



SYNAXARIA OF THE PENTECOSTARION

by Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos

SUNDAY of ALL SAINTS

On this day, the Sunday after Pentecost, we celebrate the Feast of All Saints who shone forth throughout the inhabited earth, in Asia, Libya, and Europe, North and South, East and West.

Verses

All the friends of my Lord do I hymn.
If any would, let him make mention of them all.

Synaxarion

On this Sunday, which follows immediately after Holy Pentecost, the Divine Fathers ordained that we should celebrate the memory of all the Saints who have existed throughout the world. Initially, the most ancient Fathers made this a Feast solely of the Martyrs who suffered throughout the world, as attested by the encomium of St. John Chrysostomos, in which he praises only the Martyrs. The later Fathers, however, made this Feast more general, calling it the “Sunday of All Saints,” including in it Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, Hierarchs, Ascetics, and all the Righteous together, of every age and race.

The reason for the present Feast is, as our Lord Jesus Christ said, before His Suffering, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me” (St. John 12:32)—which was the whole purpose of His descending to earth, taking flesh, and becoming perfect Man, while Himself remaining perfect God, namely, to save human nature and exalt it to Heavenly blessedness.

The nature, therefore, that He assumed in His Divine Hypostasis He raised up to the Heavens through His Divine Ascension and made it sit at the right hand of God the Father. But even so, the promise that He gave when He

said, “I will draw all men unto Me,” was not fulfilled. For this reason, He sent the All-Holy Spirit to His Holy Apostles, so that they might go and preach the one Godhead to all the nations through His power, and gather the elect into the Kingdom of Heaven, which His good and faithful servants did with all zeal, with all their soul and heart, and unto the shedding of their blood. In this way, the world above, from which the apostate angels had fallen, was replenished. This is what we celebrate today, that is, the fruit of the Apostolic preaching.

It is said that there is another reason for this common Feast: that many, very many, and almost innumerable persons have become sanctified in different places and regions, whom, on account of their multitude and anonymity, it was not possible for us to honor individually. Therefore, in order to honor them appropriately and to gain their help and succor, our Mother, the Church, decreed that we should observe a common Feast of all the Saints in general, and that at the same time this Feast should be celebrated also for those who would hereafter either suffer martyrdom or in general be sanctified. It is also said that Leo VI, that most devout emperor (886-912), who is surnamed “the Wise,” wished to honor his first wife, Theophanó, as a Saint, but that the Church did not assent to his desire; hence, he built a very beautiful Church of All Saints and said: “If Theophano is a Saint, let her be numbered with All the Saints.”

The most important reason for this Feast, as for any Saint that we celebrate, is the exhortation of ourselves, the living, to emulate those being celebrated. That is, we should compel ourselves to attain to the praiseworthy life of those blessed and renowned servants of our true God. The Prophet-King David says, with reference to this: “Thy friends, O God, are exceedingly honored by me” (Psalm 138:17, LXX). The Divine Apostle, enumerating the exploits of the Saints, and putting forward their memory to us as an example of turning aside from earthly affairs and sin, and of imitating their patience and courage in the contests of virtue, says: “Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us” (Hebrews 12:1).

Guided by the teaching of the Divine Scriptures and the Apostolic Tradition, we, the Faithful, honor all the friends of God, the Saints, as keepers of God’s commandments, as shining examples of virtue, and as benefactors of the human race. We honor each of the known Saints specially on one particular day of the year, as is evident from the Menologion; but since many are unknown, as we said previously, and since their number has multiplied from time to time, is still multiplying, and will not cease increasing until the end of the world, for this reason our Mother, the Church, has ordained that we

should hold, once a year, a general commemoration of all the Saints, which is the present Feast.

It should be known that we celebrate today all whom the Holy Spirit has munificently sanctified: that is, the most sublime and sanctifying Intelligences— namely, the Nine Orders of Angels—, the Forefathers and Patriarchs, the Prophets and the Holy Apostles; the Martyrs and the Hierarchs; the Hieromartyrs and monastic martyrs, the Ascetics and the Righteous, and all the choirs of holy women, and all of the other anonymous Saints, including those to come. Above all and in all and with all, we celebrate the Saint of Saints, her who is Most Holy and beyond compare superior to the Angelic Orders, our Sovereign Lady the Theotokos, Mary the Ever-Virgin.

By the intercessions of Thine Immaculate Mother, O Christ God, and of all Thy Saints from all ages, have mercy on us and save us, as Thou alone art good and lovest mankind. Amen.

