



On Saturday we commemorate the Apostles Peter and Paul. St Peter was the impetuous fisherman who had been called by Christ and had become leader of the disciples. Despite misunderstanding and denying Christ, the Risen Christ had called him to “feed my sheep.” St Paul had not known Christ during His earthly ministry and had actively persecuted His followers. However, he had such a dramatic encounter with the Risen Christ on the road to Damascus that his whole life turned around and he became one of the most outstanding missionaries of the Church. Both saints were responsible for spreading the faith and the growth of the early Church, and both were martyred in Rome. By commemorating them together the Church reminds us of how very different people can work together to build up the Church..



**On Sunday, 23 June 2013,
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: Luke 1:24-25, 57-68, 76, 80; Ephesians 5:8-19; Matthew 18:10-20
Monday of the Holy Spirit; Nativity of John the Forerunner; Elizabeth, Mother of the Forerunner

Tuesday: Romans 1:1-7, 13-17; Matthew 4:23-25; 5:1-13
Apodosis of the Forerunner; Prokopios the New Martyr

Wednesday: Romans 1:18-27; Matthew 5:20-26
New Martyr David; Appearance of the Icon of Our Most Holy Lady the Theotokos of Tikhvin

Thursday: Romans 1:28-32; 2:1-9; Matthew 5:27-32
Samson the Hospitable; Joanna the Myrrhbearer

Friday: Romans 2:14-28; Matthew 5:33-41
Relics of Unmercenarys Cyril & John; Pappias the Martyr

Saturday: John 21:14-25; 2 Corinthians 11:21-33; 12:1-9; Matthew 16:13-19
Apostles Peter and Paul



Archbishopric of Good Hope,
Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa

Evangelion

A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

23 June 2013

Living Water

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

After the various preparations for the Divine Liturgy, such as Matins and the service of the *Proskomede* which we discussed, the altar, icons and Church is censed and the Great Doxology is sung. The royal doors of the iconostasis are then opened and it is time for the Liturgy to begin.

Blessed is the Kingdom

The opening words of the Divine Liturgy which the priest intones set the scene for everything that will follow:

“Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.”

These words tell us what the Liturgy is all about. By coming to Church on a Sunday morning we are, in effect, coming to the Kingdom of God which is made manifest to us in the Liturgy.



The clergy wear special vestments for the Divine Liturgy which have a rich symbolism and can be quite ornate. Their most important function, however, is to remind us that in the Liturgy we enter into another world, that of the Kingdom of God. Their splendour is not for the sake of the priest's vanity, but rather to remind all of us the Kingdom of Light to which we are headed.

God's Kingdom is nothing other than the life of God Himself, which has been brought to the world by Jesus Christ. Although we live in the everyday world, as part of a particular society, we also belong to God's Kingdom which is mystically present in this world. When we come together as the Church and prepare to celebrate the Holy Eucharist, we separate ourselves in a sense from the world and take a step closer to the Kingdom. The Divine Liturgy is really a journey to the Kingdom of God and so as we set out on this journey at the beginning of the celebration, the priest solemnly announces our destination.

This Kingdom originates with God and with the Three Divine Persons of the Holy Trinity. It is because of the communion “of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” that we too are enabled to enter into communion with them and with one another, for the communion that we are called to in the Church is nothing other than a reflection of the communion that exists between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The Kingdom of God is therefore our origin and source, and the very basis of our lives as Christians. And it is also our destiny, that to which we are called to grow, and which the Divine Liturgy will lead us to.

After the priest has intoned these words, the people (usually represented by the choir) respond with “Amen.” This means “so be it” or “let it be so.” In saying “Amen” we are basically agreeing that the Kingdom of God is blessed. To bless the Kingdom of God is to acknowledge its value in our lives, to see it indeed as our most prized possession. It is to recognise it as the pearl of great price of which Jesus speaks in his parable (Luke 13:14), that for which we would be prepared to sacrifice all other possessions.

Today, on the feast of Pentecost, 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, and in them we kneel for the first time since Pascha during three long prayers that implore God's help.

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.



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.

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

St. Seraphim of Sarov

Saint Irenaeus of Lyon