

The grace of the Holy Spirit which is given mystically to every Christian when he is baptized acts and is manifested in proportion to our obedience to the commandments of the Lord. That is, if a Christian obeys the commandments of the Lord more, grace acts with him more, while if he obeys them less, grace acts within him less. Just as a spark, when covered in the ashes of fire becomes increasingly manifest as one removes the ashes, and the more fire wood you put the more the fire burns, so the grace that has been given to every Christian through Holy Baptism is hidden in the heart and covered up by the passions and sins, and the more a man acts in accordance with the commandments of Christ, the more he is cleansed of the passions and the more the fire of Divine grace lights in his heart, illumines and deifies him.

Saint Nikodemos
of the Holy Mountain



**31 May 2015 is the
Great Feast of Pentecost**

Matins Gospel: John 20:19-23

Epistle: Acts 2:1-11

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

Apolytikion:

Blessed art Thou, O Christ our God, Who hast shown forth the fishermen as supremely wise by sending down upon them the Holy Spirit, and through them didst draw the world into Thy net. O Befriender of man, glory be to Thee.

Kontakion:

Once, when He descended and confounded the tongues, the Most High divided the nations; and when He divided the tongues of fire, He called all men into unity; and with one accord we glorify the All-holy Spirit.

Readings and saints for this week:

Monday: Ephesians 5:8-19; Matthew 18:10-20

Monday of the Holy Spirit; Martyr Justin the Philosopher; Righteous Pyrrus

Tuesday: Romans 1:1-7, 13-17; Matthew 4:23-25; 5:1-13

Nicephorus, Abp. of Constantinople; Erasmus of Ochrid & his Companion Martyrs

Wednesday: Romans 1:18-27; Matthew 5:20-26

Martyrs Lucillian and Paul; Athanasios the Wonderworker

Thursday: Hebrews 7:26-28; 8:1-2; John 10:1-9

Metrophanes, Abp of Constantinople; Martha and Mary, Sisters of Lazarus

Friday: Romans 2:14-28; Matthew 5:33-41

Hieromartyr Dorotheus; 10 Martyrs of Egypt

Saturday: Romans 1:7-12; Matthew 5:42-48

Apodosios of Holy Pentecost, Hilarion the New; Bessarion the Wonderworker of Egypt



Evangelion

A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

31 May 2015

Archbishopric of Good Hope
Patriarchate of Alexandria & All Africa

Let Anyone who is Thirsty Come

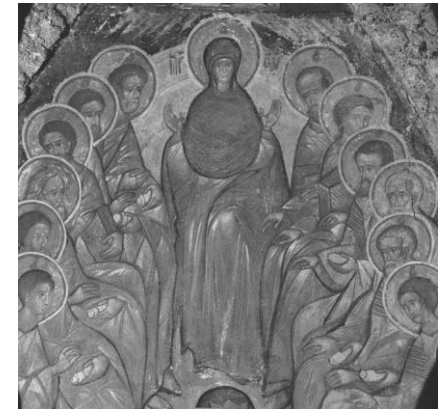
In today's Gospel for the feast of Pentecost, we hear Jesus Christ speaking about the coming of the Holy Spirit. After having told his disciples that He would be leaving them, He stood and cried: "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me! Let anyone who believes in me come and drink!" And He added: "From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



The Mystery of Repentance

A series on the meaning of Confession

We saw last week that the Orthodox Church encourages both private confession, which forms part of our personal life of prayer, and sacramental confession before a priest.

Sacrament of Confession developed in different ways in the life of the early Church. It was initially only used for serious sins that resulted in excommunication. Sometimes sins were confessed openly before all members of the Church, but this caused problems as the Church grew. The development of



monasticism also influenced the practice of confession in the rest of the Church. Instead of being reserved for serious sins, it became a means to growth for all Christians, a place where we encounter Christ's healing work and receive direction and support in our Christian life.

We are not Christians in isolation

It is important to confess our sins in private, but there is something particularly liberating about naming them in the presence of someone else, difficult though we may find this. This is not only something that psychologists acknowledge, but it is, even more, an expression of our Christian identity. We are not Christians in isolation, but we are joined together in the Body of Christ and are accountable to one another. Christ gave His Apostles the authority

to forgive sins and this authority is passed on to our bishops and to those whom they appoint as healers of souls.

It is Christ Who forgives

When we confess our sins in the presence of a priest, we are really confessing them to Christ. The priest serves not as a judge, but rather as a witness to the sincerity of our confession. This is why both the priest and the penitent face the icon of Christ during confession, for the priest is simply the witness of the mercy of God. Likewise, having witnessed our confession, and possibly given us direction or advice, the priest does not offer us his own forgiveness or absolution, but instead he prays: "May God forgive you."

The Mystery of Repentance is really about learning to be honest before God and to receive His healing forgiveness. In order to grow in Christ and be filled with His Spirit, we need ongoing cleansing from all the things that keep us from Him.



An old man said to a brother, "The devil is the enemy and you are the house. The enemy never stops throwing all that he finds into your house, pouring all sorts of impurities over it. It is your part not to neglect throwing them out again. If you do not do this the house will be filled with all sorts of impurities and you will no longer be able to get inside. But all that the other begins to throw in, you should throw out again little by little, and by the grace of Christ your house will remain pure."

From the Sayings of the Desert Fathers

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.



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

Saint Seraphim of Sarov



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 imploring God's help.