



## St. Alexis of Wilkes-Barre Orthodox Church

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Services Schedule

Please see our [online calendar](#) for dates and times of Feast Day services.

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Bulletin for Sunday, June 23, 2024

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### Welcome



Jesus Christ taught us to love and serve all people, regardless of their ethnicity or nationality. To understand that, we need to look no further than to the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). Every time we celebrate the Divine Liturgy, it is offered "on behalf

of all, and for all." As Orthodox Christians we stand against racism and bigotry. All human beings share one common identity as children of God. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatian 3:28)

### Members of our Parish Council are:

Greg Jankura - Vice President  
Susan Davis- President  
Sharon Hanson - Member at Large  
Luba Martins - Member at Large  
Susan Egan - Treasurer  
Dn Timothy Skuby - Secretary

## Pastoral Care - General Information

Emergency Sick Calls can be made at any time. Please call Fr Steven at (860) 322-2906, when a family member is admitted to the hospital.

Anointing in Sickness: The Sacrament of Unction is available in Church, the hospital, or your home, for anyone who is sick and suffering, however severe.

Marriages and Baptisms require early planning, scheduling and selections of sponsors (crown bearers or godparents). See Father before booking dates and reception halls!

Funerals are celebrated for practicing Orthodox Christians. Please see Father for details. The Church opposes cremation; we cannot celebrate funerals for cremations.

## Announcements

### Pentecost

Please remember that we will hold Vespers of Pentecost with the Kneeling Prayers right after Liturgy. Coffee hour will follow. It would be nice to break our fast together and to celebrate the Feast of Pentecost with the breaking of bread (and other assorted eats and drinks).

## Prayers, Intercessions and Commemorations



Memory Eternal to all the departed faithful of this parish.

Pray for: All those confined to hospitals, nursing homes, and their own homes due to illness; for all those who serve in the armed forces; widows, orphans, prisoners, victims of violence, and

refugees;

- All those suffering chronic illness, financial hardship, loneliness, addictions, abuse, abandonment and despair; those who are homeless, those who are institutionalized, those who have no one to pray for them;
- All Orthodox seminarians & families; all Orthodox monks and nuns, and all those considering monastic life; all Orthodox missionaries and their families.
- All those who have perished due to hatred, intolerance and pestilence; all those departed this life in the hope of the Resurrection.

Please let Fr. Steven know via email if you have more names for which to pray.

- Departed: Joseph Anselmo, Joan Navarro
- Clergy and their families: Fr Sergei,
- Catechumen: Robert, Abbie, Matthew, Joseph, Mary, and Kevin
- Individuals and Families: Luba, Suzanne, Gail Galina, Evelyn, Rosemary, John, Daniel & Dayna
- Birthdays and Name's Days this

- Month: Jason Danilack-Fekete, Nancy Davis
- Anniversaries this Month: Malcolm and Anastasia Littlefield
- Expecting and Newborn: Lynn, David and their unborn child, Elizabeth and her unborn son, Timothy
- Traveling: Maureen Skuby
- Sick and those in distress: Thomas, Sheri, Joanna, Joshua, Stormy, Scott

8th SUNDAY OF PASCHA — Tone 7. Holy Pentecost: Feast of the Holy Trinity. Martyr Agrippina of Rome (253-260). Righteous Artemii of Verkol'sk (1545). Translation of the Relics of St. Herman, Archbishop of Kazan' (1567). Martyrs Eustochius, Gaius, Probus, Lollius, and Urban, of Ancyra (4th c.). Synaxis of the Saints of Vladimir. The Meeting of the VLADIMIR Icon of the Mother of God (in commemoration of the saving of Moscow from the invasion of Khan Akhmat—1480). Nikéttas of Thebes and those with him (11th c.).

- Again we pray for those who have lost their lives because of the wars in Ukraine and in the Middle East: that the Lord our God may look upon them with mercy, and give them rest where there is neither sickness, or sorrow, but life everlasting.
- Again we pray for mercy, life, peace, health, salvation, for those who are suffering, wounded, grieving, or displaced because of the wars in Ukraine and in the Middle East.
- Again we pray for a cessation of the hostilities against Ukraine and the Middle East, and that reconciliation and peace will flourish there, we pray thee, hearken and have mercy.

## Parish Calendar

### St Alexis Parish

June 23 to July 1, 2024

#### Sunday, June 23

Tina Roman  
John Krawchuk  
Holy Pentecost  
9:30AM Divine Liturgy  
11:45AM Vespers of Pentecost w/ Kneeling Prayers

#### Monday, June 24

Nativity of the Forerunner John the Baptist

#### Tuesday, June 25

1st Tuesday after Pentecost  
Olga Kucharski  
8:30AM Matins

#### Wednesday, June 26

1st Wednesday after Pentecost

#### Thursday, June 27

1st Thursday after Pentecost  
St. Joanna the Myrrhbearer  
8:30AM Matins

#### Friday, June 28

1st Friday after Pentecost

#### Saturday, June 29

Peter and Paul, the Holy Apostles  
Sts Peter and Paul  
5:30PM Great Vespers

#### Sunday, June 30

Malcolm & Anastasia's Anniversary

Synaxis of the Twelve Holy Apostles  
Scoops for Troops Ice Cream Social  
9:30AM Divine Liturgy

**Monday, July 1**

Cosmas & Damian the Holy Unmercenaries

## Saints and Feasts

**June 23**

### **Holy Pentecost**

After the Saviour's Ascension into the Heavens, the eleven Apostles and the rest of His disciples, the God-loving women who followed after Him from the beginning, His Mother, the most holy Virgin Mary, and His brethren—all together about 120 souls returned from the Mount of Olives to Jerusalem. Entering into the house where they gathered, they went into the upper room, and there they persevered in prayer and supplication, awaiting the coming of the Holy Spirit, as their Divine Teacher had promised them. In the meanwhile, they chose Matthias, who was elected to take the place of Judas among the Apostles.

Thus, on this day, the seventh Sunday of Pascha, the tenth day after the Ascension and the fiftieth day after Pascha, at the third hour of the day from the rising of the sun, there suddenly came a sound from Heaven, as when a mighty wind blows, and it filled the whole house where the Apostles and the rest with them were gathered. Immediately after the sound, there appeared tongues of fire that divided and rested upon the head of each one. Filled

with the Spirit, all those present began speaking not in their native tongue, but in other tongues and dialects, as the Holy Spirit instructed them.

The multitudes that had come together from various places for the feast, most of whom were Jews by race and religion, were called Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and so forth, according to the places where they dwelt. Though they spoke many different tongues, they were present in Jerusalem by divine dispensation. When they heard that sound that came down from Heaven to the place where the disciples of Christ were gathered, all ran together to learn what had taken place. But they were confounded when they came and heard the Apostles speaking in their own tongues. Marvelling at this, they said one to another, "Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?" But others, because of their foolishness and excess of evil, mocked the wonder and said that the Apostles were drunken.

Then Peter stood up with the eleven, and raising his voice, spoke to all the people, proving that that which had taken place was not drunkenness, but the fulfilment of God's promise that had been spoken by the Prophet Joel: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that I shall pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and daughters shall prophesy" (Joel 2:28), and he preached Jesus of Nazareth unto them, proving in many ways that He is Christ the Lord, Whom the Jews crucified but God raised from the dead. On hearing Peter's teaching, many were smitten with

compunction and received the word. Thus, they were baptized, and on that day about three thousand souls were added to the Faith of Christ.

Such, therefore, are the reasons for today's feast: the coming of the All-holy Spirit into the world, the completion of the Lord Jesus Christ's promise, and the fulfilment of the hope of the sacred disciples, which we celebrate today. This is the final feast of the great mystery and dispensation of God's incarnation. On this last, and great, and saving day of Pentecost, the Apostles of the Saviour, who were unlearned fishermen, made wise now of a sudden by the Holy Spirit, clearly and with divine authority spoke the heavenly doctrines. They became heralds of the truth and teachers of the whole world. On this day they were ordained and began their apostleship, of which the salvation of those three thousand souls in one day was the comely and marvellous first fruit.

Some erroneously hold that Pentecost is the "birthday of the Church." But this is not true, for the teaching of the holy Fathers is that the Church existed before all other things. In the second vision of The Shepherd of Hermas we read: "Now brethren, a revelation was made unto me in my sleep by a youth of exceeding fair form, who said to me, 'Whom thinkest thou the aged woman, from whom thou receivedst the book, to be?' I say, 'The Sibyl.' 'Thou art wrong,' saith he, 'she is not.' 'Who then is she?' I say. 'The Church,' saith he. I said unto him, 'Wherefore then is she aged?' 'Because,' saith he, 'she was created before all things; therefore is she aged, and for

her sake the world was framed.'" Saint Gregory the Theologian also speaks of "the Church of Christ ... both before Christ and after Christ" (PG 35:1108-9). Saint Epiphanius of Cyprus writes, "The Catholic Church, which exists from the ages, is revealed most clearly in the incarnate advent of Christ" (PG 42:640). Saint John Damascene observes, "The Holy Catholic Church of God, therefore, is the assembly of the holy Fathers, Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Evangelists, and Martyrs who have been from the very beginning, to whom were added all the nations who believed with one accord" (PG 96, 1357c). According to Saint Gregory the Theologian, "The Prophets established the Church, the Apostles conjoined it, and the Evangelists set it in order" (PG 35, 589 A). The Church existed from the creation of the Angels, for the Angels came into existence before the creation of the world, and they have always been members of the Church. Saint Clement, Bishop of Rome, says in his second epistle to the Corinthians, the Church "was created before the sun and moon"; and a little further on, "The Church existeth not now for the first time, but hath been from the beginning" (II Cor. 14).

That which came to pass at Pentecost, then, was the ordination of the Apostles, the commencement of the apostolic preaching to the nations, and the inauguration of the priesthood of the new Israel. Saint Cyril of Alexandria says that "Our Lord Jesus Christ herein ordained the instructors and teachers of the world and the stewards of His divine Mysteries ... showing together with the dignity of Apostleship, the incomparable glory of the authority given

them ... Revealing them to be splendid with the great dignity of the Apostleship and showing them forth as both stewards and priests of the divine altars . . . they became fit to initiate others through the enlightening guidance of the Holy Spirit" (PG 74, 708-712). Saint Gregory Palamas says, "Now, therefore ... the Holy Spirit descended ... showing the Disciples to be supernal luminaries ... and the distributed grace of the Divine Spirit came through the ordination of the Apostles upon their successors" (Homily 24, 10). And Saint Sophronius, Bishop of Jerusalem, writes, "After the visitation of the Comforter, the Apostles became high priests" (PG 87, 3981B). Therefore, together with the baptism of the Holy Spirit which came upon them who were present in the upper chamber, which the Lord had foretold as recorded in the Acts, "ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence" (Acts 1:5), the Apostles were also appointed and raised to the high priestly rank, according to Saint John Chrysostom (PG 60, 21). On this day commenced the celebration of the Holy Eucharist by which we become "partakers of the Divine Nature" (II Peter 1:4). For before Pentecost, it is said of the Apostles and disciples only that they abode in "prayer and supplication" (Acts 1:14); it is only after the coming of the Holy Spirit that they persevered in the "breaking of bread," that is, the communion of the Holy Mysteries-"and in prayer" (Acts 2:42).

The feast of holy Pentecost, therefore, determined the beginning of the priesthood of grace, not the beginning of the Church. Henceforth, the Apostles proclaimed the good tidings "in country and town,"

preaching and baptizing and appointing shepherds, imparting the priesthood to them whom they judged were worthy to minister, as Saint Clement writes in his first Epistle to the Corinthians (I Cor. 42).

All foods allowed during the week following Pentecost.

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## **June 24**

### **Nativity of the Forerunner John the Baptist**

He that was greater than all who are born of women, the Prophet who received God's testimony that he surpassed all the Prophets, was born of the aged and barren Elizabeth (Luke 1: 7) and filled all his kinsmen, and those that lived round about, with gladness and wonder. But even more wondrous was that which followed on the eighth day when he was circumcised, that is, the day on which a male child receives his name. Those present called him Zacharias, the name of his father. But the mother said, "Not so, but he shall be called John." Since the child's father was unable to speak, he was asked, by means of a sign, to indicate the child's name. He then asked for a tablet and wrote, "His name is John." And immediately Zacharias' mouth was opened, his tongue was loosed from its silence of nine months, and filled with the Holy Spirit, he blessed the God of Israel, Who had fulfilled the promises made to their fathers, and had visited them that were sitting in darkness and the shadow of death, and had sent to them the light of salvation. Zacharias prophesied concerning the child

also, saying that he would be a Prophet of the Most High and Forerunner of Jesus Christ. And the child John, who was filled with grace, grew and waxed strong in the Spirit; and he was in the wilderness until the day of his showing to Israel (Luke 1:57-80). His name is a variation of the Hebrew "Johanan," which means "Yah is gracious."

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**June 29**

### **Peter and Paul, the Holy Apostles**

The divinely-blessed Peter was from Bethsaida of Galilee. He was the son of Jonas and the brother of Andrew the First-called. He was a fisherman by trade, unlearned and poor, and was called Simon; later he was renamed Peter by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, Who looked at him and said, "Thou art Simon the son of Jonas; thou shalt be called Cephas (which is by interpretation, Peter)" (John 1:42). On being raised by the Lord to the dignity of an Apostle and becoming inseparable from Him as His zealous disciple, he followed Him from the beginning of His preaching of salvation up until the very Passion, when, in the court of Caiaphas the high priest, he denied Him thrice because of his fear of the Jews and of the danger at hand. But again, after many bitter tears, he received complete forgiveness of his transgression. After the Resurrection of Christ and the descent of the Holy Spirit, he preached in Judea, Antioch, and certain parts of Asia, and finally came to Rome, where he was crucified upside down by Nero, and thus he ascended to the eternal habitations about the year 66 or 68, leaving two Catholic

(General) Epistles to the Church of Christ.

Paul, the chosen vessel of Christ, the glory of the Church, the Apostle of the Nations and teacher of the whole world, was a Jew by race, of the tribe of Benjamin, having Tarsus as his homeland. He was a Roman citizen, fluent in the Greek language, an expert in knowledge of the Law, a Pharisee, born of a Pharisee, and a disciple of Gamaliel, a Pharisee and notable teacher of the Law in Jerusalem. For this cause, from the beginning, Paul was a most fervent zealot for the traditions of the Jews and a great persecutor of the Church of Christ; at that time, his name was Saul (Acts 22:3-4). In his great passion of rage and fury against the disciples of the Lord, he went to Damascus bearing letters of introduction from the high priest. His intention was to bring the disciples of Christ back to Jerusalem in bonds. As he was approaching Damascus, about midday there suddenly shone upon him a light from Heaven. Falling on the earth, he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" And he asked, "Who art Thou, Lord?" And the Lord said, "I am Jesus Whom thou persecutest; it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." And that heavenly voice and brilliance made him tremble, and he was blinded for a time. He was led by the hand into the city, and on account of a divine revelation to the Apostle Ananias (see Oct. 1), he was baptized by him, and both his bodily and spiritual eyes were opened to the knowledge of the Sun of Righteousness. And straightway- O wondrous transformation! - beyond all expectation, he spoke with boldness in the synagogues, proclaiming that "Christ is the Son of God"

(Acts 9:1-21). As for his zeal in preaching the Gospel after these things had come to pass, as for his unabating labors and afflictions of diverse kinds, the wounds, the prisons, the bonds, the beatings, the stonings, the shipwrecks, the journeys, the perils on land, on sea, in cities, in wildernesses, the continual vigils, the daily fasting, the hunger, the thirst, the nakedness, and all those other things that he endured for the Name of Christ, and which he underwent before nations and kings and the Israelites, and above all, his care for all the churches, his fiery longing for the salvation of all, whereby he became all things to all men, that he might save them all if possible, and because of which, with his heart aflame, he continuously traveled throughout all parts, visiting them all, and like a bird of heaven flying from Asia and Europe, the West and East, neither staying nor abiding in any one place - all these things are related incident by incident in the Book of the Acts, and as he himself tells them in his Epistles. His Epistles, being fourteen in number, are explained in 250 homilies by the divine Chrysostom and make manifest the loftiness of his thoughts, the abundance of the revelations made to him, the wisdom given to him from God, wherewith he brings together in a wondrous manner the Old with the New Testaments, and expounds the mysteries thereof which had been concealed under types; he confirms the doctrines of the Faith, expounds the ethical teaching of the Gospel, and demonstrates with exactness the duties incumbent upon every rank, age, and order of man. In all these things his teaching proved to be a spiritual trumpet, and his speech was seen to be more radiant than

the sun, and by these means he clearly sounded forth the word of truth and illumined the ends of the world. Having completed the work of his ministry, he likewise ended his life in martyrdom when he was beheaded in Rome during the reign of Nero, at the same time, some say, when Peter was crucified.

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## June 30

**Synaxis of the Twelve Holy Apostles: Peter, Andrew, James & John the sons of Zebedee, Phillip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Jude the brother of James, Simon & Matthias**

The names of the Twelve Apostles are these: Simon, who was called Peter, and his brother Andrew, the First-called; James the son of Zebedee, and his brother John, who was also the Evangelist and Theologian; Philip, and Bartholomew (see also June 11); Thomas, and Matthew the publican, who was also called Levi and was an Evangelist; James the son of Alphaeus, and Jude (also called Lebbaeus, and surnamed Thaddaeus), the brother of James, the Brother of God; Simon the Cananite ("the Zealot"), and Matthias, who was elected to fill the place of Judas the traitor (see Aug. 9).

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## Hymns of the Day



### The First Antiphon

The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims His handiwork. (Ps. 18:1)  
Refrain: Through the prayers of the

Theotokos, O Savior, save us!  
Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge. (Ps.

18:2) (Refrain)

Their proclamation has gone out into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the universe. (Ps. 18:4) (Refrain)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen. (Refrain)

### The Second Antiphon

The Lord answer you in the day of trouble; the Name of the God of Jacob protect you! (Ps. 19:1)

Refrain: O Gracious Comforter, save us who sing to You: Alleluia!

May He send you help from the sanctuary and give you support from Zion! (Ps. 19:2) (Refrain)

May He remember all your offerings, and fulfill all your plans! (Ps. 19:3) (Refrain)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

("Only-begotten Son and immortal Word of God...")

### The Third Antiphon

In Your strength the king rejoices, O Lord, and exults greatly in Your salvation. (Ps. 20:1)

Tone 8 Troparion

Blessed are You, O Christ our God, You have revealed the fishermen as most wise by sending down upon them the Holy Spirit, and through them You drew the world into Your net.//

O Lover of Man, glory to You!

You have given him his heart's desire, and have not withheld the request of his lips. (Ps. 20:2)

Troparion of the Feast

For You meet him with goodly blessings; You set a crown of fine gold upon his head. (Ps. 20:3)

Troparion of the Feast

Entrance Verse

Be exalted, O Lord, in Your strength! We will sing and praise Your power! (Ps. 20:13)

Tone 8 Troparion

Blessed are You, O Christ our God, You have revealed the fishermen as most wise by sending down upon them the Holy Spirit, and through them You drew the world into Your net.//

O Lover of Man, glory to You!

Tone 8 Kontakion

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.

*Instead of the Trisagion, we sing:)*

As many as have been baptized into Christ,  
have put on Christ. Alleluia.

*(Instead of "It is truly meet...", we sing:)*

Rejoice, O Queen, glory of mothers and  
virgins!  
No tongue, however sweet or fluent, is  
eloquent enough to praise you worthily.  
Every mind is overawed by your  
childbearing.  
Therefore, with one voice, we glorify you.

### **Communion Hymn**

Let Your good Spirit lead me on a level path!  
(Ps. 142:12a)  
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

## **Gospel and Epistle Readings**

### **Epistle Reading**

**Prokeimenon. 8th Tone. Psalm 18.4,1.**  
Their voice has gone out into all the earth.  
Verse: The heavens declare the glory of God.

**The reading is from Acts of the Apostles  
2:1-11.**

WHEN THE DAY of Pentecost had come,

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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. Now there were  
dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from  
every nation under heaven. And at this sound  
the multitude came together, and they were  
bewildered, because each one heard them  
speaking in his own language. And they  
were amazed and wondered, saying, "Are  
not all these who are speaking Galileans?  
And how is it that we hear, each of us in his  
own native language? Parthians and Medes  
and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia,  
Judea and Cappadocia, Pontos and Asia,  
Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts  
of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors  
from Rome, both Jews and proselytes,  
Cretans and Arabians, we hear them telling  
in our own tongues the mighty works of  
God."

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### **Gospel Reading**

**Holy Pentecost**  
**The Reading is from John 7:37-52; 8:12**

On the last day of the feast, the great day,  
Jesus stood up and proclaimed, "If any one  
thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who  
believes in me, as the scripture has said, 'Out  
of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.'"  
Now this he said about the Spirit, which  
those who believed in him

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were to receive; for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

When they heard these words, some of the people said, "This is really the prophet." Others said, "This is the Christ." But some said, "Is the Christ to come from Galilee? Has not the scripture said that the Christ is descended from David, and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?" So there was a division among the people over him. Some of them wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him.

The officers then went back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, "Why did you not bring him?" The officers answered, "No man ever spoke like this man!" The Pharisees answered them, "Are you led astray, you also? Have any of the authorities or of the Pharisees believed in him? But this crowd, who do not know the law, are accursed." Nikodemos, who had gone to him before, and who was one of them, said to them, "Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does?" They replied, "Are you from Galilee too? Search and you will see that no prophet is to rise from Galilee." Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

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## Wisdom of the Fathers

For as thirsty men, when they have taken a bowl, eagerly drain it and then desist, so too

they who hear the divine oracles if they receive them thirsting, will never be weary until they have drunk them up. For to show that men ought ever to thirst and hunger, "Blessed," It said, "are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness" (Matt.5:6)

## St. John Chrysostom

*Homily 51 on John 7, 4th Century*

## Beyond the Sermon



The Gospel story is historically set in the time of Jesus' teaching ministry, before His arrest and trial. The passage is read on the feast of Holy Pentecost because it is closely associated with the promised gift of the Holy Spirit, which the disciples received on Pentecost, fifty days after the Resurrection

and ten days after the Ascension of the Lord. To the Jewish people, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ declares: "If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, ... 'Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.'" This is the "living water" promised to the Samaritan woman at the well. Jesus speaks these words on the last day of the Jewish eight-day Feast of Tabernacles commemorating

Israel's 40 years of wandering in the desert. During the sacrifice, water was drawn from the pool of Siloam — the same pool where the blind man was healed. The people chanted from the prophet Isaiah: "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation" (Isaiah 12:3). They read from the prophet Ezekiel about water flowing from the temple (Ezekiel 47). They mixed the water with wine and poured it at the foot of the altar as a purification and a remembrance of the water that flowed from the rock that Moses struck (Exodus 17:1-7). The "rock" symbolizes Christ, the wine foreshadows the Eucharist, and the "living water" is the grace of the Holy Spirit that would come on the day of Pentecost.

After Christ's Ascension, the remaining Holy Apostles and disciples return to Jerusalem, patiently waiting for the Holy Spirit. On Holy Pentecost, Christ's promise is fulfilled, and the Holy Spirit suddenly comes. Filled with the Holy Spirit, the disciples begin miraculously speaking in other tongues — languages and dialects they did not know. Apostle Peter, in his famous sermon (Acts 2:14-36), tells the people that this is what the prophet Joel predicted, that the Holy Spirit would be poured out on all flesh (Joel 2:28).

In the Nicene Creed, we confess the Holy Spirit to be the Lord, the Creator of Life, Who proceeds from the Father, Who together with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, Who spoke through the prophets. With the power of the Holy Spirit now with them, the mission of the Church in the world begins. As Pentecost was originally a harvest festival,

through the power of the Holy Spirit, the work of the Holy Apostles will now reap a harvest of souls. On that day, about 3000 people believed and were baptized (Acts 2:41). According to tradition, the Church is established on the day of Holy Pentecost. This mystery is what the Church calls us to celebrate on today's feast. In many ways, Holy Pentecost represents the final fulfillment of the mission of Christ because the mission of the Church on earth starts with Pentecost. The Church is the continuation of the Incarnation of Christ on earth. As Christ was present on earth in His physical body, He is now ever-present in His mystical Body, the Church. The Holy Apostles, a group of mostly unlearned fishermen made wise by the Holy Spirit, now go out into the world with divine authority and proclaim the truth of the Gospel, the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Holy Pentecost is undoubtedly an event in history, and it continues to be relevant to us today. Holy Pentecost sets out the fundamental feature of the Church's theology and mission — the doctrine of the Holy Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) and the mandate to make disciples of all nations. Holy Pentecost also provides the Church with its basic structure and organization. The Head of the Church is Christ. In its earthly dimensions, the Church is headed by the Holy Apostles, who govern, preach, and serve. Bishops are the successors of the Holy Apostles. With the sacrament of ordination, through the laying on of hands, an unbroken connection is established between the Holy Apostles and us.

Through apostolic succession, the mission of the Church is given a location — a diocese — which the Bishop oversees. When we celebrate the Divine Liturgy and other services, the Bishop stands in the place of Christ as His representative. Within our parishes and communities, we often meet a priest, not a bishop. Practically speaking, the Priest is called to administer the sacraments on behalf of the Bishop. All sacraments conducted by the Priest are tied to the Bishop's authority and status within the apostolic succession. Every time we go to Church, attend the Divine Liturgy, and receive the Holy Eucharist, we experience Pentecost. We live the mission of the Church as it was set out by Christ Himself. Just like Christ led his disciples in establishing the Holy Eucharist during the Mystical Supper, the Bishop conducts the liturgy with the presbyters,deacons, and all the people of God in our churches today.

At the same time, the notion of community remains an integral part of the Church. The hierarchical structure of the Church is dependent on a community of faithful. The models for leadership and worship in the Church are designed for community. Christians live and pray in communities together with others. The most important sacrament in the Church, the Divine Liturgy, takes place within the community. All the liturgical prayers, the congregational responses, and the common chalice reinforce this collective perspective. For its part, Christ-like leadership, which entails sacrifice in service to others, presupposes community. In the Church, bishops, priests, and lay leaders are called to serve the people of God, the community

of believers.

Holy Pentecost theologically completes the way in which we worship God. In our services and prayers, we often refer to God in three hypostases: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In this way, we articulate the mystery of the Holy Trinity. This is why Holy Pentecost is also referred to as Holy Trinity Sunday. Coming to terms with the doctrine of the Holy Trinity in purely rational terms can be challenging. It may be helpful to recall that the Holy Trinity stems from God's revelation, starting with the Father in the Old Testament, moving to the Incarnation of the Son, and the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. In this manner, Holy Pentecost completes the process of revelation and sets the standard for our worship and theology. God was revealed in Trinity, in One and Three. Therefore, there is a powerful dimension of diversity and community in God Himself. Both hierarchical and communitarian perspectives are sustained and nourished in the Church through its theology.

It is helpful to consider how Pentecost is relevant to us in our daily struggle in the faith. God wants us to follow Him in every aspect of our lives. We are called to give ourselves entirely to the leading of the Holy Spirit to truly benefit from the freedom and love that God offers us. Opening ourselves to discover our own unique path is a process that takes place with others within the community of believers. It does not take place with us alone. In finding our place in the world and the Church, Holy Pentecost sets out the essential feature

of our approach — unity of the Spirit. Apostle Paul teaches us to make “every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace: [for] there is one body and one Spirit” (Ephesians 4:3-4). This feature is vital because it connects us to Christ and the Holy Apostles. For Orthodox Christians, maintaining an unwavering link to the early Church is of great importance. Let us celebrate the Feast of Holy Pentecost in communion with one another and the unity of the Holy Spirit, speaking with the “tongues” of the many gifts God has given us to share the Gospel with others.

