

Saints of the Old Testament

4 November

Memorial

This time of year the Church celebrates the feast of All Saints and gathers up thanksgiving for the whole company of those who, in various and different ways, bore witness to Christ. Today we extend our thanksgiving and include the saints of the Old Testament in our celebration of faith.

The New Testament teaches us that Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, was "born under the law of Moses," and thereby fulfilled the long history of God's covenant with Israel. For this reason, the Church believes that he gathered into the kingdom of heaven all those Hebrew men and women who were faithful and holy witnesses to God in the ages before his coming in great humility to redeem the whole world.

The Eastern Orthodox tradition has always remembered this important truth and taken pains to commemorate the Old Testament saints in its liturgies. Local churches in the West have also done so since ancient times, and we claim this tradition of remembrance for our own Church. Our faith did not begin with the birth of Christ in Bethlehem, but with Abraham and Sarah, with Moses and Miriam and Aaron, with Deborah and Samuel, with holy kings like David and Hezekiah, and with prophets like Elijah and Jeremiah. We give thanks for the testimony of their lives and celebrate their faith, because they were the true forebears of Christ, who has made us partners and fellow heirs with them in the covenant of salvation.

Sentence

The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is God not of the dead, but of the living. *Matthew 22.32*

Collect

Almighty God,
in the midst of your people Israel
you raised up many saints,
who through faith in your eternal covenant
conquered kingdoms, did justice,
and won strength out of weakness.
Grant us to hold in glad remembrance
their holy lives and fearless witness,
that by your grace we may press on towards the goal
for the prize of our heavenly calling;
through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you
and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Readings

Hebrews 11.1-3, 8-12, 23-28, 32 — 12.2 Psalm 37.28-36

Refrain: The law of God is in the heart of the righteous.

Matthew 22.23-32

Prayer over the Gifts

Grant us, Almighty God, with the saints of ancient Israel,
so to be faithful in the grace of your covenant,
that our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving
may have its truth and fulfilment
in the one oblation of Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Preface of All Saints

Prayer after Communion

God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,
who set your law in the hearts of the righteous,
grant us your love as the rule of our lives,
that we who have tasted the grace of Christ
may come to be seated at the banquet of his glory.
We ask this for his sake,
who lives with you and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever.