

All Saints – A Revolution led by Christ
Fr. Hector Firoglanis – Sunday, June 14, 2020

Today is the Sunday after Pentecost, which in the Orthodox Church is All Saints Sunday. For most of my life I celebrated this day as my name-day, because I didn't know if there was a Saint Hector.

About four years ago, however, Thomas Troop, who is now a seminarian at St. Vladimir's Seminary, went on an OCF Real Break trip to Romania. During this short-term mission trip, the students embarked on a pilgrimage to the Crasna Monastery where Thomas took a picture of a Saint on the wall of the church which appeared to be Saint Hector. I was amazed.

After some research, and by the Grace of God, we discovered that indeed there is a Saint Hector who was martyred around the year 300 under the Emperor Diocletian, and his feast day is celebrated this Saturday on June 20.

This discovery reminded me that there are hidden saints everywhere – even saints who are not listed in the Synaxarion – and what the world needs today more than ever are not new social movements, but new saints to continue the Revolution started by Christ.

There have been many revolutions throughout history; the vast majority have been violent and bloody.

The one Revolution, however, which brought about the overthrow of the cosmic order of the Fall and sin of mankind, was the Incarnation, Crucifixion, and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is the one true Revolutionary, who shed His own innocent and life-giving blood on the Cross to bring change to the human heart – lifting up Saints who are changing the world as vessels of the Holy Spirit.

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What does this Revolution of our Lord look and sound like?

First of all, to be a part of this Revolution, our Lord Jesus Christ expects unwavering allegiance and faithfulness from His followers, as He says in today's Gospel Reading:

"Everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before My Father who is in heaven; but whoever denies Me before men, I also will deny him before My Father who is in heaven. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of

Me; and he who does not take his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me" (Matt. 10:32-33)

Our Lord Jesus also states what He expects from His followers:

"Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you ... And just as you want others to do to you, you also do to them likewise" (Luke 6:21-31).

And that His Revolution will be carried out with concrete actions of love:

"For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. 36 I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me" (Matthew 25:35).

And that His followers must be willing to give up their very lives for this Revolution: "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13).

These are the words of a true Revolution led by a Christ our God – a call to faithfulness, a call to change our hearts, to love our enemy, to love all people with concrete actions of love, and to even lay down our life for our neighbor.

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For the first three centuries of Christianity, this Revolution spread like wildfire – in adverse conditions – throughout a hostile and evil world.

While most revolutions spread through violence and bloodshed, the Revolution of Christ began with the shedding of His innocent blood on the Cross and continued with the blood of the Martyrs – countless hidden and unknown saints like Saint Hector.

These Martyrs and Saints were and continue to be the true revolutionaries and witnesses of Christ, who live by the words of their Master: **"By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35).**

Listen to the words of these saints from the first three centuries, the pioneers of Christ's Revolution who would change the world forever and lead countless others to the Kingdom of God.

St. John the Dwarf said: **“It is not possible to build a house from the top down; one must build it from the foundation to the top...the foundation is your neighbor, whom you must win over to Christ by your love.”**

Saint Anthony the Great said: **“Our life and our death depend on our neighbor: if we gain our brother, we gain God; and if we scandalize our brother, we sin against Christ.”**

Saint Agathon said: **“If it were possible for me to find a leper, give him my body, and receive his, I would be very glad; for this is perfect love.”**

This is how Christians thought and lived in the early centuries of Christianity.

By the fourth century when the persecutions ended, the Christian faith began to be watered down, and Saint John Chrysostom, preaching to perhaps 400 people in Antioch, told them, **“If all of you were Christians, there would be no more pagans in the world.”** St. John was trying to make a simple point: If you want to understand how Christianity spread so rapidly in the early centuries, it was because Christians were truly Christian and loved their neighbor, even those who hated and persecuted them.

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As we celebrate our parish centennial next year and gear up for another 100 years of ministry and witness, this is the Revolution we are all called to engage in above all others.

Our Annunciation Church is making bridges with our neighbors in need, and we invite all of you to join us. Volunteer for the groups who participate in Off the Streets, helping to move homeless people in Lancaster City to permanent and stable housing.

Volunteer on a Thursday morning to help us distribute 200 food boxes to our neighbors in need – and to see Christ in the faces of those who are hungry. It matters not to us what the color of that face is, for every face is beautifully created in the image of God.

It is a humble work, but it is a beginning and it is what we are called to do. Let us spend less time on social media and the news which seeks to divide us. And let us spend more time working together and carrying out the revolution of Christ with repentance, worship, and acts of love for our neighbors in need. For this is what will unite us and conquer the divisive and demonic forces of evil that seek to tear us apart.

I'd like to conclude today's sermon with a heartfelt appeal. One of our own families in the parish needs our help desperately. One of our Eritrean families – a beloved husband and wife with their three beautiful children – is going through a terrible trial during this time.

I cannot share their names out of respect for their privacy, but the father is terminally ill and in need of a kidney transplant to save his life. The mother is working two jobs to support the family as the father is too sick and weak to work at this time. The mother is going to be the one who will donate a kidney to save her husband's life, and in doing so she will not be able to work for several months – leaving the family with no income. Even before the illness this family struggled and worked hard to make ends meet. Now they must find a way to raise \$15,000 for the surgery and another \$15,000 to sustain the family while both parents recover from the transplant surgery.

Our church has already raised and sent \$5,000 to the National Foundation for Transplants and will send another \$5000 this week through the Altar Fund, but we all need to work together to help this family get through this difficult time. If you can help, please mail a check to the church office, made out to **“Annunciation Church Altar Fund”** and write **“Kidney Donation”** on the memo line. If you wish to make a donation [online](#), you may do so by giving under **“General Donation”** and writing **“Altar Fund – Kidney Donation”** in the space to the right.

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Our Lord does not call us to change the world. He calls us to change our hearts. He does not call us to solve the problems of world hunger, homelessness, illness, and violence; rather, He calls us to feed the hungry, give shelter to the homeless, help the sick, and soothe the afflicted – one person at a time.

This is the Revolution of our Lord Jesus Christ, carried out by the Saints and all of us working together through the Grace of the Holy Spirit sent down to us on Pentecost. When each of us was Baptized and Chrismated, we were given Power from on high.

As the churches open up again, do not be afraid. Prepare yourselves and come receive Holy Communion, so that we might have the grace and power needed to carry out this holy work of Christ together with all the Saints.

With Christ as our Head, this is the only Revolution that changes the hearts of people, that conquers demonic powers, that changes enemies to friends, and changes the world we live in for the better, as we journey together to the Kingdom of Heaven. Amen.