

Pentecost (8th Sunday after Pascha)

On the tenth day after the Ascension of Jesus Christ during the Jewish feast of Pentecost, at the third hour but according to our reckoning at nine o'clock in the morning, when people usually go to the temple both for offering up a sacrifice and prayer —) all the disciples were assembled in Jerusalem, in the upper room (Acts 1:13), which was "on Mount Zion", "and suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind," (as though from an unusually strong wind)". Actually there was no wind rustling, but the noise was similar as if it were from the strength of a wind, but without the wind". This noise "filled the whole house where they were sitting", not only of the apostles, but, according to the commentary of St. John Chrysostom, even other believers in Christ (Acts 1:16). In that instant in the middle of the house in the air appeared many tongues as of fire, being carried above the heads of the disciples, dropped down and rested on them. They were not really fiery tongues, but were "as if of fire", i.e. it only had the appearance of fire; they shone only, but did not burn. Directly behind these, or even together with these external appearances, the event followed the internal, completing in the souls of the believers: "all were filled with the Holy Spirit" —).

As fast as the Divine Fire flared up in the souls of the believers, they were filled with holy ecstasy and in reply to the gift of Heaven lifted up to Heaven a word of praise and thanksgiving to the Great God for the benefactions to the human race. And they all "began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance". Each of these gifted ones began to speak in whatever language even if the other language was unknown to him, in the language of a country where he never lived, or a language which he never studied. The knowledge of this language was exclusively a gift of the Holy Spirit for him. And the power of the Holy Spirit was first found out by their ability in languages, because this ability was first of all necessary for the apostles, so that they could preach the Gospel message all over the world.

Meanwhile the stormy noise of the breath from Heaven attracted many Jews to the apostolic quarters. Seeing the people gathering for them, believers with praises and hymns on their lips they went on the flat roof of the house where they were. For it is natural to assume that they were filled with holy joy, the desire and zeal to announce the glory of God revealed in them to other people. They spoke about "wonderful acts of God" (Acts 2:11), which now opened in all the fullness and light for them. They praised the omnipotence, mercy and wisdom of God, they magnified the Lord Jesus, they confessed that He is the Christ announced by the ancient prophets, the Redeemer of our sins, that He is risen and, ascended with glory into Heaven to the Father, who sent the Holy Spirit, who teaches all wisdom, and finally, they thanked God for everything that they have received through grace

from Christ. Hearing these words of praise and thanksgiving, all those gathered in the apostolic quarters were amazed by their new unexpected and unclear revelation. The disciples of Christ, whom the greater part were native Galileans, people who were unlearned and uneducated, from whom they could not expect any knowledge of foreign languages, except their Galilean dialect, each of these people spoke some kind of dialect, so, as the gathered crowd spoke various languages according their origin, each, however, heard something which glorified God in the language of his country from any one among those who spoke about the great works of God. Surprise turned into fear. For all saw the unusual, heard the wonderful, but no one could explain what they saw and heard. "They were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, whatever could this mean" (Acts 2:12)?

But the impious were also found, who began to swear at the God-inspired preachers. Then the Holy Apostle Peter raised his voice and delivered his first sermon, in which he pointed out the glorious events accomplished in this day, the fulfillment of ancient prophecies and the completion of the great work of salvation of the people, which was fulfilled on earth by the crucified and resurrected Lord Jesus Christ. This first Christian sermon was simple and brief, but since the Holy Spirit spoke through the mouth of the Holy Apostle Peter, his words penetrated the hearts of the hearers and won over their obstinacy. "Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' (Acts 2:37). "Repent", the Holy Apostle Peter answered them, "and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ" and you will not only be forgiven, but you shall also "receive the gift of the Holy Spirit". For the promise of the Holy Spirit is given not only to us, but also even "to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call" (Acts 2:38-39).

"Then those who gladly received his word" that is of the Apostle Peter immediately repented, believed, and were baptized (Acts 2:1-41), and the new Church has grown from 120 (Acts 1:15) to 3000 men. Thus ended the events, now celebrated, which have ended in the complete victory of the Holy Spirit over the unbelievers. In memory of this wonderful and glorious event we call this day *the day of the Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles* 4).

This feast is still called *Trinity Day*, because the appearance of the Holy Spirit has revealed to the people in a very clear light, how necessary the mystery of the Holy Trinity was for them. And therefore even for the Holy Church, teaching us "in the Orthodox way" and piously to confess the All-holy Trinity, for on this day in its prayers and hymns it honors and praises all three Persons of the Holy Trinity, who participated in the descent of the Holy Spirit: God the Father, who

sent the Holy Spirit, God the Son Jesus Christ, who entreats the Father to send the Holy Spirit, and God the Holy Spirit, who descended appearing as fiery tongues.

This feast was named *Pentecost* because an event in the Old Testament called the feast of Pentecost was commemorated on this day, and also because this feast necessarily comes 50 days after the Christian Pascha. Especially important is the concurrence of the time of the descent of the Holy Spirit with the time of the Old Testament feast of Pentecost. The descent of the Holy Spirit on the believers in Christ was the crowning of the redemption and salvation of man by God. During the time of Pentecost the disciples of the Lord have blossomed and have grown spiritually. Then the fullness of the gifts of the Spirit of God descended on them, and they became the first fruits of the redemptive work of Christ. Together with these revelations, the Church of Christ began on earth 5).

The day of Pentecost was the day when the Old Testament theocracy which began on Sinai and ruled the people through the written law, the law of slavery and of death, was replaced by the New Testament law, where the people are led by the Spirit of God, the spirit of adoption and freedom (Rom. 8). Thus, as the Pascha of Christ abolished the Old Testament Pascha, the New Testament Pentecost replaces the Old Testament one, from which life under the law began.

The event, the descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles, and the beneficial fruits of this great event are praised in the hymns of the church for the day of Pentecost. "Today", sings the Holy Church, "wondrous things were done before the face of all peoples in the city of David, when the Holy Spirit came down as fiery tongues", upon the disciples of Christ. Now "the Spirit of salvation purifies the hearts of the apostles". Now, "the apostles are clothed with the power from on high by Christ, for the Comforter revives them". Now, the Holy Spirit "revealed the unlettered to be orators", the fishermen, "bridling the mouths of sophists in abundance with a word, and raising from the deep night unnumbered people". "The Essence is known in three persons, according to the true, Unapproachable, Unoriginate One, when "the light has shone, the grace of the Spirit". "When the power of the Divine Spirit came down, it divinely united in one harmony the voice divided of old (i.e. the language of the people) of those who had wickedly agreed together, as to believers it gave understanding of knowledge of the Trinity, in which we have been established" 6). Now, "the Holy Spirit falls on all, makes prophecies flow, perfects priests, teaches the unlettered wisdom, reveals fishermen to be theologians, welds together the whole institution of the Church". "That which was proclaimed of old in the Law and Prophets has been fulfilled. For today the grace of the Divine Spirit has been poured out on all believers". "Now the Comforter Spirit has been poured out on all flesh, for beginning with the choir of the Apostles, he has unfolded their grace through participation to the faithful". "The strength which has come down today is the good Spirit, the Spirit of the

Wisdom of God. The Spirit proceeding from the Father and is made manifest to us faithful through the Son, giving holiness freely to those in whom he dwells, in which he is perceived by nature". "O light-formed children of the Church, receive the Spirit's fire-breathing dew, and the redeeming purification of offences. For now a law has gone out from Zion, the torch-tongue-formed grace of the Spirit".

Praising the Zion event and showing its fruits, the Holy Church lifts up our minds and hearts even to the knowledge of God's attributes and actions of the Heavenly Visitor, the Spirit of God. In the words of St. Gregory the Theologian: "The Holy Spirit always was, and is, and will be; neither beginning nor coming to an end, but always ranked and numbered with the Father and the Son". "He is the life and creator of life; He is the light and the bestower of light; He is the pouring out of goodness and source of goodness". "Through Whom the Father is known and the Son (John 16:14) is glorified, and by all is known". "He is the Spirit of wisdom, understanding". "He is God and deifier". "He distributes the gifts" (1 Cor. 12:11), "crowns the prophets, apostles and martyrs".

Glorifying the Holy Spirit, the solemn Worship of the actual day also includes within itself the thanksgiving glorification of our Lord Jesus Christ, "Who on this final great and saving day of Pentecost revealed to us the mystery of the Holy, Consubstantial, Coeternal, Undivided and Uncompounded Trinity", and "poured out the Comforter upon the disciples, as was promised", and "setting them as Evangelists of our true faith, revealing them as confessors and heralds of true theology". "In your courts", exclaims the Holy Church, "I will sing your praise, as the Savior of the world, and bending the knee I will worship your invincible power, at evening and morning and midday, and at every moment I will bless you, O Lord."

The Holy Church also uplifts the general doxology to the Most Holy Trinity and inspires us, that we, "bending the knee of souls and body", praise you "the Father without beginning, and the Son, likewise without beginning, and the Co-eternal and All Holy Spirit", "the Trinity One in Essence", "Identical in power and Coeternal". "Come, you people," the Church appeals to its children, "let us worship the Godhead in three persons, the Son in the Father, with the Holy Spirit; for the Father timelessly begot the Son, co-eternal and co-reigning, and the Holy Spirit was in the Father, glorified with the Son; one power, one essence, one Godhead."

But in order that our glorifications not remain fruitless, the Holy Church often appeals to the very Spirit Comforter with the prayer: "O Heavenly King, the Comforter, Spirit of Truth who art everywhere and fillest all things. Treasury of Blessings, and Giver of life: Come and abide in us, and cleanse us from every impurity, and save our souls, O Good One". *(1967 OCA translation).*

(Liturgical texts above mostly from Archimandrite Ephrem © 10 Feb. 2001)

The Troparion, Tone 8

**Blessed art Thou, O Christ our God,
Who hast revealed the fisherman as most wise
By sending down upon them the Holy Spirit;
Through them Thou didst draw the world into Thy net.
O Lover of Man, Glory to Thee!**

(1967 OCA translation)

The Kontakion, Tone 8

**When the Most High came down and confused the tongues,
He divided the nations;
But when He distributed the tongues of fire,
He called all to unity.
Therefore, with one voice, we glorify the all-holy Spirit!**

(1967 OCA translation)

The Magnification

**We magnify Thee,
O Life-giver Christ,
And we honor Thy most Holy Spirit,
Whom Thou didst send from the Father unto Thy disciples.**

The Rubrics require that the All-Night Vigil be served on the eve of Trinity Day 7). In Matins for the Magnification the icon stand with an icon, representing either the Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles, or the Appearance of the Lord to Abraham as the three Travelers is placed in the middle of the temple. In the canon sing the refrain: "All-holy Trinity, our God, glory to Thee " 8). **At the Liturgy** sing the festal antiphons; instead of the Trisagion sing: "As many as have been baptized into Christ"; instead of "It is truly Meet" sing the Irmos of the 9th Ode of the Canon: "Rejoice, O Queen".

Readings (1) Num. 11:16-17, 24-29. (2) Joel 2:23-32. (3) Ezek. 36:24-28. Epistle Acts 2:1-11; sel. 5. Gospel John 7:37-52, 8:12; sel. 27.

Footnotes:

__). Pentecost for the Jews was one of the three great annual feasts (Exodus. 23:14, 16, 17; Deut. 16:16). By the day of Pentecost the Jews had finished the harvest, which began with the feast of Pascha, according to that, the fiftieth day after the first day of Pascha was actually the feast of the ending of the harvest, in which under the law they should offer to God a thanksgiving sacrifice from fruits

of the earth. (Exodus. 23:16; Num. 28:26). Over time this feast began to incorporate and commemorate the giving of the Sinai law received by the Hebrews within 50 days after their exodus from Egypt. For the Jews this feast was solemn and joyful (Deut. 16:11), and for this feast they flocked to Jerusalem in great numbers. Each of them considered it a sacred duty to visit the Holy City, in order to bring the sacrifice from the gathered harvest in gratitude to God, established by the law, (Lev. 23:17, 30), and it was considered obligatory not only for Palestinian Jews, but also for those outside of Palestine living in countries all over in the then known world. Therefore in Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost it was possible to meet those who arrived from Rome, Egypt, Crete, Mesopotamia, from all areas of Asia Minor and Western Asia, from "all of the people under Heaven ", not only Jews, but also proselytes, i.e. those converted from paganism (Acts 2:5, 9:11, 20:16).

__). The mighty wind was closest to the prophecy, and the appearance of fiery tongues was seen as the sign of the coming of the Holy Spirit. The mighty wind and vision of fiery tongues proceeded not for long, maybe for a moment; but the Holy Spirit has always poured himself out into the souls and hearts of the believer. Being most pure and bodiless, the Holy Spirit has selected a physical sign to more perceptively manifest His presence. "For", reasoned St. Gregory the Theologian, "as the Son of God was seen to be visible on earth, it also was necessary for the Holy Spirit to be seen to be visible. But "yes who will not think", teaches St. Leo the Great, "that what was visible with physical eyes was the most Divine essence of the Holy Spirit." "That which actually belongs to His essence is hidden in His Divinity, because human sight, as it cannot see the Father and the Son, also cannot see the Holy Spirit". "According to His nature the Holy Spirit is invisible, similar to the Father and the Son; at His descent only the attribute is revealed in His service and action in such signs, as He Himself wishes". And He without any special purpose has now selected these, rather than other signs: logically nothing happens without a cause. Instead of the darkness and thunder at the giving of the Law on Sinai, here was heard "a sound from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind", that clearly was that same Holy Spirit, then and now, who gives the law, who sanctifies it and who fulfills it. The strong sound signified that a mighty power was transferred to the apostles. The movement from Heaven signified that this wondrous power proceeded from the One who ten days before these events ascended to Heaven. The filling of the whole house by the noise and the blessing of the assembly through the fiery tongues signified that all of them were washed and baptized by the Holy Spirit and by the abundance of gifts received from Him. The fire expressed the revitalizing power of the words of the Gospel, which should cleanse the hearts of the people, and expressed the light of faith, the warmth of love, both in the ardent zeal of the preachers and the devoted attention of the

hearers of the Gospel. Fiery tongues lay on the heads, because the head of man is the noblest and main part of the body. The meekness of the fire, which lay on the heads, signified the mercy and grace of God. The tongues signified the gift of words and the knowledge of many foreign languages, which up to that time were unknown to them, that were bestowed on them for the preaching of the Gospel throughout the world. The divided tongues signified that the Gospel would be preached in different countries and to various peoples. The Holy Spirit descended on them after the passing of ten days, instead of immediately after the Ascension, so that those who accepted Him would be made most ardent. The Holy Spirit descended within fifty days after Pascha as a reminder of the old law, for Israel received the Ten Commandments after the passing of 50 days after crossing the Red Sea. At the third hour, on this one day the Lord God granted the grace to inspire us to honor the three Persons in one essence. On the feast, the descent of the Holy Spirit takes place in order that the many who have gathered carried the message about this event everywhere, and so that those present at the feast of Pascha and former eyewitnesses of the events concerning Christ may understand their extraordinary significance. On Pentecost the Holy Spirit descended, because in that time before the law was given, it was necessary at the same time to pour out much grace of the Spirit. (Synaxarion on Monday of Pentecost; 2nd Canon, 7th Ode, 3-rd troparion; Church Messenger 1888, 23; 1895, 20).

_) . These fools, who dared to explain to one another they did not at all understand: "sneering, said that the apostles drank sweet wine" (a favorite morning drink in antiquity)". Thus blasphemous levity always sneers at sacred inspiration. So they always also are cold to subjects of faith. If they are not able to understand something, then they make an effort to make fun of anyone who speaks of higher things. Carnal people do not know of other pleasures, except for the sensual; they judge from their own experience, and blaspheme!

4). Three times, it is spoken in the Synaxarion that Christ gave the Holy Spirit to the disciples: it is implicit before His suffering (Mt. 10:1,20), it is clearer after His Resurrection through breathing (John 20:22), and now He has sent Him in essence; it is better (to say), He Himself has descended, more perfectly enlightening and illuminating them, and through them converting all the ends of the world (see the St. Petersburg Theological Messenger, 1886, 19). But we must not represent this descent of the Holy of Spirit anthropologically. The Holy Spirit, as God, is omnipresent. He has no place from which to descend and nowhere to go. He is everywhere and fills all things. To descend, to come may be only a limiting of the essence, but not of God. All these expressions, as St. Chrysostom notes, are used about God according to need, for in human language there are no words for expressing Divine actions in their very essence. All these expressions mean nothing other than the new appearance of the power of God, the special revelation

of His presence. Where the power of God opens itself, where He perceptibly appears as His presence, there, according to our weak understanding and still weaker expression, it is as if God comes. So, the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles, actually speaking, is not the descent of the Spirit on them, but the appearance of His power in them, opening in them His special presence. The Holy Spirit also acted before in human generation. The Holy Spirit, as the Church wisely sings, "always was, and is, and will be". He was even in the Old Testament, in the patriarchs, in the prophets and in any pure soul; without Him no truly good work was ever accomplished. But the appearance of His power in the apostles was most crucial and beneficial for the entire human race. In the eternal council of God concerning the salvation of the race of man it is necessary, that the Son of God, after the fulfillment of his most magnificent work on earth, has risen to Heaven and that, according to the departure of the Savior to Heaven, the Holy Spirit has come to make what was begun by the Savior, to enable the apostles to preach the Gospel to the whole world, to prepare the hearts of the people for the acceptance of the Gospel message, to instill in their life service to the Redeemer, to inform them of a new spiritual force in the fulfillment of a new law of grace, is briefly: to enable the human race make those Divine Gifts their own, which they acquired by the suffering of the Son of God (see page 600, footnote 2). Therefore the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles however is His solemn entrance to the high post of Consecrator of the sinful human race. It is a solemn sanctification of a new, worldwide, eternal Church; after this sanctification the Consecrator already began to visibly and continually act in it. And by this fact alone it reveals how important and beneficial the descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles is for the entire human race. If He did not descend upon them, the work of our Savior would remain unfinished, the Apostles would not be able to preach about Him to the entire world, the world would not know their Savior, there would not be a Christian faith in the world and all of us would remain in the darkness of idol worship. (The Works of Innocent, Archbishop of Cherson, vol. 1, pages 387-8).

5). "Brightly and triumphantly", says His Grace Theophanes, Bishop of Tambov, "the Holy Church celebrates the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles." And how can she not celebrate? Because the Holy Spirit actually created the Church of God on the foundation established by the Lord Jesus Christ. He finally reveals and explains to the Apostles the mysteries of the kingdom and the entire Christian teaching. By Him all languages are mastered and are given to the hearers of the faith. He bestows all powers "to those living in godliness. He is the source of all their rules and institutions for the development, strengthening and protection of the believers. He from here on keeps the pledge of our salvation whole and undamaged. Remembering this great work of God, the Holy Church can exult and praise the great in her.

6). In this hymn it is pointed out that with the same descent of the Holy Spirit appeared the gifts of God. There never was punishment for the self-deluded pride of the people. There never was a time, when "all the earth would speak with one mouth and with one voice." But the people, who were threatened with dispersion and slavery, thought, contrary to any definition of God's Providence, by general consensus and with the ability to fulfill an insane enterprise, began to build a tower up to Heaven to get glory for them and so not be dispersed over all the earth. Then God sent down various languages to the unreasonable workers, and it so divided them that they were not able to finish the work, because of the differences among the parties. (Gen. 11). Now the division of languages appears as such a heavenly gift, which up to now divided and separated the nationalities, is through the preaching of the Gospel brought all together in one entirety, in one Church of Christ (see the Kontakion for the feast).

7). The readings from Holy Scripture and the church hymns for this vigil belong to a great event commemorating the day of the Holy Trinity. In the Vesper readings the Church changes from a New Testament event to its ancient prototypes and its promises, indicating those very internal ties between the Old and New Testaments. In the first reading the narration about the appearance of the Spirit of God on the 70 Israelite elders during the wandering of the people of God in the desert is offered. In the second reading are the prophetic words, with which the Apostle Peter (see Acts 2:4-21) explained to the surprised people the great mysterious event of Pentecost, i.e. the promise given through the Prophet Joel about the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on all flesh. In the third reading the prophecy is pronounced about spiritual absolution by means of water and the gift of the Spirit of God, to the believer who holds to the preservation of the commandments of the Lord. These prophecies clearly emphasize the spiritual renewal and enlightenment of the sons of the New Testament by water and the Spirit.

8). In the Rubrics, the Paschal Triodion, and the Irmologion it is not prescribed to sing any refrain to the Irmos of the 9-th Ode of the Canon, and it is necessary to sing this Irmos without a refrain. But in the liturgical practice of some dioceses such a refrain is used in 9-th Ode of the canon: "The Apostles, having seen the descent of the Comforter, were amazed, how in the vision of the fiery tongues the Holy Spirit was revealed". Because this refrain is found in the Obikhod with music (2 parts), published by the Holy Synod in 1798 for use in the divine services and has managerial importance in the business of church notated singing, the refrain, placed in it, can be used in liturgical practice (Rukovodstvo dlia seljskikh pastirej (Manual for Village Pastors 1886, 44).

The Vespers of Pentecost

The main feature of the divine services on the day of Pentecost consists of reading the special kneeling prayers of St. Basil the Great. The reading of the kneeling prayers is not established at the third hour (nine o'clock) of the day when the liturgy is celebrated, but at Vespers , by virtue of the prohibition (see page 568 above) to bend the knees during the days of Pentecost). On the other hand, in order to keep the faithful in a reverential condition and to make them able, by the example of the Apostles, to most soberly and most chastely do the kneeling prayers in honor of the Holy Spirit, it is necessary to celebrate Vespers after the Liturgy. In the order of this Vesper Service the Holy Church through its hymns and touching prayers actively directs its children to worthily offer up invaluable gifts for the grace of God. This divine service begins with the prayer: "O Heavenly King", with which any divine service ordinarily begins (refer to page 604), but which on the present day and hour has special meaning for the reverentially praying faithful, commemorating the descent of the Holy Spirit Comforter. Then, following the Introductory Psalm during the Great Litany, the Holy Church reminds Christians about worthily standing especially during these minutes in the temple of God when the prayers about "awaiting the grace of the Holy Spirit" and "for those that bow their hearts and knees before the Lord", and asks God that He, "may accept the bending of our knees as incense" may send down His rich mercy on us and may grant His heavenly help to those who ask for it. After the Litany, follow the stichera (verses) "on Lord, I call" (the same, that are in Matins "on the Praises"), then there is an entrance with the censer, and we sing "O gladsome Light" and the Prokimenon ("Who is so great a God as our God; Thou art the God, who dost wonders"). After this Prokimenon, at the suggestion of the Holy Church, all present in the temple fall on their knees to the ground with the feeling of heart-felt contrition, while the head of the Church also kneels in the doors to the Holy Sanctuary, facing the people, and in such a way becoming one pious family with him in one sacred room, he begins to read the special prayer of St. Basil the Great. We read the kneeling prayers: 1) after the singing of the Prokimenon, 2) after the Litany of Fervent Supplication, "Let us all say", 3) after the prayer, "Vouchsafe, O Lord"). In the first prayer the Church asks God the Father to forgive our sins and to bless us. In the second prayer the Church asks God the Son to grant us gifts of the spirit of wisdom in the supplication for bounties from God. In the third prayer the Church asks God the Son, who fulfilled the salvation of man and who descended into Hades, to grant grace to the living and rest to our fathers and brothers who have departed this life in faith 4). To each of these special prayers is added one of the usual evening prayers (about passing the time sinless during the present evening and in the approaching night), also written by St. Basil the Great.

The first prayer is read at the end of Vespers, the second is appointed at Great Compline, and the third is the seventh Prayer of Light. The Little Litany and the Litany of Supplication follow after this solemn prayer and then, according to the church Rule (Ustav), "both choirs coming together", as a sign of inner unity, peace and brotherly concord, proceeding and strengthening among people also not without the help of the heavenly, sing four stichera (verses), of which the first three are special, but the fourth (on "Glory, both now and ever") is also the one which is also sung at "Glory, both now and ever", at Great Vespers on the eve of Pentecost, at "Lord, I call". In the appointed stichera (verses) the spiritual joy of pious souls is sung on behalf of all believers that God granted them the Divine Light and poured out the grace of His Spirit Comforter, who is renewed in them by a mystical newness of understanding. The joyful idea is inspired by the fact that from apostolic times the Holy Spirit continually abides in the Church, and all people are called (in the sticheron (verse) on "Glory, both now and ever) to the thankful worship of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, sending down upon them as a group on earth gifts of grace and equally flowing out for our illumination and salvation. After these stichera (verses) follow: "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy Servant depart", "Trisagion", "O most holy Trinity", "Our Father", and the festal Troparion. "Then the Priest does the Great Dismissal" in which are such high features that describe all the Divine management of our salvation in Christ: "Who did empty Himself from the Paternal and Divine Bosom, and came down from Heaven upon the earth, and took upon Himself all our nature and made it divine, and after these things, again ascended into Heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father, and did send down the divine and Holy Spirit, one in essence, equal in power, and equal in glory, and ever-existing with Him, upon His holy Disciples and Apostles, and through Him did enlighten them, and through them the whole world, Christ our true God... have mercy on us and save us, for He is good and lovest man".

On this feast according to the custom, temples and homes of the faithful relating to the characteristics of this feast **are also decorated with trees 5), grass and flowers**. This is how the Old Testament Church celebrated Pentecost, offering on this day a beginning of the harvest (Lev.23:10-22; Num. 28:26). In accordance with these customs of the Old Testament Church, probably, the room on Zion in which the Apostles received the Holy Spirit on this feast was also decorated. From here this custom was also spread throughout all the Church. The thought of the appearance of God as three strangers to Abraham at the Oaks of Mamre, where the tent of the patriarch stood, could also have influenced this custom. Celebrating the Holy Trinity, before Whom Abraham once bowed down in the Oaks of Mamre, ancient Christians on the day of the Holy Trinity spread tree branches and flowers in the temples to see that in this way the decorated temple of God more obviously

represents the Oaks of Mamre and the tent of Abraham where once the Triune God had the good will to appear. Now branches and flowers are offered to God as the beginning of the renewing Spring (refer to page 274). But at the same time they serve together as a symbol of the Church of Christ, which with the appearance of the grace of the Holy of Spirit flourished in it, according to the expression in the church hymns, like a white lily. It also points out the renewal of the people by the power of the descent of the Holy Spirit, (serving as a symbol of His very grace which we ask for on this day and which, being recognized by true believing souls, smells sweet to them through a great variety of spiritual gifts and pious deeds), and for the future resurrection of our dead brethren for which we especially pray on this day.

The beginning of the feast of Pentecost is coincident with the beginning of the Christian Church. The Apostles, vested on the day of Pentecost with power from above, could not, of course, forget this great day and discerned its special celebration. For them this day reminded them of their introduction into world service for the new believers in Christ, their calling into the Kingdom of Christ, for all in general into the unutterable great mercy of God, revealed to the race of man. The Blessed Augustine clearly testifies that the feast of the Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles existed in the Church since apostolic times. One should notice that in antiquity the name Pentecost was also understood as a time interval of fifty days, separating the feast of Pascha from the feast of Pentecost, and the feast commemorating the Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles, or Pentecost in the true sense.

Already the ancient Church distinguished the fifty days after Pascha with some characteristics. So, on these days, even as now, one reads the Book of Acts of the Apostles. Besides the ancient Church, dedicating these fifty days to the rejoicing about the Resurrection of the Savior, found that kneeling, as a reminder of the fall of man, does not correspond to these days, and consequently prohibited kneeling on them. The Church from the earliest times solemnly celebrated the feast of Pentecost under the name of the day of the Holy Spirit. Its special solemnity was due to the custom of the ancient Church to baptize catechumens on this day. In the Fourth Century were the works of St. Basil the Great, whose prayers are read even now by the Church in Vespers, and the spoken conversations of well-known preachers. The works of Sts. Gregory the Theologian (IV Century), Roman the Sweet-singer (VI Century), Cosmas of Maium and John of Damascus (VIII Century), Theophanes, Metropolitan of Nicaea (IX Century) and the Emperor Leo (X Century) include prayers composed in honor of the feast with many unforgettable images describing the very deep truths of Orthodox Theology and unusually exalted hymns, which even now the Holy Church sings. The moral aim of the establishment of this festival in commemoration of the Descent of the Holy

Spirit by the Holy Church first of all serves the fulfillment of the first debt before God, the Giver of all blessings, the debt of gratitude.

The sending down of the Holy Spirit to earth is so great a gift that it includes everything within it for the Christian. Without the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit we would not even receive the clear knowledge of the actions of the Son of God Himself on earth. Without the co-activity of the Holy Spirit the preaching of the Gospel would not have spread so quickly in the world, due to the many obstacles, insurmountable for the ordinary power of man. Without the life-creating Holy Spirit even the faithful in the name of Jesus Christ would be dead spiritually. We have the word of God because the Holy Spirit spoke through the prophets and the apostles. The appearance of the Deity, the Church, is openly accessible to all the cursed on the earth. Because the Holy Spirit humbled with the consecration by Himself, He was acquired by the sinful race of man, with the merits of our Lord and Redeemer. Everyone entering into this holy society receives the rebirth into the new spiritual life, because the Holy Spirit, once having been poured out, permanently remains in the Church of Christ 6). And the Holy Church, in the present day Divine services with prominent features describing the event itself of the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles in all detail, and opening all its magnificent and saving fruits for us, induces us to thank God the Father, who had the good will to grant us the Comforter, and to thank the Redeemer our God the Son who begged His Father to send down the Holy Spirit upon the earth, and to thank the Consecrator our God the Holy Spirit, who came down upon the Apostles, and through them also upon all believers who have disdained again to condescend to our impiety. Raising in us this high feeling of gratitude "to God the Benefactor", the Holy Church in its hymns with special power inspires us "to glorify" and "to sing" "the Father without beginning, together with the Coeternal Son, and together with the Coeternal and Most Holy Spirit", and to worship "the Undivided Trinity": "For that has saved us". Remembering the past and leading us to glorify "the Thrice Illumined Essence", and at the same time that its commemoration of the celebrated event would be quite beneficial and saving for Christians of all times, just as the great event of Pentecost was beneficial for the Apostles of Christ, the Holy Church, through its hymns, prayers and sacred actions, has laid out, prepared and purified its children beforehand for the recognition that the good grace of the Holy Spirit is necessary for their spiritual life. The faithful standing in the temple of God, as though on Mount Zion itself, the Holy Church instills pious thoughts, feelings and desires in them, as the disciples of the Lord were inspired before the descent of the Holy Spirit on them, and helps its children to receive the spiritual gifts necessary for salvation. Focusing on this purpose, of all being fulfilled on the present feast, the hymns, the prayers, and all active church services, the Holy Church in the Divine Services of Pentecost, in its general structure and individual

details, has laid out and leads Orthodox Christians to the pious imitation of the disciples and apostles of Christ for one holy purpose. All sacred hymns and prayers and all actions, accomplished by her in this case, penetrates the truly Christian spirit with living faith in the goodness and mercy of God, the Giver of all blessings, undoubtedly and together with deeply humble hope for the reception of the highest gifts, the fervent and universal love for God and neighbor. The same with faith, hope and thankful love must inspire the heart and every Christian wishing to worthily participate in the sacred prayer of the Church, and everyone, agreeing with the appeal of the Holy Church, kindling in itself an ardent desire to be honored with the heavenly grace of the All Holy Spirit, for its spiritual comfort and salvation, should with reverent audacity be moved to appeal:

"Save, O Comforter, those who faithfully hymn Your God-pleasing coming, and cleanse us from every impurity for You are compassionate, and show us to be worthy of your radiance, and with your God-seeing light create the reflection I was undefiled".

All this, finally, inspires in the Christian the care that the sacred celebration of the present day was not contradicted by a sinful life. That each of us, asking for ourselves the renewal and multiplication of the grace of the Spirit of God and being made worthy of His graceful visitation in prayer and in the mysteries, continued to observe ourselves as temples of the Holy Spirit, not offending His holy magnificence. "The present celebration", says Philaret, Metropolitan of Moscow, "is not a simple commemoration of the past, but the continuation of the apostolic preparation for the reception of this "Spirit", without ceasing "by those who wish, breathing it in". The Apostles, after continual prayers with one accord, "were filled with the Holy Spirit". And not only the Apostles, according to the explanation St. Chrysostom, but also the disciples staying with them, "altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty (Acts 1:15), filling them all". And for us now the Church, as in the Jerusalem "upper room" (Acts 1:13), gathered together in this temple to call the Comforter Spirit of truth to come and be installed in us". "The soul of every feast is the presence of the one whom we celebrate. And for those who celebrate the day of the Holy Spirit what can be more desired than to have this Heavenly Comforter infused with grace visit His feast? If He would, not with fiery tongues to sit on our heads, but at least mystically with a spark of fire touch our hearts and inflame their sensitivity to the presence of God". According to the position of St. John Chrysostom, "our celebration should be in accordance with the worthiness of the gifts of blessings granted to us and to consist not in the crowning of the doors, but in the improvement of souls, not in the adornment of festal curtains, but in the adornment of the soul with the vestments of virtues so that, during such a celebration, we may be worthy of the grace of Spirit and to receive Its fruits" 7). "Whoever wishes to become a dweller in Christ and be

filled with the Holy Spirit, for the offering of spiritual fruits", as St. Macarius the Egyptian teaches, "he should first of all firmly believe in the Lord, entirely converted to the requirements of His commandments and renounce the world so that his mind would not be engaged in anything visible. He should also remain in continual prayer and with faith in the good will of the Lord always to await His visitation and help, and then to force himself to every good deed and to every commandment of the Lord".

In agreement with the Decision of the Holy Synod of 1886, No. 885, some dioceses make a general **collection** of donations **for the benefit of the church parish schools** of the diocese on the day of Pentecost (Refer to page 447).

⌋). There is no present obstacle to serve Great Vespers on the day of the Holy Trinity with the reading of the prayers for the reposed in the hospital in order to console the unfortunate patients entering into their mournful dwelling in the joy of Christ. They are made part of the celebratory divine service even in the street, for example, the Litya (Tserkovnyi Vestnik (Church Messenger), 1889, 15).

⌋). "All of Pentecost", as St. Basil the Great teaches, "is a reminder of the Resurrection, which we expect in the future age". And it is why the Holy Church commands us during all of Pentecost, as well as on all the Sundays of the year (see First Ecumenical Council, Canon 20; Sixth Ecumenical Council, Canon 90), to pray standing which signifies our co-resurrection with Christ the Savior and serves as a reminder of our future resurrection. Having completed the specified days of prayer "the Church thoroughly teaches its children to pray standing, that, being a frequent reminder of the never-ending life, we do not leave with an incorrect parting word for such repose". "The Church Typicons (Ustavi) teach us to prefer on this day the erect position of the body during prayer, as a clear reminder of moving our thoughts from the present to the future". "Therefore", as Matthew Vlastar says, "even this Great Basil has most fairly theologized and combined propitiatory prayers about the sending of the Holy Spirit and have commanded the servant people to bend their knees during their exclamation in the church, and by this, establishing the worthiness of the Divinity ever existing in the Spirit, having thought it fit that one should not read them during the Third Hour called the Lord's and during the fifty days of Pascha, during what hour or day the All Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles. For it would not conform to healthy reason that the commentator on the mysteries of the Spirit and the law giver of the Church broke the stated preference for the Lord's day and together with Pentecost, tied with the great mysteries. Therefore even reading these prayers is postponed until the

evening of that day when the sovereign days and Pentecost ends and the second day begins". (Alfavitnaia Syntagma (Primary System) of Matthew Vlastar translated from the Greek by Priest N. Iljinsky, page 180-181).

4). During the cathedral rite it is accepted not only for one preeminent person but also for other of the two oldest clergy to read these prayers by turns. In St. Petersburg, for example, a similar order in the reading of the appointed prayers is observed even during the celebration of the divine service by the ranking members of the Holy Synod concelebrating with two vicars (Tserkovnyi Vestnik (Church Messenger) 1888, 13; 1889, 19).

4). We meet in this prayer the word "really" which means indeed, the deed itself, worthily, authentically, truly (Rukovodstvo dlia seljskikh pastirej (Manual for Village Pastors) 1886, 15).

5). The decoration with *young* birch and other kinds of trees is not established by the church canons, but is a folk custom. The Holy Synod forbids (Ukase (Rule) of May 23, 1875) the use of young birch trees for this decoration, but permits the use of flowers, handicrafts and part handicraft plants and tree branches. The Novgorod Spiritual Consistory explained to the local clergy, that greens are necessary for supporting the ancient custom of the decoration of churches and houses on the day of the Holy Trinity, and not to bother about its complete discontinuance. The order of the Holy Synod "about preserving the young growth of trees from their use in the decoration of temples, living premises and so forth on some holidays" did not have the goal of destroying this custom but only of preventing the unnecessary destruction of young birch trees as a public benefit, certainly did not mean such districts where the density of wood growth demands cutting down excessive trees for the freedom of the growth of other trees. That is why the Novgorod Consistory wrote to the Deans that in the future they will stop reporting in their semiannual official reports of information, touching upon the conserving of the young growth of tree species (Rukovodstvo dlia seljskikh pastirej (Manual for Village Pastors) 1889, 19).

6) Arguing the importance and meaning of the feast of Pentecost, St. Chrysostom says: "great, beloved, and unspeakable gifts are granted us on this day by God who loves mankind. Now the Lord grants us the coming of the Holy Spirit, and through Him grants us countless blessings from heaven. Tell me, what is necessary for our salvation that is not established through the spirit? Though Him we are released from slavery, we are called to freedom, we are raised up to the position of son, and finally, so to speak, we shall be transfigured, putting away the

heavy and stinking burden of sins. Through the Holy Spirit we have the investing of priests and the ranks of teachers. From this Source we also have gifts of revelation and the gift of healing. And we have all the rest that adorns the Church of God, which is granted from here".

According to the explanation of His Eminence Innocent, Archbishop of Chersonese, the present feast is not one celebration, but a whole collection of celebrations. The New Testament celebrates, for now is the day the Holy Spirit descends on the Apostles, together with that, it is the foundation and the beginning of Church in grace. The invisible world celebrates, for on the present special day the Holy Church raises up prayers for the souls of the departed brethren, (extends its motherly hold by interceding for mercy to "those being held in Hades"). The visible and sensual world celebrates, for on the present special day the Holy Church, decorating the temples with branches, one may say, connects the temples with the temples of nature, remembering by this the primitive condition of man in Eden, and pre-describing the future situation on Zion when there will be no sensual temples, but all will be temples. Faith now celebrates, for now it worships the Holy, Consubstantial and Undivided Trinity, the teaching of Which is one of the greatest mysteries of the faith. Hope now celebrates, for the Holy Church from the present now ascends to the future, foresees the end of the kingdom of grace, the approach of the kingdom of glory, and prays for compassion at the future judgment seat. Love now celebrates, sweeping with its prayerful arrangement the visible and invisible, the heaven, the earth and the infernal regions. (The Works of Innocent, Archbishop of Chersonese, vol. 1, pp. 454-455).

7) "The light-depicting children" the Holy Church (i.e. such, whose lives reflect the fulfillment of the commandments of Christ the Savior), of course, all receive "the fire breathing dew of the Spirit" on this feast in the new, complete cleansing of sins and are more inflamed with fidelity to the Lord, more zealous for the life pleasing to God. Now the sinners who represent the other side of church celebration: the fire of grace of the Holy Spirit burns all the guilty, all those alienated from the life-creating Divine brightness, inducing into the conscience of the person his impartial judge. And here it is during the presentation of the similar action of the fire of grace of the All Holy Spirit, who destroys all the impure, the involuntary dark thoughts that appear in the soul of the sinner. Not having in himself the spiritual might for the experience of joy on this great church feast and together with remembering the corporal, impure sinful life, the sinner on this joyful day trembles before the judgment seat of the divine fire, which has descended even on him with all his sinful inclinations, with his slavery to sin and to the devil. But if the present church celebration has stirred up fear before the judgment seat of the divine fire in the soul of the sinner, then it is for his good: for all is not yet lost for

him; he will find calm for himself on the present feast. This fear before the judgment seat of God having appeared in his soul is the beginning of his spiritual rebirth, the beginning of his tearful invocation to his Savior, the beginning of his tearful supplication for the saving grace of the All Holy Spirit now most abundantly pouring into the regions of his soul, cleansing him, like fire, from all that is sinful in him. Such sinner is close to his salvation. But there is a spiritual situation, the most terrible situation completely hopeless, which is called spiritual blindness. This situation in its final development is not that the other, as the full living alienation from the Deity, from all sacred Divine laws but is also without the slightest consciousness of his sinfulness, unrighteousness of his way of living. Such a person is not touched at all with the present church celebration. He is spiritually blind for he does not see the now appointed way by the Church of light, life, truth and grace. He is deaf, for does not hear the joyful appeal of the Church to the recognition of the grace of the Spirit. He is poor, for he does not have the holy feeling, required for sensing church joy. He is nude, for he is deprived of Divine grace. He is unfortunate, for he does not understand all the perniciousness of his way of life. He is pitiful, as he is led to the abyss of the dead. Such an awful condition is arrived at in the years of childhood and youth of opposing the Christian advice of his mother or educator, to the good lessons of study and education, later, to the lessons of life and the word of God, and at all times, to the suggestions of his conscience. The sinner, not suddenly but gradually, reaches such a strange condition. Each new resistance to the voice calling him to salvation hardens his conscience more and more. This voice becomes weaker and weaker day by day, and the sinner approaches all the closer to that fatal limit when, left to himself and his persistence, he will become inaccessible to all appeals of grace. He will continue to listen, perhaps, to the preaching of the Gospel, but this preaching will not lead him to salutary action. And neither the threats of the truth touch his conscience, nor the meek appeals of grace reach his heart. The Judgment Seat of God will still amaze people around him but he himself sheds tears about sufferings or death of his relatives. But the Holy Spirit, Who alone can make these trials salutary for the soul, already will not penetrate them any more through His beneficial influence, and the sinner amidst grief remains chained in the bonds of sin. The distance between him and God increases more and more. His indifference, unbelief, moral dream seize him all the more strongly in his soul. For him repentance and consequently also forgiveness become more impossible. It is not other than the unfortunate condition of the soul, its own persistent opposition to the Holy Spirit, closed a way to repentance and reconciliation with God for itself. Such a person cannot have a place in today's celebration. And as his indifference, according to the word of God, is vomited up "out of the Divine mouth" (Rev. 3:13-18). "Their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber" (2

Peter 2:3; Ref. Heb. 6:4-6; 10:27-29). He cannot belong to the Holy Church, and in this life he is given to slavery to the devil, and in future he will be prepared for Gehenna. And this judgment of God is expressed not in those, or other external actions, but occurs inside the person himself invisible to others (John 3:19-20). The person condemns himself by not belonging to the Church. Today he feels the burden of the church celebration, and he does not understand the joyful feelings of the "light shaped children of the church", who received "the fire breathing dew of the Spirit". He does not even understand the joyful repentant feelings, which members of the Church today experience, repenting their pernicious life in sin. He feels superfluous in this celebration and he himself leaves it.

Today's celebration has also the meaning in the forms of fiery tongues of the Spirit of grace for the persistent unrepentant sinners, for it judges them, and does not give them the right of participation in the church joy. Blessed are those who belong to the number of the "light shaped children" in the Holy Church! If in their hearts a full stony unfeeling has taken hold, then having the boldness of the children of the Holy Church they also should now raise up such prayers that has also warmed them with the fire of the Divine grace that they, even though at the end of their life, have addressed to the source of blessings and for this reference have been saved by the Good Comforter. The same who feel in themselves the need for repentant prayer for their defiled life, should stir up in their souls the hope of light that in the consciousness of the their sinfulness their penitential prayer will be warmed by fire of the grace of All Holy Spirit and will intercede on this gala day for the "fire breathing dew of the Spirit" (for details see Mogilevskiiia Eparkh. Ved. (Mogilev Diocesan News) 1891, 18-19).

*S. V. Bulgakov, **Handbook for Church Servers**, 2nd ed., 1274 pp. (Kharkov, 1900) pp. 608-618).
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