

# FEAST OF ALL SAINTS OF NORTH AMERICA

June 21, 2020 • Second Sunday after Pentecost



## WISDOM OF THE SAINTS OF NORTH AMERICA

HERMAN OF ALASKA

*Monk*

†1836

*from his Letters*

A TRUE CHRISTIAN is made by faith and love toward Christ. Our sins do not in the least hinder our Christianity, according to the word of the Savior Himself. He deigned to say: *I have come to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance; (Luke 5:32) there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety righteous ones. (Luke 15:7)* Likewise concerning the sinful woman who touched His feet, He deigned to say to the Pharisee Simon: *To one who has love, a great debt is forgiven, but from one who has no love, even a small debt will be demanded. (cf. Luke 8:47)* From these judgments a Christian should bring himself to hope and joy, and not in the least accept an inflicted despair. Here one needs the shield of faith. *Amen.*



JOHN MAXIMOVICH

*Archbishop of San Francisco*

†1966

*~ from his homily 'Sin approaches unnoticed' ~*

THE GOSPELS TELL US about two feasts. One of them, described in a parable, was given by a king full of good will and mercy. Nevertheless, when the feast was ready, those who were called did not come. They preferred other occupations—some buying, others household affairs; others seized the king's messengers, insulted them, and even killed some of them. The angered king punished the guilty ones severely, and again sent his servants to invite those whom they should meet. Many guests came to the feast. When the king arrived, he saw one of the guests not dressed for the feast. The king asked him why he had come inappropriately dressed, but the latter did not answer, thus expressing his contempt for the king and his lack of desire to participate in the solemnities, for which he was cast out. Thus, although there were many called to the feast there were few chosen, because some refused to come, while others showed themselves to be unworthy. The other feast, not a parable but a real one, was given by King Herod. No one refused the invitation to this feast. To the contrary, all those called came in festal garments and indulged themselves fully. The feast went on in drunkenness, lasciviousness, and ended in a terrible crime—the murder of John the Baptist.

These two feasts, described in the Gospels, are images of two different ways of life and two kinds of delight. The first is the image of a spiritual feast and spiritual joy. The Lord gives it. This is the feast of life in the Christian Church. All are invited to this feast, to participation in the services, especially to Divine Liturgy and Communion of the Holy Body and Blood of Christ, to doing good, to a concentrated spiritual way of life. But many of us refuse to participate in this feast, in that we miss the Church services, do evil instead of good, and prefer daily cares to communion with God. If we bring an alien and sinful state into our lives, then we dress ourselves in clothes inappropriate for a wedding feast. Every time a person prefers the sinful and fleshly over the spiritual and divine, he refuses the spiritual feast.

We are also invited to Herod's feast, even many times a day. Our calamity is that we often do not notice that we are being drawn in by a sinful desire, and therefore sin sneaks up on us unnoticed. Herod himself once listened with pleasure to St. John the Baptist. Probably he recognized the sinfulness of his desire, but he did not struggle with it, and finally he arrived at the sin of murdering a great, righteous man. Each of us goes to the wicked feast of Herod

every time we agree to evil, when we choose fleshly and sinful delights, when we are unmerciful, or inattentive to our own souls.

We begin with a trifle, and it becomes hard to stop. If we do not come to our senses in time and take ourselves in hand, we can arrive at terrible sins and crimes, which will bring us eternal torment. Then as now, St. John the Baptist calls to us: *Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. (Matthew 3:2)* Repent, that you may delight in the feast of the Lamb, slain for the sins of the whole world, in bright and eternal habitations, and not share in the devil's feast of torments in Tartarus and outer darkness. *Amen.*



## TIKHON OF MOSCOW

*Archbishop*

†1925

*~ from a homily delivered at the Cathedral Church of San Francisco on the Sunday of Orthodoxy, 1903 ~*

**T**ODAY THE CHURCH solemnly recalls its victory over the Iconoclast heresy and other heresies and gratefully remembers all who fought for the Orthodox faith. Orthodox people ought to remember it is their sacred duty to stand firm in their Orthodox faith and carefully to keep it. For us it is a precious treasure: it is ever ready to give us its help and blessing in all our needs and good undertakings, however unimportant they may seem; it supplies us with strength, good cheer and consolation; it heals, purifies and saves us. For its sake the Apostles bore pain and labored; martyrs and preachers suffered for it; pastors and teachers fought for it. Do we preserve the Orthodox faith? Do we keep to its Gospels? Of yore, the prophet Elijah, that great worker for the glory of God, complained that the sons of Israel had abandoned the Testament of the Lord, leaning away from it towards the gods of the heathen. Yet the Lord revealed to His Prophet, that amongst the Israelites there still were seven thousand people who have not knelt before Baal. (*cf. III Kingdoms 19*) Likewise, no doubt, in our days also there are some true followers of Christ. *The Lord knows those who are His. (II Timothy 2:19)*

We do occasionally meet sons of the Church, who are obedient to Her decrees, who honor their spiritual pastors, love the Church of God and the beauty of its exterior, who are eager to attend to its Divine Service and to lead a good life, who recognize their human failings and sincerely repent of their sins. But are there many such among us? Are there not more people in whom the weeds of vanity and passion allow but little fruit to the influence of the Gospel, or even in whom it is altogether fruitless, who resist the truth of the Gospel, because of the increase of their sins, who renounce the gift of the Lord and repudiate the Grace of God?

'I have given birth to sons and have glorified them, yet they deny Me,' said the Lord in the olden days concerning Israel. And today also there are many who were born, raised and glorified by the Lord in the Orthodox faith, yet who deny their faith, pay no attention to the teachings of the Church, do not keep its injunctions, do not listen to their spiritual pastors and remain cold towards the Divine Service and the Church of God. How speedily some people lose the Orthodox faith in this country of many creeds and tribes! They judge it is 'old fashioned' and 'not accepted amongst educated people'. They seldom go to church and sometimes not at all; they do not go to confession; they dispense with church marriage and delay baptizing their children. And in this way their ties with Orthodox faith are broken! They remember the Church on their deathbed, and some don't even do that! To excuse their apostasy, they naively say: "This is not the old country, this is America, and consequently it is impossible to observe all the demands of the Church", as if the word of Christ is of use for the old country only and not for the whole world. As if the Orthodox faith is not the foundation of the world!

*Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel into anger. (Isaiah 1:4)* Holding to the Orthodox faith, as to something holy, loving it with all their hearts and prizing it above all, Orthodox people ought to endeavor to spread it amongst people of other creeds. Christ the Savior has said that *neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candle stick, and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. (Matthew 5:15)* The light of Orthodoxy was not lit to shine only on a small number of men. The Orthodox Church is universal; it remembers the words of its Founder: *Go ye into the world, and preach the gospel to every creature (Luke 16:15), go ye therefore and teach all nations. (Matthew 28:19)* We ought to share our spiritual wealth, our

truth, light and joy with others, who are deprived of these blessings, but often are seeking them and thirsting for them.

We live surrounded by people of alien creeds; in the sea of other religions, our Church is a small island of salvation, towards which swim some of the people, plunged in the sea of life. And are we to remain deaf and insensible? God save us from such a lack of sympathy. Otherwise woe unto us, *for we have taken away the key of knowledge, we entered not in ourselves, and them that were entering in we hindered. (cf. Luke 11:52)* But who is to work for the spread of the Orthodox faith, for the increase of the children of the Orthodox Church? Pastors and missionaries, you answer. You are right; but are they to be alone? St. Paul wisely compares the Church of Christ to a body, and the life of a body is shared by all the members. So it ought to be in the life of the Church also. *The whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. (Ephesians 4:16)* In this work every member of the Church ought to take a lively and heart-felt interest.

Consequently, we can express the interests we take in the cause of the Gospel in praying to the Lord:  
that He should take this holy cause under His protection,  
that He should give its servants the strength to do their work worthily,  
that He should help them to conquer difficulties and dangers, which are part of the work,  
that He should not allow them to grow depressed or weaken in their zeal;  
that He should open the hearts of the unbelieving for the hearing and acceptance of the Gospel of Christ,  
that He should impart to them the word of truth,  
that He should unite them to the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church;  
that He should confirm, increase and pacify His Church, keeping it forever invincible.

We pray for all this, but mostly with lips and but seldom with the heart. Woe to our lack of wisdom! Woe to our carelessness and idleness! In addition to offering earnest prayers for the successful preaching of Christ, we can also show our interest by helping it materially. Do not be ashamed of the smallness of your offering. If you have much, offer all you can, but do offer; do not lose the chance of helping the cause of the conversion of your neighbors to Christ, because by so doing, in the words of St. James, *you shall save your own soul from death and shall hide a multitude of sins (James 5:19-20)*.

Orthodox people, you must devote yourselves to the Orthodox faith not in word or tongue only, but in deed and in truth. *Amen.*

