



Welcome to St. Olympia Orthodox Church,  
a young and, God willing, growing community of worshippers.

Join us for prayer and fellowship.

Divine Liturgies are held every Sunday at 10 am  
Great Vespers are held every Saturday evening at 5 pm  
Services are primarily in English.

Next Services

Saturday, June 9th

Great Vespers  
5:00 pm

Sunday, June 10th

Saints of America

Matins  
9:30 am  
(summer hours)

Divine Liturgy  
10:00 am

at

St. Olympia Chapel  
123 Main Street  
Potsdam, NY

All welcome!



The icon of All Saints is also an icon of the Last Judgment with many elements in it that reference the book of Revelation. The setting of the icon is paradise, represented by trees on gold. At the bottom left is Abraham holding a righteous soul to his bosom. At right is Jacob holding scrolls representing the twelve tribes of Israel. In the center is the penitent thief. In this icon, the saints are shown within a circle--the great cloud of witnesses. Christ, as Judge, sits in a mandorla descending up the throne of Preparation (Ps. 9:7) while Adam and Eve prostrate before Him.

Sunday of All Saints

(Heb.11:33-12:2; Matt.10:32-33, 37-38; 19:27-30)

Note: the following article has been written by an anonymous contributor.  
It is included here by permission.

We know from Genesis 1:26 that we humans are made in God’s image, and are intended to live according to God’s likeness. And we know from Romans 8:29 that God has redeemed us in Christ so that we, empowered by solely God’s grace, might be “conformed to the image of His Son, that He [Jesus] might be the firstborn among many brethren.” What we have trouble processing is that it’s only when we are living in God’s image, according to God’s likeness, and it’s only when by grace we become fully like Christ, that we are authentically human; only then are we who we’re made to be, living as we’re created to live. From the instant of our birth we’re called to worship and revere and serve and love God with all our mind, heart, soul, and strength. But in our fallen state we cannot do so. Ah, but then, in the instant of our new birth in Holy Baptism, we who were born according to the flesh as fallen and condemned sinners are born again as new people with a new nature, as God’s own children in His household, His own family. In Christ, we no longer stand outside the mercy, grace, and love of God, and no longer stand at enmity with God, but have “received the Spirit of adoption by Whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father,’” infused with the very life of God as a member of God’s own family.

And that leads us to what we celebrate on this first Sunday after Pentecost: the feast of All Saints, because in and through our Baptism we ourselves become saints of God. Admittedly, we tend to think of “the saints” as very holy, almost perfect, people. But what we usually miss is that holiness of life is the result of being a saint. Understand: the word “saint” means “dedicated, set apart unto God, belonging to God.” In Ephesians 1:1 St. Paul addresses his letter “to the saints who are in Ephesus and faithful in Christ Jesus.” Were the Ephesian Christians all perfect, holy and sinless? Nope. They were “saints,” God’s set-apart people by reason of their Baptism, who were “faithful in Christ Jesus” and through that relationship were growing towards God’s goals for every believer: “that we should be holy and blameless before Him.” So as much as this feast celebrates the lives and examples of those of our brothers and sisters in Christ who’ve already crossed the finish-line, at one level we’re also celebrating all---including us---who’ve accepted God’s invitation to follow Jesus Christ, because everyone who has crossed the baptismal threshold into the family of God can rightly be called a saint of God.

However, before we start polishing our halos, let’s admit although we may be “saints” by virtue of our Baptism, we are not saintly saints. Rather famously, Martin Luther described the believer as simul justus et peccator, loosely translated as “at the same time saint and sinner.” And while we as Orthodox Christians do not use that particular phrase, what one of us cannot identify with St. Paul in Romans 7:19, where he--a baptized Christian, remember, and therefore one of God’s dedicated people--laments with frustration that “the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice”? The bad news is that we are still sinners by virtue of our behavior, living in the image of Adam after the Fall. But the Good News is that by virtue of our Baptism and by virtue of the faith God’s Spirit has created in us, we are nonetheless set apart unto God as what 1 Peter 2:9 calls “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, [God’s] own special people.” And why? Because being God’s dedicated people depends, not on anything we can do, but upon what God in Christ has already done for us. God justifies us, puts us back into right relationship with Himself, because Jesus has taken away our sins by nailing them to his cross; as it says in Hebrews 10:14, “we have been sanctified [set apart] through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” It’s God Who calls us to Himself by the Gospel; Who enlightens us through Baptism and empowers us through Chrismation and the work of the Holy Spirit within us, Who nourishes us through Holy Communion, prayer, and His Words; and Who sanctifies us as His holy people.

BUT this does not mean that we’re merely passive spectators. “The saints” were, are, and always will be ordinary people who, led and empowered by the Holy Spirit, have really and fully given their heart and life to Jesus Christ. But giving one’s self to another implies process and demands personal choice. So let’s look first at process. Is a newborn baby, and indeed, the fetus in the womb, a human being? Absolutely! That child has a human nature and all of his/her potential already present. But that human nature has to be developed, and all that potential for learning and doing has to emerge and be nurtured, encouraged, educated and trained before they’re of any use and any enjoyment, right? No kid grows up automatically toilet-trained, knowing how to brush their own teeth, tie their own shoes, read and write, behave with at least some manners, and have a good work ethic, without going through a process of development, education, training and discipline. Nobody the their right mind expects a newborn to hop out of the crib, shower, shave, put on a suit, go out and get a job, and put in a 40-hour week. Living as a human being involves a process of growing up.

And so does living as a child and saint of God. We’re born again in Baptism to the life of grace; but that new life within us then has to develop and grow. Note in Ephesians 4:13 and 15 that although in our Baptism we each become one of God’s set-apart people, still we’re engaged in a process of growing in Christ “till we all come...to a perfect [fully mature] human being who measures up to the stature of the fullness of Christ;” Baptism only begins the journey by which we “grow up in all things into Him Who is the Head, Christ.” Life in Christ, like any other relationship, is a process.

And it’s a process demanding personal choice. Physically, we have no choice about whether or not we’re going to grow and age. But growing as a saint of God will happen only as we’re willing to let it happen and to cooperate with God’s grace in making it happen. In Hebrews 12:14 St. Paul bids us “pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.” Holiness--which is nothing other than actually being and living in God’s image and according to God’s likeness, living life our life in God as God lives His life--doesn’t just fall into our lap. We have to pursue that goal, to want it; we have to choose to live that kind of life. Only then does God have, as it were, a free hand to go to work on us from the inside to re-shape and empower us so we can live that life. Of course, ultimately even the desire to pursue holiness is produced by the Holy Spirit; but we still have to say “Yes” to it and cooperate with God in the process of achieving it.

And that choice has to be ongoing. In the last two verses of today’s Epistle, Hebrews 11:33-12:2, St. Paul urges us to “lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.” Our relationship with God, which begins in Baptism, is eternal; so it’s not a sprint, but a life-long marathon. Running that marathon requires the willingness to keep going and the willingness to ditch anything and everything which slows us down, holds us back, shifts our focus and/or breaks our concentration. The energy to keep going, and the pruning away of whatever holds us back, comes from God; the willingness to keep running has to come from us.

We think of “the saints” as people different from who and what we are. Not so. They were exactly who and what we are. But in response to the work of the Holy Spirit which began in them with their Baptism, and even though they were hobbled with exactly the same weight and snares of sin which make us stumble and fall, they chose and kept choosing to “run with endurance the race that was set before them.” They pursued and kept chasing that “holiness, without which no one will see the Lord” until they caught it and were caught by it. By God’s grace, as God’s dedicated people “faithful in Christ Jesus,” they chose and kept choosing to live a moral and compassionate life, characterized by humility before God and love towards God and neighbor. What are you and I choosing today?



There are many variations to “all saints” icons. One very popular type is to feature the saints of a country, region or even village. Show left is a Russian icon of saints of the British Isles and at right are saints from Africa.