



## THE SUNDAY OF ALL SAINTS

June 11

### THE GOSPEL READING

**Matthew 10:32-33; 37-38; 19:27-30**

[Encouragement to Fearless Witness]

*The Lord said to his disciples, "Every one who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven; but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny him before my Father who is in heaven. He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and he who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me." Then Peter said in reply, "Lo, we have left everything and followed you. What then shall we have?" Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of man shall sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. But many that are first will be last, and the last first."*

### THE SERMON

The Gospel reading relates to the theme of apostleship, the theme of the Church's mission in the world. Christ delivers not only to the Apostles, but to each and every one of us a clear message. As Saint John Chrysostom remarks, "He is not here addressing his original disciples only but every one of us who follows after his disciples in accord with their witness to him." Christ asks that we love Him beyond all else, even beyond to Sainthood. This is why this particular Gospel reading is so closely connected to the



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Feast of All Saints. On the Sunday of All Saints, the Church commemorates all the men and women who have attained saintliness, whether known or unknown. As the faithful throughout the world continue to grow in their faith, celebrating All Saints is necessarily an open-ended affair, including contemporary and future Saints.

Sometimes, we might feel like the Saints are distant from us. We perceive them to be our Holy Church's hall of fame of the greatest Christians who ever lived, forgetting that they too were Christians like us who grew to love God. Believe it or not, many of our beloved Saints were some of the greatest sinners at some point in their lives. We can think of the first Saint, the Thief on the Cross (also known as the Good Thief). Although he spent his life leading a life of crime, at the hour of his death, he confessed his sins on the cross. He prayed, "Remember me when you come into your kingdom." The Lord told him, "Today, you will be with me in Paradise." Let us reflect on the mercy of God in this exchange on the Cross. The Thief asked for a life of crime to be forgiven at the end of his life, and the Lord assured him that he would enter Paradise with Him in the Holy Resurrection. Truly, as King David says in the Psalms, "God is wonderful among his Saints!" God is truly wonderful to His Saints, and to us, the saints of God's Church on earth. We only need to simply turn to God, and ask Him from our hearts to remember us in His Kingdom.

This Good Thief reminds us that the Saints are not those who lived perfect lives; they were sinners just like all of us. The Saints had their faults, just like you and me, but the Saints are those who acknowledge and love the Lord Jesus Christ, ask for His mercy, and receive His grace. They lived in a constant state of repentance, that is, learning how to follow in the steps of our Lord and leave behind all things that keep us from being close to Him.

What makes our Saints holy is their ability to demonstrate that the Gospel is not merely a theoretical concept, but a living practice. The essence of the Gospel, encompassing love for God, all human beings, and His creation, can be tangibly lived by individuals during their earthly existence. Through the Grace of God, our spiritual endeavors, and acts of love, *the Gospel can guide us towards holiness and salvation*. The lives of the Saints, characterized by a life of dedication, repentance, and boundless love, serve as spiritual beacons for us.

Likewise, we too can not only become saints, but we are *called* to become saints. No matter our past, no matter what we have done, the Physician Jesus Christ is waiting for us to heal us, and lift us up with Him, just like the Good Thief. Saints are those who renounce their old lives, take up their cross, and follow our Lord Jesus Christ, finding joy in our Savior who waits with open arms for each of us to return to Him.

The Saints are an example of what you and I can become if we are open and willing for the Lord to come into our hearts and heal what is broken. The Saints are our role models; we are called to imitate them, as they imitated Christ. They show us that we do not have to be perfect, since only Christ is perfect, and we do not have to be resigned to lives of

discontent. The Peace of God, Jesus Christ, can fill us with His peace, and make us saints if we follow Him, regardless of our shortcomings.

On the Feast of All Saints, we celebrate, therefore, our own God-given potential to be perfected in glorifying God with our thoughts, words, and deeds. It is possible. All the Saints serve as examples of persons who achieved sainthood through trials and tribulations, exercised patience and humility, and practiced selfless love in service to others. They were not born saints. They were not without sin; they were not perfect. They were, however, through love and repentance, able to reach sainthood. Now they stand ready to intercede for us before God in favor of our own salvation. They intercede on our behalf while we continue engaging in our struggle toward holiness. Let us pray to the Lord for guidance and strength as we attempt to reach the choir of the Saints, where God Himself patiently and lovingly waits for each one of us.