**6 26 16**

***"THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK"***

***“And all these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.”***

On this Holy Sunday of All Saints let us rejoice in the beauty and majesty of our Orthodox Faith. In the modern society we live in, many people are isolated and lonely. This is because we are generally proud individualists. We don’t want to depend on other people, we don’t want to admit any weakness of our own. Therefore, we build walls around ourselves, and we “protect” ourselves from the intrusion of others, and in doing so we become isolated and lonely. If we happen to be religious, then religion becomes a relationship only between ourselves and our God. In the privacy of this relationship, what we believe to be faith actually becomes, merely, an occasion for pride.

Beloved, it is the exact opposite in the Church. We have an ethos,that at its core, brings us into an intimate relationship with each other, so that together we may unite ourselves to our God. The Church, as the body of Christ, tells us that we all are dependent on each other. We have different roles, but no role can do without the others. When one of us is weak, then the others will lift us up. When one of us is strong, then we reach out and save those who are struggling. The remarkable thing is that even the strong one is saved by the one who is struggling-for it is the Love of Christ that saves both.

This is why the Saints are so important to us. They are our strong brothers and sisters, who are constantly praying for us. They are constantly reaching out to help us. On the day of our Baptism we are given one of their names, and we have a special relationship with that blessed one, and he or she with us. Let us depend on them, and pray to them to help us, for they will never disappoint us. They have experienced every temptation we have, and through faith have overcome them. They wish to give us the same victory by lifting us up through their prayers to the throne of God- for ***“The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. (Jam 5:16 NKJ)”*** The Saints are our righteous brothers and sisters and their prayers are powerful. Do not miss an opportunity to ask for their help in our personal path to God.

Finally, beloved, the absolutely most astounding thing is that the Saints, who are already victorious, are waiting for us to be perfected! It would be impious of me to ever advocate praying for a Saint, however look closely at the anaphora of St. John Chrysostom; ***“And again we offer unto thee this reasonable service for all those who in faith have gone before us to their rest; Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles…*** Beloved they have no need of our prayers, but God has ordained that they indeed should wait for us. That they will be perfected in glory with us, and not apart from us. When He comes again to this earth, He will come with His Saints, and we, together, will be raised with them.

Let us depend on one another, pray for one another, and love one another! For, it is together that we will be saved. This is the beauty and glory of our Orthodox Faith. Amen.