

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



19 June is the Great Feast of Holy Pentecost

Matins Gospel: John 20:19-23

Epistle: Acts 2:1-11

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

Resurrectional 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.

Seasonal 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, 20 June: Ephesians 5:8-19; Matthew 18:10-20

Monday of the Holy Spirit; Hieromartyr Methodios; Father Callistus

Tuesday, 21 June: Romans 1:1-7, 13-17; Matthew 4:23-25; 5:1-13

Martyr Julian; Hieromartyr Terentios of Iconius

Wednesday, 22 June: Romans 1:18-27; Matthew 5:20-26

Hieromartyr Eusebius; Martyrs Zenon and Zena

Thursday, 23 June: Romans 1:28-32; 2:1-9; Matthew 5:27-32

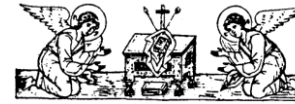
Martyr Agrippina; Martyr Aristocleus

Friday, 24 June: Luke 1:24-25, 57-68, 76, 80; Romans 13:11-14; 14:1-4; Luke 1:1-25, 57-68, 76-80

Nativity of John the Forerunner; Elizabeth, Mother of the Forerunner

Saturday, 25 June: Romans 1:7-12; Matthew 5:42-48

The Apodosis of Holy Pentecost; Apodosis of the Forerunner; Prokopios the New Martyr



Evangelion

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Archbishopric of Good Hope
Patriarchate of Alexandria & All Africa

Let All who are 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.

Kneeling Vespers – Monday of the Holy Spirit

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 commonly called “Kneeling Prayers” because this is the first time that we kneel since Pascha. But in fact the kneeling prayers are actually part of Great Vespers of Monday, which is the Feast of the Holy Spirit.

During the kneeling prayers we kneel for the first time since Pascha, as the priest prays long three long prayers that implore God’s help.

In the first prayer we pray to God the Father: we ask for an increase in our consciousness of our need for forgiveness of sins, which is the first condition for entering into the Kingdom of God.

In the second prayer we pray to our Lord and God Jesus Christ: we ask Him to send upon us the Holy Spirit. We ask the Holy Spirit to help us, to teach us to pray and to follow the true path in the dark and difficult night of our earthly existence.

In the third prayer, we remember all those who have achieved their earthly journey, but who are united with us in the eternal God of love.



Abba Dorotheos said: “Once, when Abba Zosimas was talking about humility, one of the Sophist philosophers was there, listening to what he was saying. He wanted to learn exactly what he meant and he asked him, “Tell me, why do you consider yourself to be a sinner? Do you not know that you are a saint? Do you not know that you have virtues? Can you not see that you are practising the commandments? How can you believe that you are a sinner since you do all these things?” The elder could not find words to formulate his answer but he simply said to him, “I do not know how to explain it to you, but that’s the way it is”. The Sophist insisted and wanted to learn how this could be so. The elder, no finding words to explain it to him, started saying in his saintly simplicity, “Do not misunderstand me, indeed I am a sinner.”

When I saw the elder wondering how to answer, I said to him “I wonder, is this not like sophistry and medicine? When, for example, the doctor or Sophist learns the art of medicine or sophistry well and practices it, it gradually becomes a habit for him, and, as I said, little by little the soul imperceptibly assumes this art by the practising of it. This is more or less the same with humility when, where by keeping the commandments, humility becomes a habit and it is not possible to give an explanation of this in words.” When Abba Zosimas heard this, he was happy, embraced me and said, “You’ve found it; it is like you said.” The Sophist was also satisfied and he himself accepted that explanation.”

Holy 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.



Thus says the Lord: "I will take you from among the nations, gather you from all the lands, and bring you into your land. I shall sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be cleansed from all your uncleanness, and I will also cleanse you from all your idols. I shall give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you. I shall take the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I shall put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My requirements, and you will keep My judgments and do them. You will dwell in the land I gave to your fathers. You will be My people, and I shall be your God."

Reading from the Prophecy of Ezekiel for Vespers Holy Pentecost

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

Saint Seraphim of Sarov