



## Parish Information Bulletin

### Program for 20—26 June 2021

#### SUNDAY 20 JUNE

#### PENTECOST SUNDAY, John 7: 37-52, 8: 12

- 7.00am—Orthros and Divine Liturgy

#### 2021 SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES FOR ALL AGES

(A free voluntary program organised by the Church)

Lessons take place in the building behind the church and begin at 10.30am until Church dismissal.

We have classes for ages ranging from 5yrs to teenage years. Lessons are taught in a relaxed, friendly environment.

Please bring your children along to learn of their rich Orthodox faith and come close to God and His Love.

#### MONDAY 21 JUNE

#### *Of The Holy Spirit*

- 7.30am

Orthros and Divine Liturgy

#### THURSDAY 24 JUNE

#### *Nativity of St John the Baptist*

- 7.30am

Orthros and Divine Liturgy

#### SUNDAY 27 JUNE

#### GOSPEL READING: Matthew 10: 32-33, 37-38, 19: 27-30

EPISTLE READING: Hebrews 11: 33—12:2

### Pentecost

### The indwelling of the Holy Spirit

On this day we recall that just 50 days after the Glorious Resurrection, the Holy Spirit came upon the Holy Apostles and all those gathered with them in a new and different way. For the first time, the Holy Spirit actually took up residence within the human soul.

Before this the Spirit of God would descend upon a person for various reasons - such as when one of the prophets was inspired to speak or write or act in a particular way so that God's will might be made known to His people, but He did not make His abode within their soul. But something new happened at Pentecost, something wondrous, something marvellous - God came and dwelt not only among us as our Lord Jesus Christ, but within us through the Holy Spirit. The promise of our salvation that we would be united with God, began to be made manifest.

### The Holy Spirit at Work In Us

Every baptized Orthodox Christian receives the Holy Spirit in and through the sacraments of baptism, chrismation and the Eucharist. How do we show that the Holy Spirit is at work in our lives?

Each Orthodox Christian is called to be part of the holy priesthood. Priests in general consecrate things – to make them into an offering to God. In the Church, Bishops consecrate Chrism and men to serve as priests and deacons in the church. Priest in turn consecrate believers in baptism and also bread and wine to be shown to be the Body and Blood of Christ. But all believers share in a priesthood in which we each are to consecrate the things in our life – our homes, families, children, jobs, hobbies, meals, friendships, thoughts, words, feelings – everything great and little can be consecrated. We can make everything we do into a holy offering to God. The meals we cook, the things we build, or memorize, or sing, or think about – all can be consecrated, offered to God. If we think we can't offer it to God, perhaps we shouldn't be doing it. But what we choose to do, all of these things we should offer to God, consecrate them to God and for God's own use so that God will deify them.

Everything we have is a gift from God including our lives, our possessions, our blessings, our talents, knowledge, wisdom, the work of our hands. So what can we offer to God that is truly our own? What is truly ours are our wills and our decisions. We can freely opt to co-operate with God. We can present ourselves to God in order to serve Him. Our free wills belong to us and we can work in synergy with God to accomplish God's will. Thus every decision, the countless ones we make in our daily lives are each an opportunity for us to serve God – to offer that moment in our lives to God, to direct our energy toward God. Our choices are a true offering to God – not something God predetermines in our lives, but what we can freely offer to God. Our love is something we can choose to offer to God. It is something God truly values in us and from us. - Fr Ted Bobosh

### Telephone Contact Numbers

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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.

## **HOLY PENTECOST**

In the Church's annual liturgical cycle, Pentecost is "the last and great day." It is the celebration by the Church of the coming of the Holy Spirit as the end—the achievement and fulfilment—of the entire history of salvation. For the same reason, however, it is also the celebration of the beginning: it is the "birthday" of the Church as the presence among us of the Holy Spirit, of the new life in Christ, of grace, knowledge, adoption to God and holiness.

This double meaning and double joy is revealed to us, first of all, in the very name of the feast. Pentecost in Greek means fifty, and in the sacred biblical symbolism of numbers, the number fifty symbolizes both the fullness of time and that which is beyond time: the Kingdom of God itself. It symbolizes the fullness of time by its first component: 49, which is the fullness of seven (7 x 7): the number of time. And, it symbolizes that which is beyond time by its second component: 49 + 1, this one being the new day, the "day without evening" of God's eternal Kingdom. With the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Christ's disciples, the time of salvation, the Divine work of redemption has been completed, the fullness revealed, all gifts bestowed: it belongs to us now to "appropriate" these gifts, to be that which we have become in Christ: participants and citizens of His Kingdom.

## **THE VIGIL OF PENTECOST**

The all-night Vigil service begins with a solemn invitation:

"Let us celebrate Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit,  
The appointed day of promise, and the fulfilment of hope,  
The mystery which is as great as it is precious."

In the coming of the Spirit, the very essence of the Church is revealed:

"The Holy Spirit provides all,  
Overflows with prophecy, fulfils the priesthood,  
Has taught wisdom to illiterates, has revealed fishermen as theologians,  
He brings together the whole council of the Church."

In the three readings of the Old Testament (Numbers 11:16-17, 24-29; Joel 2:23-32; Ezekiel 36:24-28) we hear the prophecies concerning the Holy Spirit. We are taught that the entire history of mankind was directed towards the day on which God "would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh." This day has come! All hope, all promises, all expectations have been fulfilled. At the end of the Aposticha hymns, for the first time since Easter, we sing the hymn: "O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth...", the one with which we inaugurate all our services, all prayers, which is, as it were, the life-breath of the Church, and whose coming to us, whose "descent" upon us in this festal Vigil, is indeed the very experience of the Holy Spirit "coming and abiding in us."

Having reached its climax, the Vigil continues as an explosion of joy and light for "verily the light of the Comforter has come and illumined the world." In the Gospel reading (John 20:19-23) the feast is interpreted to us as the feast of the Church, of her divine nature, power and authority. The Lord sends His disciples into the world, as He Himself was sent by His Father. Later, in the antiphons of the Liturgy, we proclaim the universality of the apostles' preaching, the cosmical significance of the feast, the sanctification of the whole world, the true manifestation of God's Kingdom.

## **THE VESPERS OF PENTECOST**

The liturgical peculiarity of Pentecost is a very special Vespers of the day itself. Usually this service follows immediately the Divine Liturgy, is "added" to it as its own fulfilment. The service begins as a solemn "summing up" of the entire celebration, as its liturgical synthesis. We hold flowers in our hands symbolizing the joy of the eternal spring, inaugurated by the coming of the Holy Spirit. After the festal Entrance, this joy reaches its climax in the singing of the Great Prokeimenon:

**"Who is so great a God as our God?"**

Then, having reached this climax, we are invited to kneel. This is our first kneeling since Easter. It signifies that after these fifty days of Paschal joy and fullness, of experiencing the Kingdom of God, the Church now is about to begin her pilgrimage through time and history. It is evening again, and the night approaches, during which temptations and failures await us, when, more than anything else, we need Divine help, that presence and power of the Holy Spirit, who has already revealed to us the joyful End, who now will help us in our effort towards fulfilment and salvation.

All this is revealed in the three prayers which the celebrant reads now as we all kneel and listen to him. In the first prayer, we bring to God our repentance, our increased appeal for forgiveness of sins, the first condition for entering into the Kingdom of God.

In the second prayer, 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. Finally, 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.

The joy of Easter has been completed and we again have to wait for the dawn of the Eternal Day. Yet, knowing our weakness, humbling ourselves by kneeling, we also know the joy and the power of the Holy Spirit who has come. We know that God is with us, that in Him is our victory.

Thus is completed the feast of Pentecost and we enter "the ordinary time" of the year. Yet, every Sunday now will be called "after Pentecost"—and this means that it is from the power and light of these fifty days that we shall receive our own power, the Divine help in our daily struggle. At Pentecost we decorate our churches with flowers and green branches—for the Church "never grows old, but is always young." It is an evergreen, ever-living Tree of grace and life, of joy and comfort. For the Holy Spirit—"the Treasury of Blessings and Giver of Life—comes and abides in us, and cleanses us from all impurity," and fills our life with meaning, love, faith and hope.

- Father Alexander Schmemmann