



DIAKONIA

A National Ministry of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

John 7:37-52; 8:12



“...Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water”

REFLECTIONS FROM TODAY'S READING | Fr. George Parsenios

Today's Gospel reading refers to the gift of the Spirit, which had not yet been given during Jesus' ministry because Jesus had not yet risen from the dead. That gift was bestowed upon believers on the day of Pentecost, the great feast that we celebrate today. And the gift of the Spirit changes the disciples. Only after Pentecost did the disciples fully understand the mission of Jesus and become fully empowered to share the Gospel throughout the world. Every Christian is given this same gift of the Spirit in our baptism. Like the disciples at Pentecost, we must ourselves come to understand more fully the mission of Jesus and we must share his Gospel in our own lives. And this requires effort. We are given the Spirit at baptism, but we must receive it through our own decisions and actions. Church history is littered

with Christians who did not make this effort. When St. Paul writes First Corinthians, he tells the Christians in Corinth that he cannot address them as people who have received this Spirit (1 Cor 3:1) but as infants in Christ and as people who do not understand their Christian identity. How do we avoid their immature fate? We can do three things. First, we must guard our words carefully. If we watch what we say, we ensure that we say things that draw ourselves and others closer to God. Second, we must continue to live ascetical lives. By fasting and praying and giving generously to others, we arrest our own selfish wills and ensure that we subject our will to the will of God. Finally, we must study our faith so that we understand not only who God is, but what his purpose is for our lives.

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FROM THE ORIGINAL GREEK: Pentecost (Πεντηκοστή) What does “Pentecost” mean?

Fr. George Parsenios



The word Πεντηκοστή/*Pentecost* means “fiftieth” in Greek, and the feast of Pentecost falls on the 50th day after Pascha, when the Holy Spirit descended on the disciples in Jerusalem. Before Pentecost became a Christian festival, however,

it was celebrated by Jews as the 50th day after Passover. The Hebrew name

for the feast was *Shavuot*, which means “weeks,” because the feast was celebrated after 7 weeks (49 days) had elapsed from Passover. *Shavuot/Pentecost* commemorated the gift of the Law that God gave

to Moses on Mt. Sinai, and it was one of the three great pilgrimage festivals, when pious Jews traveled from around the world to be in Jerusalem. When the Holy Spirit descended on the apostles at Pentecost, it inspired them to speak miraculously in foreign languages. These languages were understood by the pilgrims who had traveled from distant lands to observe the Jewish feast (Acts 2:8). But if the original feast of Pentecost celebrated the Mosaic Law as God’s gift to the Jewish people, the Christian feast celebrates the even greater gift of the Holy Spirit, indicating that we are no longer guided by the letter of the Law, but by the Holy Spirit of God who writes God’s will in our hearts (Ezekiel 11:19, Jeremiah 31:33).

THIS WEEK’S LOOK AT CHURCH HISTORY

The Greek War Relief Efforts of World War II



*An unidentified schoolboy in Patras, Greece waits with his tin dish under his arm for his school lunch. Ca 1945
Harry S. Truman Library and Museum public domain*

During World War II and the years that followed, the Greek Orthodox Community in America organized to provide critical aid to people in Greece and all of Europe. Our communities did all they could to support both the War Bond initiative and the Greek War Relief Association. Fundraisers were held by Archbishop Athenagoras with the assistance of the Catholic Archbishop of Boston who encouraged his congregation to support the effort. Spyros Skouras, a prominent film executive, organized events and premieres featuring well-known actors to raise funds for the cause.

As a result of the Greek War Relief Association’s efforts, hundreds of thousands of packages containing food, clothing, medicine, blankets, and medical equipment were shipped to Greece. Between the early 1940’s and the mid-1950’s, more than \$300 million (adjusted for inflation) were raised by Greek Orthodox in America from within and from outside the Greek Orthodox community.

THE SUNDAY OF Holy Pentecost

The Feast of Holy Pentecost, celebrated fifty days after Pascha and ten days after the Ascension, is a great feast of our Church. It is not merely the commemoration of a past event, but the living manifestation of God's presence among us. We celebrate the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles, the revelation of the Holy Trinity, and the Church as the living Body of Christ.

As we hear in the Book of Acts, the Apostles were gathered as Jesus had directed them. Suddenly, a sound like a rushing wind filled the house, and tongues of fire rested upon each of them. Filled with the Holy Spirit, they began to speak in different languages. This was the transformative presence of God, sanctifying the Apostles and empowering them to proclaim the Gospel to all nations.



This took place during the Jewish Feast of Pentecost (50 days after Passover), when many people from across the known world had gathered in Jerusalem. Hearing the Apostles speak in their own languages, the people were astonished. Some were confused, others doubtful. Yet through the preaching of the Apostle Peter who boldly proclaimed Christ Crucified and Risen, the hearts of many were moved. When they asked, "What shall we do?" Peter called them to repentance, baptism, and the reception of the Holy Spirit. On that day, thousands entered the life of the Church.

Church lives today as a communion rooted in the Apostles' teaching, fellowship, the breaking of the bread, and prayer. This life continues today in the Divine Liturgy, the sacraments, and the unity of the faithful. Pentecost reminds us that the Church is sustained by the presence and action of the Holy Spirit, who guides us in truth and unites us in love.

The icon of Pentecost proclaims this reality. The Holy Spirit descends upon the Apostles, while below the world awaits the light of Christ. This mission of the Church continues, and we are called to participate. We are not spectators of Pentecost. We have received the Holy Spirit in our baptism and chrismation. We are called to grow in repentance and prayer, bearing witness to Jesus in our daily lives.



PERSONAL ACTION ITEM

This week, commit to living your Orthodox faith intentionally. Let us set aside 10 minutes each day for prayer and reflection, asking the Holy Spirit to guide you from passive belief into active, living faith.



Holy Pentecost

Pentecost is a special day that celebrates when the Holy Spirit came down from heaven, 50 days after Easter. The Holy Spirit came like a strong, rushing wind and looked like flames of fire resting on the disciples and the Virgin Mary. They were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different languages. People from many countries were there in Jerusalem and heard about Jesus in their own language. About 3,000 people believed and were baptized that day

Just For Kids!
(...and the young at heart)



A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M

N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z

ANSWER KEY: A term found in ACTS 2:3 "TONGUES OF FIRE"