

Pentecost Sunday

"Blessed are you, O Christ our God. You have shown the fishermen to be all-wise, sending down upon them the Holy Spirit. Through them you have caught the whole world in your net. O Lover of us all, glory to you" (Troparion of the Descent of the Holy Spirit)!

Dear brothers and sisters! Today we celebrate Pentecost. More than two thousand years ago, Jerusalem was crowded with pilgrims from all over the Roman Empire. And here, the attention of the people was directed to a small group of Galileans illuminated by some unearthly force. Then Peter said that the time had come to fulfill the prophecies, when the Holy Spirit would rest on all the faithful. He addressed the audience with a sermon: "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to by God with mighty works and wonders and signs which God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know – this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. But God raised him up, having loosed the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it" (Acts 2:22-24).

The power of apostolic doctrine was extraordinary. Thousands were baptized in Jesus' name that day. The Holy Spirit radically changed the essence of the apostles: from simple, timid fishermen to courageous preachers of the Gospel of Christ.

The book of Genesis says that in the beginning, when the Lord created the "invisible and empty" earth, "...the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters" (Gen. 1: 2). It was the first, cosmic Pentecost, the Pentecost of creation. Since then, the Life-Giving Spirit has filled the universe, giving unity to the scattered and revealing the potential of all living things. "When you send forth your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth" (Ps. 103:30). The spring burst of life is a sign of His action.

In the second chapter of Genesis, we see human Pentecost: "then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2:7). Despite the Fall, people have not lost this Spirit forever. Pentecost is repeated every time a child begins. It is manifested in human life when love reigns and hatred is overcome. When the Spirit reveals the mysteries of eternity, scientists make discoveries, and artists and painters try to capture its reflection in their creations.

Thanks to the Spirit who "spoke through the prophets," God's chosen people kept the true faith for centuries. It was Pentecost of the Old Testament.

From the first pages of the Gospel, we see the descent of the Holy Spirit. "And the angel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you...'" (Luke 1:35). Mary conceived Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. It became the Pentecost of the Mother of God. Thirty years later, at the Baptism of Jesus Christ in the Jordan River, John the Baptist said, "...I saw the Spirit descend as a dove from heaven and remains on him" (John 1:32). Fifty days after the Resurrection of Christ, and ten days after His Ascension, Christ's promise to the apostles was fulfilled. With the sound of a strong wind and tongues of flame, the Holy Spirit descended on the heads of the apostles, turning them into inspired preachers of the Word of God.

One of the most quoted speeches of the 20th century was the inaugural speech of the 35th President of the United States of America, John F. Kennedy, in 1961. He said, "Don't ask what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country." From the same speech: "The lamp is passed on to a new generation." Kennedy ends his address reminding us, "...that here on earth God's work must truly be our own."

These words summarize the effect of the descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles when, inspired by the Power of God, the Savior's disciples took to the streets of the city to preach the Gospel. Their only thought was, "Let the Word disperse."

Generations have changed and, as Kennedy said, "The lamp has been passed on to a new generation." Today we ask ourselves, "What can we do for God?" What will be the consequences of our lives? Can we, modern Christians, carry the lamp of faith so that it illuminates the path of humanity? Will we find someone to pass it on to in the future? The answer to all these questions depends on all of us.

Today we celebrate Pentecost, and at the same time, call on the Holy Spirit to come upon our heads. Dear believers! Let us pray that the Holy Spirit will descend into our hearts as He once descended into the hearts of the apostles.