

SERMON ON SUNDAY OF ALL SAINTS OF AMERICA, June 10, 2018

In the Orthodox Church, on the Second Sunday after Pentecost we celebrate all local and regional saints. Therefore in Russia, today is celebrated all Saints who shone forth in the land of Russia, among them the Great Prince Vladimir, the Princess Olga, the Royal Martyrs Boris and Gleb, the monastic strugglers Sergius of Radonezh and Seraphim of Sarov, the warrior saint Alexander Nevsky, as well as all the new martyrs who suffered under the atheist Communist yolk. In Greece, all saints who sanctified the land of Greece with their holy lives and deeds are remembered and commemorated, such as the great preacher and Evangelizer Cosmas of Aetolia, Nektarios, Metropolitan of Pentapolis, and all the martyrs who suffered under the Turkish yolk. On the Holy Mountain Athos, all Athonite saints, known and unknown, are celebrated today, such as the great elders Joseph the Hesychast, Porphyrios, Paisios and Silouan the Athonite. Today, in the youngest autocephalous Orthodox Church among all the autocephalous Orthodox Churches in the world, we humbly remember and celebrate all Orthodox saints who shone forth in our own land, in Alaska and in America. We remember our holy father St. Herman, a simple monk from Valaam who enlightened Alaska with the light of Christ and the Holy Gospel and spread Orthodoxy among the Aleutian Indians. We remember St. Innocent, Metropolitan of Moscow and Enlightener of America who struggled in Alaska as a missionary to bring the truth of Orthodoxy to the Aleutian Indians, who created a written Tlinget alphabet and translated the Holy Scriptures into the Tlinget language. He wrote a beautiful tract in the native language of the Alaskans called "Indication Into the Way of the Kingdom of Heaven," teaching them how to be Christians and how to be saved. We celebrate St. Alexander Hotovitsky, a married priest who helped to organize and found the first Russian Orthodox parishes in America (including St. Basil's in Watervliet), and who later was summoned back to Russia where he was tormented and persecuted by the Communists and ultimately perished in a Soviet concentration camp. We remember St. Alexis of Wilks Barre who led hundreds of Uniates back to the Orthodox faith. We remember St. John (Maximovitch), Archbishop of San Francisco, a miracle-worker whose superhuman ascetical struggles of prayer and fasting are legendary, and whose incorrupt relics are enshrined and venerated today in his cathedral in San Francisco. We remember the Holy Martyr Peter the Aleut, a baptized Orthodox Christian who Franciscan fanatics tried to re-baptize into the Latin heresy, who meekly replied that he was already baptized, and who was tortured by them by having his hands and his feet cut off. We remember Tikhon, missionary bishop in America who founded numerous parishes, St. Nicholas Cathedral in NYC (a NY landmark), and St. Tikhon's Monastery in South Canaan, Pennsylvania, the first Orthodox monastery in America. Tikhon later returned to Russia where he struggled as the newly elected Patriarch (when the Patriarchate was restored) against the Bolsheviks who persecuted and murdered clergy and laymen alike, destroyed and robbed churches and who murdered the Royal family. If that were not enough, St. Tikhon also had to struggle against the so-called "Living Church," who he excommunicated. They were a heretical group of false clergymen who sought to change the the essential fabric of the teachings and practices of the Orthodox Church in the name of "modernism." Brothers and Sisters, as we remember the legacy today and the holy lives of the Orthodox Saints who shone forth in our land, let us remember that we must be Christian not only in name but also in deed. We must not only say that we are Orthodox Christians, but we must live the Christian faith in every aspect of our lives. Our Lord Jesus Christ must be the main driving force and power in all that we do. All of our actions must be motivated and in accordance with the Holy teachings and commandments of God and His Holy Church. God has granted a great mercy and act of love by allowing Orthodoxy to come to this continent. You and I are the humble, weak and unworthy inheritors of that awesome gift. As the Archangel warns us, "let us stand aright and let us stand in fear", that we stand fast and true in the faith of the saints delivered unto us, that we may have communion with all the Mothers and Fathers who have been sanctified in the Lord and, unworthy as we are, that in the end we may be deemed worthy to join them in the Kingdom to come. Amen.