



## Parish Information Bulletin

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Fr Athanasios and  
Fr Ephraim are available  
at the Church every  
Monday to Friday  
between 4.00 and 6.00pm  
for Holy Confession and  
any spiritual need.

The Holy Scriptures  
were not given to  
us that we should  
enclose them  
in books,  
but that we should  
engrave them  
upon our hearts.



St John Chrysostom

### SUNDAY 7 JUNE

### THE FEAST OF PENTECOST, John 7:37-52, 8:12

#### • 8.00am

Orthros and Divine Liturgy followed by Vespers for Feast Day of the Holy Spirit and the Service of Kneeling

### MONDAY 8 JUNE

#### • 8.00am

Orthros and Divine Liturgy

### THURSDAY 11 JUNE

*Apostles Bartholomew and  
Barnabas, Revelation of Axion Esti,  
St Luke the Surgeon,  
Holy Martyrs of China*

#### • 8.00am

Orthros and Divine Liturgy

### SUNDAY 14 JUNE

Epistle Reading: Hebrews 11: 33-40, 12:1-2

Gospel Reading: Matthew 10: 32-33, 37-38, 19: 27-30

### PENTECOST

Pentecost was one of the major feasts of the Jews, the Feast of Weeks, a harvest festival celebrated fifty days after Passover. Pentecost literally means "the fiftieth day." It was a feast of joy and thanksgiving for God's protection and His rich provisions. The whole community presented itself before the Lord as a "holy convocation" (see Lev. 23:15-22). The first fruits of the wheat harvest and loaves baked from the new wheat crop were offered to the Lord. The people worshipped God, the source of life. They thanked Him for His great acts of deliverance in history and His gift of the Promised Land.

It was on this festival of Pentecost that God gave humanity the gift of the Spirit, the pledge of a new Promised Land, God's coming kingdom. When He had completed His mission on earth the risen Christ charged His followers to remain in Jerusalem: "Wait for the gift I told you about, the gift my Father promised....In a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit....You will be filled with power, and you will be witnesses for me in Jerusalem, in all of Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" [Acts 1:4-5,8].

Who were the followers of Jesus in these earliest days? The Book of Acts tells us that there were "about a hundred and twenty in all" (Acts 1:15). Among them were the eleven apostles (Acts 1:13); Matthias, the apostle who took the place of Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:23-26); the Virgin Mary and the other women disciples such as Mary Magdalene who are not named (Acts 1:14). Present also were the "brothers" of the Lord (Acts 1:14) such as James, who became one of the leaders of the Jerusalem Church. The Church fathers interpret Jesus' "brothers" as half brothers, the sons of Joseph by another wife. According to Jewish custom a brother could also be a cousin or another relative. To number about a hundred and twenty there must have been many others as well, such as Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus.

The Book of Acts tells us that all these believers gathered frequently in an upper room to pray as a group (Acts 1:13-14). They were waiting upon the Lord to empower them for their mission in preaching and teaching the new life in Christ. To be effective witnesses they first needed to experience fully the saving power of the Gospel they were to proclaim to others.

### The Holy Spirit

In the Orthodox Church the Feast of Pentecost is one of the seven great feasts of the Lord observed during the liturgical year. It celebrates the Lord's bestowal of the Spirit upon His Church. Pentecost is also a feast of the Trinity, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit — One God in Three Persons, existing eternally and working together for the salvation of the world. Finally, Pentecost celebrates the gift of the Spirit to the world, the historical revelation of the Spirit. In honour of the Spirit, the day after Pentecost has been appointed Monday of the Holy Spirit. The following hymns express the multiple themes of Pentecost:

*Blessed are You, Christ our God, who have shown the fishermen to be all-wise,  
sending upon them the Holy Spirit and through them drawing into the net of the Gospel all people.*

*Loving Lord, glory to You.  
Dismissal Hymn, Sunday of Pentecost*

### New Birth

The Service of Kneeling, which is the Vespers of the Monday of the Holy Spirit, is one of the most solemn acts of worship during the whole liturgical year. During this service on the day of Pentecost we glorify God by recounting His great acts of salvation in history. We solemnly kneel before God recognizing our sinfulness and we earnestly implore Him for forgiveness.

We pray for God's visitation, protection, and renewal through fresh outpourings of the Spirit.

We sing triumphantly:

*"Who is so great a God as our God? You alone are the God who does wonders!"*

## THE HOLY SPIRIT COMES DOWN AS FIRE ON ALL PEOPLE

*When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. Acts 2:1-4* Leave-Taking of the Ascension

Many of us are familiar with the Old Testament story of the Tower of Babel, as told in Genesis 11. We read in that account that all of the people of the earth had one language and few words. And they decided to come together to build a tower to the heavens. So, God descended on Babel and created languages, in order to confuse the people so that they could not build a tower to heaven. Because the way to heaven was not going to be a man-made tower, it was going to be our Lord Jesus Christ. The Tower of Babel marked the creation of all the languages of the world, and with the diversity of languages also came a division of peoples, for people only associated with those who spoke the same language.

In the time of Christ, there was a great division of languages and cultures. Jews and Samaritans did not like one another. No one liked the Romans. And Gentiles were considered barbarians by the Jews. So, when the Holy Spirit descended upon the Disciples on Pentecost, He gave them the ability to speak in all the languages of the earth. And all those who were gathered in Jerusalem heard the Good News of Christ in their own language.

At the time of the Ascension, when Jesus "commissioned" the Disciples to "baptize all nations," (Matthew 28:16-20) they must have felt very inadequate when thinking about this daunting task. For not only would they need to travel to foreign lands and encounter foreign customs, but they would also have to be able to articulate the Gospel in foreign languages. The grace of the Holy Spirit, again defined as that which heals what is infirm and completes what is lacking, the Godly quality that makes ordinary extraordinary, empowered the simple fishermen to be able to speak in all the languages known to men. Not only were they able to utter words in these languages, they were able to speak with eloquence and conviction. Think about that. These men who had had doubts and fears throughout the earthly ministry of Christ, were not only enabled to speak in all the languages but to speak with such boldness and confidence that three thousand people converted to the faith on that very first day. (Acts 2:41) The Lord, who had once divided the nations at Babel, now through the Holy Spirit, united the world by allowing every person of every nation to hear the Gospel in his or her own language.

The Holy Spirit comes into each of us, as He did for each of the disciples. As the flames came on each disciple, bringing them a specific language to speak and eloquence with which to speak it, the Holy Spirit has come into each of us. The Spirit comes into each of us. He gives to each of us a talent by which to glorify Him and to serve one another. Some are doctors, some are farmers, some are mechanics and others are teachers. There are thousands upon thousands of different and unique talents, all of which are needed for our world to work.

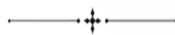
The other thing that the Spirit does is that it gives each of us a unique and special way to proclaim the Gospel. A few are called to be priests and serve the church as their life's work. But it is not just the priests who are called to share the Gospel. Each of us has a talent to proclaim the Gospel. Some can do it as Sunday school teachers, others can sing in the choir, some can be greeters, and others can visit the sick. Any and all of us should cultivate the ability to pray for others and to pray with them. There are hundreds of ways to express the Gospel.

As important as it is to cultivate our talents so that we can maintain a vocation, it is equally as important to cultivate our unique talent by which we further the message of the Gospel. And it is really important that we remember this as we prepare for our careers and as we advance in our careers. It is important that we also continually advance in our knowledge of the Gospel and of spiritual things, and it is important that we strive continually in ways large and small to advance the Gospel of Jesus Christ, guided by the Holy Spirit. None of us are likely to see tongues of fire on our heads, the way that the Holy Spirit came on the Apostles. But all of us have tongues of fire in our hearts, the light of the Holy Spirit burning in us. It is up to us to stoke the fire and spread the message. Come back tomorrow to learn the various languages of the Gospel and how to speak them.

*When the Most High God came down and confused the tongues, He divided the nations. When He distributed the tongues of fire, He called all to unity. And with one voice we glorify the all-Holy Spirit. (Kontakion, Pentecost, Trans. by Fr. Seraphim Dedes)*

Let the "fire" of the Holy Spirit burn in your heart and inspire your life today!

- Fr. Stavros Akrotirianakis



***It is truly meet and right to bless you, O Theotokos,  
Ever-blessed and most-pure mother of our God.  
More honourable than the Cherubim,  
And beyond compare more glorious than the Seraphim,  
Who without corruption gave birth to God the Word,  
True Theotokos: we magnify you.***

**Axion Estin** is also the name given to the icon of the Theotokos (Mother of God) before which, according to tradition, the hymn was revealed. It stands in the high place of the altar (sanctuary) of the katholikon (main church) of Karyes on Mount Athos.

According to tradition, an Elder and his disciple lived in a cell on Mount Athos. One Saturday night the Elder left to attend the All-Night Vigil in Karyes. He told his disciple to chant the service alone. That evening an unknown monk who called himself Gabriel, came to the cell, and they began the Vigil together. During the Ninth Ode of the Canon, when they began to sing the Magnificat, the disciple sang the original hymn "More honourable than the Cherubim..." and afterwards the visiting monk chanted it again, but with "It is truly meet..." preceding the original Irmos. As he sang, the icon began to radiate with Uncreated Light. When the disciple asked the visiting monk to write the words of the new hymn down, he took a roof tile and wrote on it with his finger, as though the tile were made of wax. The disciple knew then that this was no ordinary monk, but the Archangel Gabriel. At that moment the Archangel disappeared, but the icon of the Mother of God continued to radiate light for some time afterward.