



My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Throughout the earthly existence of the Church, beginning with the miracle of Pentecost, there are those who heard Christ's words from the Gospel for this Sunday: *"Every one who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven..."* (Matthew 10:32). It is for this reason that the Church, in her wisdom, has chosen to make the Sunday after Pentecost, the Sunday of All Saints.

On this first Sunday after Pentecost, we honor all those who live with God, because they chose to acknowledge Him, despite everything. St. Paul shows us in this Sunday's Epistle to the Hebrews, that even before the Incarnation of Christ, there were servants of God who were even willing to be *"...tortured, refusing to accept release, in order to obtain a better resurrection. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned to death, they were sawn in two, they were killed by the sword..."* (Hebrews 11:35-37). These holy

martyrs understood that faithfulness to God is a greater gift than all the honors of this earth.

Even those spiritual fathers and mothers who were not martyrs, many of them lived their earthly lives in such a humble way that they were not glorified in their own time. This means that, to this day, we do not know the names of many who, as St. Paul continues, *"...went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated—of whom the world was not worthy..."* (Hebrews 11:37-38) Despite the difficulties they faced in their lives, they understood that to be a faithful servant of means, *"...many that are first will be last, and the last first"* (Matthew 19:30). St. Paul still pauses to emphasize that though the heroes of ancient Israel *"...were commended for their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better so that they would not, without us, be made perfect"* (11:39-40). This perfection was achieved in Christ's victory over death, His Ascension to the Father, and the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Though the powers of this world did their best to be sure that the name of Christ would be forgotten, we know that it is because of all God's Saints—both the martyrs, and those who fell asleep peacefully—that the darkness has not overtaken the Gospel. As we continue to dwell in the illumination and comfort of the Holy Spirit, I fervently pray that every one of us calls upon not only our Patron Saint, but an unknown saint, to intercede on our behalf. Therefore, I offer blessings, not only for our fathers (both earthly and spiritual) on this Father's Day, but also all those who celebrate their Name Day on this Feast: Χρόνια Πολλά!

+SEVASTIANOS
Metropolitan of Atlanta