

This faith, which we have received from the Church, which we preserve carefully, because, through the action of the Spirit of God, like a deposit of great price enclosed in a pure vessel, it rejuvenates ceaselessly, and makes the vessel that contains it to be rejuvenated. It is to the Church herself that the gift of God has been imparted, as the breath had been to the created man, so that all the members may partake of it and be vivified thereby; it is in her that the communion with Christ, that is, the Holy Spirit has been deposited, the Earnest-money of incorruption, a confirmation of our faith, and the ladder of our ascent to God For where the Church is, there is also the Spirit of God and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church and all grace. And the Spirit is Truth.

Saint Irenaeus of Lyon



On Sunday 8 June 2014 we celebrate the Great Feast of Pentecost

Matins Gospel: John 20:19-23

Epistle: Acts of the Apostles 2:1-11

Gospel: John 7:37-52; 8:12

Apolytikion for Pentecost: Blessed are You, O Christ our God, who made fishermen all-wise, sending upon them the Holy Spirit and, through them, netting the world. O Loving One, glory to You.

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Readings and saints for this week:

Monday: Ephesians 5:8-19; Matthew 18:10-20
Cyril, Abp. Of Alexandria; 3 Virgin-martyrs of Chios

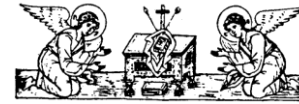
Tuesday: Romans 1:1-7, 13-17; Matthew 4:23-25; 5:1-13
Martyrs Alexander & Antonina; Hieromartyr Timothy

Wednesday: 1 Corinthians 4:9-16; Matthew 5:14-19
Apostle Bartholomew; Apostle Barnabas

Thursday: Romans 1:28-32; 2:1-9; Matthew 5:27-32
Onuphrius of Egypt; Peter of Athos

Friday: Romans 2:14-28; Matthew 5:33-41
Martyr Aquilina; Triphyllus the Bishop of Nicosia

Saturday: Romans 1:7-12; Gospel: Matthew 5:42-48
The Apodosis of Holy Pentecost; Prophet Elisseus; Methodius the Confessor



Evangelion

A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

8 June 2014

Let Anyone Who is Thirsty Come

In today's Gospel for the feast of Pentecost, we hear Jesus Christ speaking about the coming of the Holy Spirit. After having told His disciples that He would be leaving them, He stood and cried: "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me! Let anyone who believes in me come and drink!" And He added: "From his heart shall flow streams of living water."

Saint John tells us that Christ was referring here to the Holy Spirit, who was to come upon His disciples after His Ascension. The Old Testament Scriptures are full of references to water and its power to both destroy and to save. Likewise, Jesus uses the imagery of water to refer to our spiritual thirst, which can only be satisfied in Him. On the Sunday of the Samaritan Woman we saw how He describes Himself as the Living Water.

But the imagery of Living Water is also applied to the Holy Spirit. Saint Cyril of Jerusalem tells us that the "streams of living water" that Christ tells us will flow out of our hearts "are not rivers perceived by sense that merely water the earth with its thorns and trees. But these are rivers that bring souls to the light."

The Holy Spirit can be referred to as water, because of what He does for us. Saint Cyril continues:

And why did He call the grace of the Spirit water? Because by water all things subsist; because water brings forth grass and living things; because the water of the rain showers down from heaven; because it comes down in one form but works in many forms. ... And so the Holy Spirit also, being one, and of one nature and indivisible, distributes to each His grace as He wills. And as the dry tree, after being nourished with water, puts forth shoots, so also the soul in sin, when it has been through repentance made worthy of the Holy Spirit, brings forth clusters of righteousness. And though He is one in nature, yet many are the virtues He inculcates by the will of God and in the name of Christ.



A Mercy of Peace, a Sacrifice of Praise

An introduction to the Divine Liturgy (continued)

We saw last week that the reception of Holy Communion is introduced by the phrase, "Holy Things for the holy." We can only receive the Holy Gifts of Christ's Body and Blood because we have been joined to Him in baptism, and are united to Him in the Mystery of the Church. While we need to be struggling to lead a life of repentance, our holiness does not depend on our own efforts, but on what God has given us in Christ.

Broken yet not divided

While the choir sings and before the clergy receive Holy Communion, the priest prepares the Lamb, or the Bread that has been consecrated, dividing it into four parts and saying:

*The Lamb of God is broken and distributed,
broken yet not divided, ever eaten yet never consumed,
but sanctifying those who partake.*



This action of breaking the Bread, which is called the Fraction, recalls Christ's action at the Last Supper, when he broke the Bread into pieces and gave it to His disciples, saying: "Take, eat: this is my Body which is broken for you." (1 Corinthians 11:24) At the Crucifixion, Christ's bones were not broken, but now in the Liturgy, He is broken so that He may be given to the faithful. As Saint John Chrysostom writes:

What Christ did not suffer on the Cross, He undergoes at the offering for your sake, and He endures to be broken so that all may be filled.

It was in the breaking of bread that the two disciples recognised Jesus Christ on the road to Emmaus. (Acts 20: 7ff) Saint Symeon of Thessaloniki tells us that, through this breaking of Bread,

The undivided Christ is divided up and shared out for our sake, so that we may all become partakers of Him. And while being invisible, He is divided for us, uniting us with Himself and making us one, as He prayed for.

Here we see the divine paradox, for the breaking and distributing of Christ's Body does not diminish Him in any way. He is truly present in each particle of the holy Bread, in each person who receives Him, and in each part of the Church, which is spread throughout the whole world. Christ is distributed, but He remains undivided and whole, for, as Saint John tells us, "From His fullness, we have all received." (John 1:16) While ordinary food runs out, the Lamb of God is "ever eaten, yet never consumed."



**Acquire the Holy Spirit,
and a thousand around you will be saved.**

Saint Seraphim of Sarov

Pentecost — Trinity Sunday

Today we celebrate the great feast of Pentecost, which marks both the fulfilment and the beginning of the Church's faith.

Pentecost is the fulfilment and culmination of our celebration of Christ's resurrection, and the Church has been preparing us for it for the last fifty days since Pascha. It is the final feast of the great Mystery of God's coming to us in the incarnation, passion and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ.



Pentecost is also the fulfilment of God's revelation of Himself as the Holy and Undivided Trinity. With the coming of the Holy Spirit on the apostles, as Saint Luke tells us in today's reading (Acts 2:1-11), the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity are clearly revealed. For that reason today is also referred to as Trinity Sunday.

But Pentecost also marks a new beginning in the life of the Church. The Holy Spirit is not simply revealed as an abstract truth, but He comes to the Church in order to strengthen it, and to empower it to carry out Christ's mission in the world. With Pentecost we see the beginning of the public preaching by the apostles that was accompanied by signs and healings, and that would result in repentance and many baptisms. We also see that, in addition to gathering for prayer, which they had been doing, the disciples and apostles gather together "for the breaking of the bread" (Acts 2:42) for, with the coming of the Holy Spirit, the apostles receive their authority and the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church begins.

Kneeling Vespers

The Feast of Pentecost is not simply the celebration of what happened centuries ago, but is also the celebration of what happens today. We have become "temples of the Holy Spirit" in baptism and have received "the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit" in Chrismation. But we need to constantly ask for the gift of the Holy Spirit, for we cannot live without His help. Today the Church serves what is known as Kneeling Vespers, usually straight after the Divine Liturgy. They are actually Great Vespers of Monday, which is the Feast of the Holy Spirit. During them we kneel for the first time since Pascha as the priest prays long prayers that implore God's help, including the following words:

From Your holy dwelling place look down upon the people present here in expectation of Your rich mercy; visit us in Your goodness; free us from the oppression of the Evil One; make our lives secure within Your holy and sacred laws. Entrust Your people to a faithful guardian angel; gather us all into Your kingdom; grant forgiveness to those who hope in You; remit them and us our sins; cleanse us through the work of Your Holy Spirit; put an end to the wiles of the enemy.