

The Confessor's Tongue for June 4, A. D. 2017

Eighth Sunday of Pascha: Pentecost; Holy Trinity

In honor of St. Maximus the Confessor, whose tongue and right hand were cut off in an attempt by compromising authorities to silence his uncompromising confession of Christ's full humanity & divinity.

Holy Pentecost—Holy Trinity

On the eighth Sunday of Pascha, we celebrate the Feast of Pentecost, one of the Twelve Great Feasts, on which we celebrate the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Holy Apostles, as recorded in the second chapter of Acts. By this the Church is established and empowered to proclaim the Gospel to the world.

Pentecost for the Jews was one of the three great annual feasts (Exodus. 23:14, 16, 17; Deut. 16:16). By the day of Pentecost the Jews had finished the harvest, which began with the feast of Passover, according to that, the fiftieth day after the first day of Passover was actually the feast of the ending of the harvest, in which under the law they should offer to God a thanksgiving sacrifice from fruits of the earth. (Exodus. 23:16; Num. 28:26). Over time this feast began to incorporate and commemorate the giving of the Sinai law received by the Hebrews within 50 days after their exodus from Egypt. For the Jews this feast was solemn and joyful (Deut. 16:11), and for this feast they flocked to Jerusalem in great numbers. Each of them considered it a sacred duty to visit the Holy City, in order to bring the sacrifice from the gathered harvest in gratitude to God, established by the law, (Lev. 23:17, 30), and it was considered obligatory not only for Palestinian Jews, but also for those outside of Palestine living in countries all over in the then known world. Therefore in Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost it was possible to meet those who arrived from Rome, Egypt, Crete, Mesopotamia, from all areas of Asia Minor and Western Asia, from "all of the people under Heaven", not only Jews, but also proselytes, i.e. those converted from paganism (Acts 2:5, 9:11, 20:16).

The sending down of the Holy Spirit to earth is so great a gift that it includes everything within it for the Christian. Without the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit we would not even receive the clear knowledge of the actions of the Son of God Himself on earth. Without the co-activity of the Holy Spirit the preaching of the Gospel would not have spread so quickly in the world, due to the many obstacles, insurmountable for the ordinary power of man. Without the life-creating Holy Spirit even the faithful in the name of Jesus Christ would be dead spiritually. We have the Word of God because the Holy Spirit spoke through the prophets and the apostles. Everyone entering into the holy society of the Church receives the rebirth into the new spiritual life, because the Holy Spirit, once having been poured out, permanently remains in the Church of Christ.

Three times Christ gave the Holy Spirit to the disciples: it is implicit before His suffering (Mt. 10:1,20), it is clearer after His Resurrection through breathing (John 20:22), and now He has sent Him in essence; it is better (to say), He Himself has

descended, more perfectly enlightening and illuminating them, and through them converting all the ends of the world.

But we must not represent this descent of the Holy of Spirit anthropomorphically. The Holy Spirit, as God, is omnipresent. He has no place from which to descend and nowhere to go. He is everywhere and fills all things. To descend, to come may be only a limiting of the essence, but not of God. All these expressions, as St. Chrysostom notes, are used about God according to need, for in human language there are no words for expressing Divine actions in their very essence. All these expressions mean nothing other than the new appearance of the power of God, the special revelation of His presence. Where the power of God opens itself, where He perceptibly appears as His presence, there, according to our weak understanding and still weaker expression, it is as if God comes.

So, the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles, actually speaking, is not the descent of the Spirit on them, but the appearance of His power in them, opening in them His special presence.

The Holy Spirit also acted before in human generation. The Holy Spirit, as the Church wisely sings, "always was, and is, and will be". He was even in the Old Testament, in the patriarchs, in the prophets and in any pure soul; without Him no truly good work was ever accomplished.

But the appearance of His power in the apostles was most crucial and beneficial for the entire human race. In the eternal council of God concerning the salvation of the race of man it is necessary, that the Son of God, after the fulfillment of his most magnificent work on earth, has risen to Heaven and that, according to the departure of the Savior to Heaven, the Holy Spirit has come to make what was begun by the Savior, to enable the apostles to preach the Gospel to the whole world, to prepare the hearts of the people for the acceptance of the Gospel message, to instill in their life service to the Redeemer, to inform them of a new spiritual force in the fulfillment of a new law of grace, is briefly: to enable the human race make those Divine Gifts their own, which they acquired by the suffering of the Son of God.

Therefore the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles is His solemn entrance to the high post of Consecrator of the sinful human race. It is a solemn sanctification of a new, worldwide, eternal Church; after this sanctification the Consecrator already began to visibly and continually act in it. And by this fact alone it reveals how important and beneficial the descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles is for the entire human race. If He did not descend upon them, the work of our Savior would remain unfinished, the Apostles would not be able to preach about Him to

the entire world, the world would not know their Savior, there would not be a Christian faith in the world and all of us would remain in the darkness of idol worship.

This feast is also called *Trinity Day*, because the appearance of the Holy Spirit has revealed to the people in a very clear light, how necessary the mystery of the Holy Trinity was for them and therefore, even for the Holy Church, teaching us "in the Orthodox way" piously to confess the All-holy Trinity, for on this day in its prayers and hymns it honors and praises all three Persons of the Holy Trinity, who participated in the descent of the Holy Spirit: God the Father, who sent the Holy Spirit, God the Son Jesus Christ, who entreats the Father to send the Holy Spirit, and God the Holy Spirit, who descended appearing as fiery tongues.

We celebrate Pentecost for seven days through its Leavetaking on Saturday. During the feast, we say or sing the festal troparion before meals and during our daily prayers. (see *bulletin*)

"If we ourselves do not learn humility, God will not stop humbling us." Elder Thaddeus

First Kneeling Prayer of Pentecost

O pure and blameless Lord, Who art without beginning, invisible and incomprehensible, unchangeable, immeasurable, and unbounded, Who art without evil and alone immortal, who dwellest in the unapproachable light, Maker of heaven and earth and the seas and all that was created therein, Who grantest to all their petitions before asking, to Thee we pray and of Thee we ask, O philanthropic Master, the Father of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ, Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and of the ever-virgin Mary, the noble Theotokos; Who first didst teach by word, and then gave testimony in deed while bearing the saving Passion, teaching us Thine unworthy, sinful, and miserable servants, to offer Thee our supplications with bent head and knee, for our sins and human ignorance.

Wherefore, O most merciful and philanthropic Lord, hear us on whatever day we call upon Thee, and especially on this day of Pentecost, whereon, after our Lord Jesus Christ had ascended into heaven and sat on Thy right hand, O God and Father, He sent down the Holy Spirit to his Disciples, the holy Apostles, Who alighted on each of them and filled them all with His inexhaustible and divine grace; and they did speak in strange tongues, prophesying Thy great deeds. Hear us who beseech Thee, and remember us, wretched and condemned. Deliver us from the (sinful) captivity of our souls by Thy loving intercession. Accept us, who kneel down before Thee and cry out: we have sinned. From birth, from the womb of our mother - we are Thine, O Lord - Thou art our God.

But as our life passes in vanity, we have therefore been stripped of thine aid, and have become silent. Yet do we trust in Thy compassion and cry unto Thee. Remember not the sins of our youth and ignorance; cleanse us of our secret sins. Reject us not in our old age, and forsake us not when our strength fails. Before we return to the earth, prepare us to return to Thee. Measure our lawlessness with a measure of Thy generosity, and erect against our many transgressions a bottomless abyss of these generousities.

Look down from the height of Thy holiness upon Thy people who stand and await from Thee abundant mercy. Visit us with Thy goodness and deliver us from the force of Satan and preserve our life with Thy holy and solemn laws. Commit Thy people unto a faithful guardian angel. Gather us all unto Thy kingdom. Forgive those who put their trust in Thee, relinquish us and them from sin. Purify us by the operation of Thy Holy Spirit and remove from us the wiles of the adversary. Amen.

From St. Porphyrios, *Wounded by Love*

Only the Holy Spirit, only the grace of God, can inspire the Jesus Prayer. It's not difficult to repeat the words, but you cannot pray it properly because your old fallen self rebuffs it. Unless you enter into the atmosphere of grace, you will not be able to say the prayer. As soon as you hear an offensive word, are you grieved? And as soon as you hear some thing complimentary, are you pleased? That shows that you are not ready, that you do not yet have what is required. For divine grace to come, you must acquire the prerequisites: love and humility. Otherwise, it provokes rebuff and rejection. To enter into this 'frame of mind', start with obedience. You must submit first to obedience in order for humility to come. When He sees humility, the Lord sends divine grace and then prayer supervenes on its own, effortlessly. If you don't submit to obedience and don't have humility, the prayer doesn't come and there is a danger of being led into error and delusion. Prepare yourself gradually and gently and repeat the prayer in your mind, Whatever is in our mind is also in our heart. Only through divine grace can you pray. No prayer can occur without divine grace....When grace comes, you say the name 'Christ' and your mind and heart are flooded. This love, this craving, also has degrees. When you experience this love, you desire to acquire spiritual things, not only when you are awake, but even in your dreams you see the same things.

Upcoming Events 2017

9 June No-Fast Friday parish game night
10 June, 3:00 p.m. Sidorenko Baptism
11 June, Coffee Hour Picnic and Youth Craft Sale
12 - 28 June Apostles' Fast

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!