

The Confessor's Tongue for June 20, A. D. 2021

Sunday of Pentecost

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 eight 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.

At Pentecost, each Christian is given the opportunity to renew his spiritual life by seeking a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit in his life. Among the Church Fathers, St. Symeon the New Theologian, who lived in the 11th century, was a zealous herald of new birth by the grace of the Spirit. According to St. Symeon, each Christian receives the Spirit like a divine fire at baptism but often covers up this inner spiritual treasure with the darkness of many sins by the time he is an adult. A Christian must turn to Christ, indeed must run to Him, for a new sealing of the Spirit through repentance, forgiveness, and faithful observance of God's commandments. A Christian can again experience consciously the new life of the Apostles. Such a Christian is "born from above," being granted the Holy Spirit anew and being baptized again by the Spirit as a child of God. St. Symeon writes, "Just as it is impossible for one to be saved who has not been baptized by water and the Spirit, neither is it for him who has sinned after baptism, unless he be baptized from on high and be born again. This the Savior confirmed when He said to Nicodemus, "Unless one is born from on high, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven" (*Catechetical Discourse 32.3*). Indeed, we need frequent renewals of the presence of the Spirit in our lives.

The week following Pentecost is a fast-free week. We resume kneeling and doing prostrations and saying the prayer "O Heavenly King." Pentecost is celebrated for seven days through its Leavetaking on Saturday. During the feast, we say or sing the troparion before meals and during our daily prayers.

Pentecost, Troparion, tone 8

Blessed art **Thou, O Christ** our God, / who hast revealed the fishermen as most wise / by sending down upon them the Holy Spirit; / through them Thou didst draw the world into Thy net. / O Lover of Man, glory to Thee!

Pentecost, Kontakion, tone 8

When the Most High came down and confused the tongues, He divided the nations; / but when He distributed tongues of fire, He called all to unity. / Therefore, with one voice, we glorify the All-holy Spirit!

The Icon of Pentecost

The Icon of Pentecost presents a cosmic image. The Apostles are seated in an arch, a proxy for the entire Church itself. The icon of Pentecost is one of those icons which though representing an event in the Bible, represents it in a manner that goes beyond the

event and becomes a permanent image of how the Church exists in the world. The hint that this is the case is of course how, just as in the image of the Ascension, St. Paul is represented though he was not there in the Biblical account. St. Peter and St. Paul are there as they are in so many icons, as the pillars of the Church, the left and the right hand of Christ. Above the Apostles is the holy fire which descends on them; this fire separates into twelve, just as the Apostles themselves each acquired tongues of fire, tongues which speak in a manner that can reveal Christ through multiplicity and be heard by all men.

And then down in the bottom of the icon is the door which leads outside the upper room, the outer darkness in which the allegorical figure of the Cosmos holds the scrolls, the fully manifest form of the twelve traditions issued by the one fire, the one Church whose unity is preserved in its multiplicity. Of course the door of Pentecost is the door of the Church itself considered at all the levels of interpretation in which we can understand that statement, it the cosmic body of Christ, but it is also the actual church building, is the road that leads out of the nave into the chaotic outside. *Jonathan Pageau, Orthodox Arts Journal, 9/2017*

Prayer to the All-Holy Spirit

O Holy Spirit, Who fillest the whole universe with Thyself and givest life unto all, and Who withdrawest from defiled men, I humbly entreat Thee: Disdain not the impurity of my soul, but come and make thine abode within me, and cleanse me of all the defilement of sin; that with Thy help I may live out the remaining time of my life in repentance and the doing of good works, and thus may glorify Thee with the Father and the Son unto the ages of ages. Amen. *From the Akathist to the Holy Spirit*

St. Basil On the Holy Spirit

Now the Spirit is not brought into intimate association with the soul by local approximation. How indeed could there be a corporeal approach to the incorporeal? This association results from the withdrawal of the passions which, coming afterwards gradually on the soul from its friendship to the flesh, have alienated it from its close relationship with God. Only then after a man is purified from the shame whose stain he took through his wickedness, and has come back again to his natural beauty, and as it were cleaning the Royal Image and restoring its ancient form, only thus is it possible for him to draw near to the Paraclete. And He, like the sun, will by the aid of thy purified eye show thee in Himself the image of the invisible, and in the blessed spectacle of the image though shalt behold the unspeakable beauty of the archetype. Through his aid, hearts are lifted up, the weak are held by the hand, and they who are advancing

are brought to perfection. Shining upon those that are cleansed from every spot, He makes them spiritual by fellowship with Himself. Just as when a sunbeam falls on bright and transparent bodies, they themselves become brilliant too, and shed forth a fresh brightness from themselves, so souls where in the Spirit dwells, illuminated by the Spirit, themselves become spiritual, and send forth their grace to others. Hence comes foreknowledge of the future, understanding of mysteries, apprehension of what is hidden, distribution of good gifts, the heavenly citizenship, a place in the chorus of angels, joy without end, abiding in God, the being made like to God, and, highest of all, the being made God. Such, then, to instance a few out of many, are the conceptions concerning the Holy Spirit, which we have been taught to hold concerning his greatness, His dignity, and His operations, by the oracles of the Spirit themselves." *St. Basil, On the Holy Spirit ¶23*

From the Akathist to the All-Holy Spirit

Kontakion II

In the form of tongues of fire, amid light and a rushing, storming wind, the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles. Wherefore, enveloped in His flames, the fishermen summoned the whole world to the Church of Christ; and, joyfully enduring tribulations on dry land and on the waters, they were undaunted by cruel depths. And all throughout the world went forth the proclamation of their divinely beautiful hymn: Alleluia!

Ikos II

O Holy Spirit of God, Thou Cup giving rise to dew and emitting fire, poured forth upon the apostles in the upper chamber on Sion: we hymn Thee, we bless Thee, and we give thanks unto Thee.

Come, Thou Who dost sanctify and preserve the Church;

Come and grant one heart and one soul to Thy faithful!

Come and enflame our cold and barren piety;
Come and dispel the darkness of ungodliness and impiety which doth thicken over all the earth!

Come and lead us to the path of correction of life;

Come and guide us to every truth!

Come, unapproachable Wisdom, and by thy judgments which Thou knowest save us;

Come Thou, O Comforter, Holy Spirit, and make Thine abode within us!

The Work of the Holy Spirit

St. Basil the Great, On the Holy Spirit

Perceive these three: the Lord who commands, the Word who creates, and the Spirit who strengthens. What kind of strengthening is it? Perfection in holiness, which expresses itself in an unyielding, unchangeable commitment to goodness. Such holiness is impossible without the Spirit. The angelic powers are not by their own nature holy; otherwise there would be no difference between them and the Holy Spirit. Rather, they are sanctified by the Holy Spirit in proportion to their excellence. When we consider a branding-iron, we also immediately remember that the fire is required to heat it, yet we

would not claim that the iron and the fire are the same substance. The angels are a similar case; they are essentially aerial spirits, composed of immaterial fire, as it is written, "He makes His angels spirits, and His ministers a flaming fire." They exist in space, and when they are seen by those who are worthy, they assume an appropriate physical form. Holiness is not part of their essence; it is accomplished in them through communion with the Spirit. They keep their rank by persevering in goodness, by feely choosing to never abandon serving Him, who is good by nature.

On the Holy Spirit, the Comforter

Homily by St. Nicholas of Zicha (+1956)

But the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." John 14:26

What practical meaning have these words other than that we must pray every day that the Holy Spirit be sent to us, just as we pray every day for our daily bread? God is willing every day to send us the Holy Spirit, but He seeks from us that we pray every day for Him to be sent to us. For as, with regard to bread, there is sometimes abundance and sometimes dearth, so it is with regard to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit comes to us and leaves us according to our good works and our patience. Therefore, the Church has ordained that the first morning service in church begin with the invocation of the Holy Spirit: "O heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth—come!", and after that comes the prayer: "give us this day our daily bread." Why? Because, without the Holy Spirit, we cannot even make use of bread in the way that we must for our salvation.

"He shall teach you all things." That is: every day and every night, according to the situation in which you find yourself, He will instruct you, advise you, and direct you in what you must think, say, and do.

Therefore, ask God only for the Holy Spirit, and He will Himself bring all that you need in any given moment. When He has descended upon you, you will know all things and be capable of all that is needful.

"And bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." That is: do not fear that you will forget My teaching and My words. The Holy Spirit knows all that I know; so, when He is present with you, then all My teaching will be present in you together with Him.

O Lord, the Holy Spirit, be pleased to descend upon us, not according to our merit but according to the merit of the Lord Jesus and according to Thine endless goodness. To Thee be glory and praise

Upcoming Events 2021

24 June: 6:00 p.m. Game Night

26 June: 2:00 p.m. Tarpley Lectures on Modernism and Postmodernism.

25 July: 20-year Anniversary Celebration

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!