



Sanctity In the World?

† *His Eminence, Metropolitan
Cyprian of Oropos and Fili*

LAST SUNDAY, we celebrated the birthday of the Church of Christ, which was born amidst the flames of Pentecost.

But what is the Church? The Church is the workshop of sanctity and salvation founded by God. It is the Body of Christ, of which all we who have been Baptized in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit are members—all who believe in an Orthodox way, as the Holy Prophets and Apostles, the Holy Martyrs, the Holy Fathers, and the Saints and the Righteous have transmitted that way to us.

Within the holy Orthodox Church, and through the holy virtues and sacred Mysteries, man is transformed in Christ, is renewed, is sanctified, is divinized. Within the Church, the believer finds his spiritual identity again, discovers the sanctity of the human person, becomes conscious of his nobility, experiences to the utmost degree his spiritual kinship with his Creator, acquires a deep awareness that he is created by God, that he is an image and likeness of God, and that he has received the command to become a god by Grace.

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Today, then, are made manifest the splendid and blessed fruits of this holy tree of the Church, which was planted on Holy Pentecost and watered by the blood, sweat, and tears of the Saints—the Saints who are the boast of our Faith and the consolation of our souls.

All of the Saints, whom we honor today, placed into practice the exhortation of the Apostle Paul and were filled by the Holy Spirit. And now that divine cloud of the Church Triumphant prompts us:

“be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.”

May that also be the message of today’s great Feast: May we be filled, by means of the holy life in Christ, with the Grace of the Holy Spirit; that is to say, may we become Saints.

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Our pious lay brethren in Christ should not easily and lightly abandon their struggle towards sanctification, on the pretext that it is too high a standard, suitable only for monastics and ascetics.

That mouth of Christ, the Apostle Paul, informs us that our sanctification is the will of God:

“For this is the will of God, even your sanctification.”

And our Lord instructs all, without exception:

“Be ye holy, for I am Holy.”

Sanctification means that we should become temples and dwelling places of the Holy Trinity:

“If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him.”

Love for our Lord and the keeping of His Divine commandments—by means of which we will be filled with the Holy Spirit—is a common duty for all of the Faithful, whether they live in the desert or in the world.

Here is an example: the Apostolic exhortation “pray without ceasing.”

Just what does that mean? That we must:

- remain in constant communion with the source of life and love;
- continuously express our love for our Lord;
- unceasingly glorify His majesty;
- always thank Him for His gifts to us, the worthless ones;
- permanently repent and seek his mercy,
- yearn for our renewal and transformation within the Light of His Grace;
- and perform all of the above, not only when we have time or when conditions permit it, but constantly, with zeal, everywhere and at all times; for nothing impedes our hearts and our mind from praying except for our own negligence.

“For this reason, the holy Fathers who are called ‘nep-tic [watchful],” writes St. Nicodemos the Hagiorite, “prescribed that lay people no less than monastics should pray, saying this short prayer, sometimes with the mouth, but most of the time with the mind and heart: ‘Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me.’”

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The desert and the world! Is it perhaps the prerogative of the former to be bearers of sanctity? Do only monasteries beget Saints? Is it the place or the manner which sanctifies us?

*“It was revealed to Abba Antonios in the desert: In the city there lives one equal to you—a physician [a cob-
bler in some MS versions—trans.] by profession, who gives whatever is not necessary to him to all who are in*

need, and all day long chants the thrice-holy hymn with the Angels!”

Is, then, sanctification unattainable in the world?

† Sunday of All Saints, 13/26 June 2005

