

SAINTS ARE NOT BORN — SAINTS ARE MADE

Meditations by Fr. Dr. Joshua D. Genig

On St. Matthew 10:32–33, 37-38; 19:27-30

(Gospel for All Saints Sunday, 11 June 2017)

St. Innocent Orthodox Church, Redford, MI



Central Narthex Icon,

St. Innocent Orthodox Church, Redford, MI

In the Name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Saints are not born; saints are made. It takes time. It takes work. Sometimes it hurts. Sometimes it even kills. But it always, always takes the Holy Spirit.

That is, of course, why the Feast of All Saints falls immediately after the Feast of Pentecost. Yes, today ends the cycle of services that began well-over 100 days ago. All the way back at the beginning of February this cycle began; it began with the Sunday of the Publican the Pharisee. But today, this cycle ends. And, in a way, that makes sense. Because it is this cycle of events – Jesus’ life, His passion, His death, His resurrection on the third day, His glorious ascension into heaven, and the giving of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles – it is this cycle that makes today worth celebrating. It is this cycle that makes today anything at all.

Because Saints are **not** born; they are made. Saints are made by the Holy Spirit. But they are made by the Holy Spirit for a very particular purpose: they are made in order to live lives that resemble that of Jesus Christ, whose life we’ve celebrated and entered into these past 100+ days.

It is so easy to think of the saints as super-human, as characters out of a comic book or a movie. They seem beyond us, and out-of-our reach. But today, I think it’s helpful to remember that the Saints were just like us. They were born into the same world, with the same struggles, with the same faults, with many of the same sins, with the same fears and, yet, they found a way to overcome these things, not by their own strength – no, they found a way to be open to the work of the Holy Spirit.

His Holiness, Patriarch Kirill, spoke of this openness in his homily for this feast in 2011:

We celebrate [this Feast] as an assertion of the fact that the power of the Holy Spirit has transformed numerous souls, turning them away from sin toward sanctity and away from darkness toward light. None of these saints was born holy. They became holy by their own inner efforts to open their souls to God’s grace. It is in this synergy, the co-working of the divine and the human, that the fullness of human life and salvation is found, and all the rest is secondary.

Saints are not born; they are made. But they are made, not into super-heroes, but into humans — humans who are fully alive!

And today is the day when we celebrate those faithful whom we know — the various saints who have a day (or multiple days) on the church calendar — but also those whom we do not know. Simple folks, many of them — children, parents, grandparents, young people, monastics, clergy, laity — who all had a single thing in common. They woke up every single day asking a single question: How can I be open to God and to His most holy, good, and life-creating Spirit today?

Today is their day. But we do not simply honor them today. No, today, we see in them a way forward for us. If they can do it, so can we. And I really mean that.

This is not a fanciful wish, but a sure and certain hope that in this very temple today saints are being made and one day, by God’s grace, this will be your day too.

In the Name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.