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Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Pentecost Sunday/ Descent of the Holy Spirit

May 23, 2010

Father Robert E Lucas, Pastor; Subdeacon Daniel
J. Korba and Nikitas Tsokris, Cantors

Rectory 215-862-9227; Parish Center 732-780-3158

We Are A Stewardship Parish Of Time, Talent and Treasure

The mission of our parish faith community is to teach the Gospel message in the rich tradition of the Orthodox Church; to enable people to reflect the image of Jesus Christ in every day activities of life; to offer spiritual formation through changing times; and to celebrate community among Orthodox believers in our Freehold area.

We of St. Paul the Apostle Parish dedicate ourselves to maintaining the sanctity of worship and spiritual enlightenment in a family environment that reaches and involves all ages and unifies all people.

We believe in the spirit of ecumenism in which we share our faith by word and example and extend our spiritual insights to all people.

We accept the responsibility of Christian Stewardship that through generous giving we may all experience a faith communion with Christ as the Center of our lives.

We dedicate ourselves to insuring the well-being of all people so that we may truly experience the message of Christ's salutary gospel.

We are a beacon on a hill with the eyes of many upon us; that beacon is the inspired Light of Christ which must shine brightly in our lives.

It is not ourselves we preach but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts, that we in turn might make known the glory of God shining on the face of Christ. This treasure we possess in earthen vessels to make it clear that its surpassing power comes from God and not from us. We are afflicted in every way possible, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in us 2 Corinthians 4: 5 - 8.

GLAD TIDINGS

+++ Today we have festal anointing on the occasion of this glorious feast of Pentecost, the Descent of the Holy Spirit, the birthday of our blessed Church. The customary greeting now is "Christ Is Among Us!" to which we respond, "He Is And Shall Be!"

+++ Monday we have the simple feast of the Holy Spirit and the Divine Liturgy is celebrated at 7: 30 PM. Please come and join us in praise and prayer on this second day of the feast of Pentecost.

+++ We remind our faithful that at the last Diocesan Council this past summer, the Diocesan Dues were raised, due to inflation and need, from the past \$50.00 per adult individual, eighteen years and older, to \$60.00 per year. Our envelope offering system still has the old amount on it, so please disregard that figure and make your offering according to the new mandated amount. If this offering was made in the old amount, please correct it by submitting the additional amount with a notation on the envelope because the parish must send the entire amount to the diocesan chancery.

+++ We will have Bake Sale this Friday, May 28 in time for the Memorial Day celebration. Please secure orders for Nut Rolls, Poppyseed, Lekvar and Apricot Rolls at \$12.00 each. The next and last Pirohi Sale for the season will be on Saturday, June 12.

+++ A special Birthday offering for the Church is taken after the gospel reading today. May your offering show our appreciation for the gift of salvation we have in Christ through His Body and Bride, our blessed Church!

+++ The sign-up sheet for both the Web Site and Bulletin sponsors is on the bulletin board in the kitchen. Please sign up as soon as possible. Do NOT make payment until your sign-up month has arrived. This will make it easier for Father to keep track of payments. Thanks in advance to all who support the parish in this way.

+++ We offer thanks to the Blessed Trinity for inspiring generosity in the souls of our faithful and the blessing of abundant grace in our midst with the offering received this past week-end: Tithe Offering, \$582.00; Candles, \$16.00; Food Coupons, \$220.00; Flowers, \$65.00; Building Fund, \$1000.00; Christian Fellowship, \$1.00; Parish Dues, \$25.00, for a total of \$1909.00. We express our profound gratitude to the parishioner communicants who offered their God-given treasure for the sake of the Lord and the good of our parish. God bless and reward you good and faithful souls! The attendance was 41 adults and 13 children last Sunday.

+++ As faithful believers, we intercede and associate ourselves in prayer with the following who have prayed and offered seven day lights for their intentions: Father Lucas, Pani Lucas, +Paul Szmaida, Debra Szmaida, Maria Idromenos, Anna Zacharyczuk, Marilyn Korba, Maria Garcia, Kent Pasquino, Kyle Pasquino, and Pani Buletza.

+++ We make a PENNIES FROM HEAVEN Canister available for our faithful to bring in pennies for our altar and its appointments. We are already in receipt of \$1572.00 from this apostolate. Even your pennies can help and are a blessing to our parish.

+++ For the expansion of our much needed parochial facilities, our parish pledge support to date totals \$103,715.00. As we thank the Lord for inspiring generosity in the hearts of our faithful, we also thank the donors for accepting the challenge of the Lord in building up His Body. We cordially invite and look forward to receiving additional and increased pledges from all our devoted parishioners.

+++ Please check the Sign-Up-Sheet for the weekly Christian Fellowship for the coming weeks. Simple foods without need for preparation are the best. Marilyn Korba coordinates this vital apostolate. Please assist her in making it a success by bringing your donation early so that all are present at the worship of our God.

WISDOM! BE ATTENTIVE

Heavenly King, Comforter, Spirit of Truth: You are everywhere present and fill all things. Treasury of blessings and Giver of life, come and dwell within us, cleanse us of all stain, and save our souls, O gracious Lord! Hymn to the Holy Spirit.

Blessed are You, O Christ God. You filled the fishermen with wisdom, sending down upon them the Holy Spirit. Through them, You have caught the whole world in Your net. O Lover of mankind, glory be to You! Troparion of Pentecost.

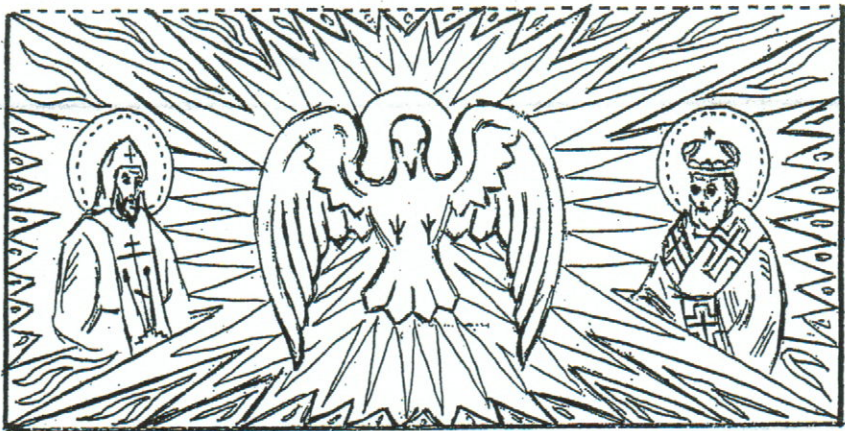
When the Most High came down and confused tongues, He scattered the nations; but when He distributed the tongues of fire, He called all men to unity. Therefore, with one voice, let us praise the Holy Spirit. Kontakion, Feast of Pentecost.

Through all the world their voice resounds, their message reaches to the ends of the earth. Prokimenon, Feast of Pentecost.

O my soul, extol the One God in three divine persons. Hail, O Queen, glory of virgins and mothers; to adequately praise you is beyond the eloquence of the most cultured tongue. The wonderful manner in which you gave birth to Christ amazes all intelligence. Therefore, with one accord, we the faithful extol you. Hymn instead of 'It is truly proper,' Feast of Pentecost.

Your good Spirit shall lead me into the land of righteousness. Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia! Communion Hymn, Feast of Pentecost.

All the people have seen wonders today in the city of David, when the Holy Spirit descended in tongues of fire, as told by the God-inspired Luke, who said: "The disciples were gathered together; there was a sound like a mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And they began to speak in foreign tongues, teaching the doctrine of the Holy Trinity." Matins Hymn, Feast of Pentecost.



The GIFTS of the Holy SPIRIT

Dear Lord, bless me with

KNOWLEDGE to know right from wrong,

FORTITUDE to stand up and be strong,

UNDERSTANDING to follow God's way,

PIETY to worship and pray,

COUNSEL to enlighten and guide me

WISDOM to feel your presence beside me,

and

FEAR OF THE LORD to always be awed by the mighty wonders
of our God!

ONE CHURCH

Faith is a more than just a vague feeling of confidence in something. It is, instead, a specific vision of reality, revealed to us by God in whom "...we live and move and have our being" Acts of the Apostles 17: 28. Faith is more than a construct of reality that we must put together by our mere human effort and reasoning. It is an implicit gift of God, imparted us out of his infinite wisdom, and to which we commit our whole life and being.

Today we many times make faith something wholly subjective, a gift we keep in ourselves and do not share with any one else, lest we impose on them our own view of reality, which by the constraints of our politically correct and silly society, is entirely forbidden. It is a standard of current American values that the most vile immorality is acceptable in public and accorded respect, but expressed religious faith is castigated, even vilified. Faith we most often forget, has an impelling and necessary community dimension, which today is ignored or considered intrusion and meddling because of superficial approach to matters spiritual or religious.

This, of course, does not mean faith can be forced or imposed on anyone, as the Church has forever repeatedly taught that all men must be immune from coercion on the part of individuals, social groups and every human power so that, within due limits, nobody is forced to act against his convictions nor is anyone to be restrained from acting in accordance with his convictions in religious matters, in public or private, alone, or in association with others. Faith response cannot be forced or imposed.

The gift of faith is not received in isolation, but through others, with others, particularly in the sacramental Mystery of Baptism and grows in understanding of God's revelation in the faith community we address as Church.

In the contemporary world it is fashionable to bash the Church of Jesus Christ. Outspoken atheists and agnostics, ignoring the realities of human history, attribute all wars, upheavals and misunderstandings to the existence of the Church and its separated factions. Even very pious and

generally peaceful people will declare calmly and with associated conviction, that they believe in God or that they believe in an after-life, but that they do not believe in the "Church" or the necessity of going to church. They opt after an isolated, individualized, so-called direct man and his Maker approach

Religious ritual is declared to be empty and devoid of meaning or carries negative meaning. This, however, is not the conviction of true believers, who know, understand and consequently, believe. In our Creed, we proclaim that God has indeed spoken to us as a community, a people that He has called his own, as the first letter of St. Peter teaches, "...a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, people of his own, so that you may announce the praise of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" 1 Peter 2: 9.

The mission of the Church was given to the disciples by the Lord right after the Resurrection, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" Matthew 28: 19, 20.

As we consider God's revelation to us in Scripture as the prominent source of the mind of God for us, we see that He speaks with us and teaches us in community, in groups, and demands we associate with one another in an organized way which He

identifies as the saving ark of humanity, the "Church." This is the divine plan, for God loves us and has the unity of all as a goal. Those who wish to separate themselves and idealize their own interpretations because of hurt feelings or actual stupidity, or imaginary, even real offensive sin, delude themselves in the motivation of their imaginary mind.

Believers in Christ pray at every Divine Liturgy, at other services, "...for the whole world... for the union of the holy churches of God, and for the union of all...."

There is, however, a curious point of grammar in the Creed. At the beginning, it declares, "I believe in one God, the Father Almighty..." then adds, "...and in one Lord, Jesus Christ," subsequently followed by, "...and in the Holy Spirit..." But before the statement on the Church, there is no "and," there is only "in one Church..."

Undoubtedly the Fathers did not wish to put the Church on the same level as God. Others say it is because the Holy Spirit speaks and expresses itself through and in "...one Church." Thus our faith in the one Church of Jesus Christ is a corollary to faith in God himself. Just as we believe strongly that there is but one God, so also we believe clearly there is but one Church, one vehicle of salvation, vibrant and alive in every generation.

Of course the American approach to Church is a democratic one and true

believers must avoid the kind of voting majority mentality that settles all disputes. Christ and his body is not bound by plebecites of popular value. The truth is unchanged and eternal and God's revelation cannot be reconstructed by majority rule. Romanism and Protestantism have introduced into the American thinking process the acceptability of individual deviation and the validity of separation. Neither Christ nor his Church subscribe to such utter foreign and alien nonsense. There is but one Body of Christ, but one Church established to secure salvation for mankind, only one ark to deliver us to the port of heavenly safety as there was in the time of Noah. Deviation is not acceptable before the throne of God. Truth and confusion cannot be linked to Christ. Individual interpretation and identification have no value before Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Such thinking and violently spurious truth cannot be tied to the saints or angelic powers. Jesus made it very clear in his priestly prayer to the eternal Father in the presence of the disciples at the Mystical Supper that there was to be a requisite unity among those who followed him and those who proclaimed him. He prayed, "I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me" John 17: 20, 21.

We must as believers in Jesus Christ be one because God is one.

In another place in John's gospel, our Lord taught that there is only one shepherd, Christ himself, and that therefore, there can only be one sheepfold, one unified, united gathered flock. The language and expectation are simple enough, but sinful and distracted man has complicated the matter by his intractable recalcitrance.

"I am the Good Shepherd, and I know mine and mine know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I will lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. These also I must lead and they will hear my voice and there will be one flock, one shepherd" John 10: 14 – 16. This teaching of the Lord reveals another fact, that the human race is not yet united, and that the achievement of unity will be a lifetime mission.

Because the one shepherd is Jesus the Messiah, the Lord, the Son of God, there is and always must be, an actual existing unity. The hierarchy of the Church in all directions has accepted disunity, the split and division or else it would have long ago been overcome and corrected. The triumphalism of the past still reigns supremely on many sides and in all directions. "We are right" we all sing with triumph and conviction. But such an attitude is not only incorrect, not only unChrist-like, but sinful and remains the

mountain of thought which spirituality cannot overcome.

What can be confusing to an "outsider" to Christianity and even in its varied confines is that there are so many 'churches', each in grave conflict with each other, each in opposition to the other; all claiming to be faithful to Jesus Christ. Essentially professional churchmen ignore the divisiveness among us and insist on how right they are in their own perversion of faith.

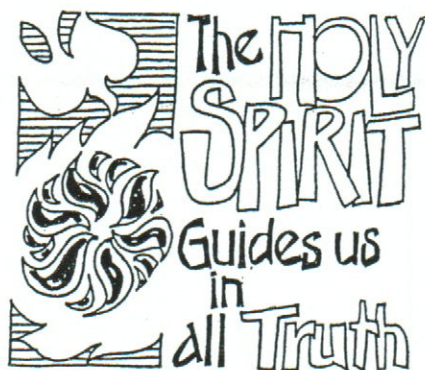
The Creed, however witnesses for us to the necessity of "one Church", as St. Paul taught, "...one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all" - Ephesians 4: 5, 6.

The world does not know us, nor recognize our sincerity if we do not openly, aggressively and with souls burning with zeal labor to achieve in fact the unity that has been sundered and whose wounds are not accepted as reality.

Orthodoxy has always seen unity in Christ as subsisting in itself. It recognizes, moreover, that many elements of sanctification, even truth, are found outside the visible confines of its holiness and enveloping and embracing arms, among which are the written Word of God, the life of grace, faith, hope and charity with varied interior gifts of the Holy Spirit, as well as countless visible elements.

As the lone principal manifestation of the true Church of Jesus Christ, Orthodoxy has a tremendous responsibility to witness to the grace of salvation in its midst and to attract to itself once again all who are outside its walls into the norm of unity that would permit a common celebration of the Lord's Eucharist, and generates a vitality of one-minded genuine faith which redeems the world.

Unity of faith does not require unity in expressing the vitality because there is a diversity in culture within the Church which gives varied expression in liturgy, in law, in theology and spirituality. It is the sacred mission of the Church to witness this diversity and show itself always ready and open and welcoming to all who take seriously salvation in Christ and wish to be associated with him in reigning forever in paradise.



Imitate the Great Disciple Maker

Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ was fulfilling his vocation and role as the Great Teacher and disciple-maker when He told his followers: "Take heed, therefore, how you hear; to the man who has, more will be given; and he who has not, will lose even the little he thinks he has" Luke 8: 18; "Listen as you will, you shall not understand, look intently as you will, you shall not see" Matthew 13: 14. He goes on to say, "Sluggish indeed is this people's heart. They have scarcely heard with their ears, they have firmly closed their eyes; otherwise they might see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn back to me, and I should heal them" Matthew 13: 15.

How directly applicable to our vocation as baptized believers! If we seriously and sincerely pay attention to spiritual instruction, we will act on it and be effective proclaimers of the eternal kingdom. Of course, we still hear his voice in the life of his Body, the Church and his message just as plainly as that summer day He uttered it for the first time. The Scripture resonates with additional encouraging and insightful messages for our edification of soul. What to they indicate to us about the way our Lord related to and dealt with people during his earthly sojourn among us?

Jesus is an excellent preacher of the Good News and an outstanding teacher of scriptural truth. "After this he journeyed through towns and villages preaching and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God" Luke 8: 1. "Jesus continued, 'When you lift up the Son of man, you will come to realize I AM and that I do nothing by myself. I say only what the Father taught me. The One who sent me is with me. He has not deserted me since I always do what pleases him. Because he spoke this way, many came to believe in him'" John 8: 28, 29.

The work and labor of making disciples involves both preaching and teaching, yet some Christians who can speak well, are gifted to express themselves plainly, find it difficult to teach people effectively. Whereas preaching involves proclaiming a message, teaching people about God and his purposes usually requires that a disciple-maker build a relationship with them. "Full authority has been given to me both in heaven and on earth; go therefore, and make disciples of all nations. Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to carry out everything I have commanded you. And know that I

am with you always, until the end of the world!” Matthew 28: 19, 20. This can only be done by imitating the virtues and practices of Jesus Christ. “You address me a ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord’ and fittingly enough, for that is what I am” John 13: 13.

If we seriously imitate the teaching methodology of our Lord, we will be complying with the admonition of the apostle Paul: “Pray that I may speak it clearly. Be prudent in dealing with outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your speech always be gracious and in good taste and strive to respond properly to all who address you” Colossians 4: 5, 6. Imitating Jesus in the work of making disciples calls for effort, but it will make your teaching effective because it will help you give an answer to each one according to individual need.

From his very childhood, Jesus had the custom of listening to people and encouraging them to express their views. When He was but twelve years old, his parents found him in the midst of the teachers in the temple, “...listening to them and questioning them” Luke 2: 46. He did not go to them to demean or embarrass the teachers with his knowledge. He went there to listen, although He also asked questions which provoked deeper thought. His inclination to be a good listener may have been one quality that gained him favor with man. “Jesus for his part progressed steadily in wisdom and age and grace before God and men” Luke 2: 52.

After his baptism and anointing as the Messiah, Jesus maintained his interest in listening to people. He did not become so absorbed in what He was teaching that He forgot about those who came to hear him speak. Often, he would pause, ask what they thought and listen to their response. “When Jesus came to the neighborhood of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples this question: ‘Who do people say that the Son of Man is’...and you, who you say that I am” Matthew 16: 13, 15?

For example, after the death of Martha’s brother, Lazarus, Jesus told her, “‘I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, although he should die, will come to life; and whoever is alive and believes in me will never die” John 11: 26. He then asked her, “‘Do you believe this? ‘Yes, Lord,’ she replied. ‘I have come to believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, he who is to come into the world’” John 11: 27. How satisfying it must have been to see Martha express her living faith in that way!

When many disciples abandoned Jesus, He was interested in hearing the viewpoint of his apostles. So He asked them, “Do you want to leave me too?” Simon Peter answered, ‘Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe; we are convinced you are God’s holy one’” John 6: 66 – 69. How these words, this profession of

faith must have pleased the Lord. A similar expression of devout faith from anyone being taught or learning about the Orthodox faith is likewise appreciated.

Jesus Listened With Respect

Another reason why Jesus was an effective disciple-maker is that He cared about people and listened to them with respect. On one occasion, for instance, Jesus witnessed to a Samaritan woman near Jacob's well at Sechem. During that discussion, He did not do all the talking; He patiently listened to what she had to say. While listening to her, Jesus noted her interest in worship and told her that God was looking for those who would worship him in spirit and truth. Jesus showed respect and concern for this woman, whereupon she told others about him and "many of the Samaritans out of that city placed their faith in him on account of the word of that woman" John 4: 5 – 29, 39 – 42.

People generally enjoy expressing their opinions and views. Residents of ancient Athens enjoyed giving their opinions and listening to something new. This led to the Apostle Paul's effective discourse on the Areopagus in that city (Acts of the Apostles 17: 18 – 34). When starting a conversation we might be inclined to say, "I am visiting because I am interested in your opinion regarding a certain topic." Listen patiently to the person's viewpoint and comment on it, or ask questions about it. Then you might have the opportunity to discuss what God has revealed to us in the life of the Church about that matter. The tendency of people to offer their insights and opinions can help start conversations about the truth of Orthodoxy. All too often, however, very few Orthodox can acquit themselves properly before the questioning and interests of non-Orthodox which is equal in fact to a criminal indictment since we must know why we believe in Jesus Christ as our Saviour and Redeemer.

Jesus was never at a loss for words; He always knew what to say. Besides being a good listener, He was aware of what people were thinking, so He knew exactly how to respond. Not having this divine insight into other people's minds, we are thus limited in comparison to the Son of God. "Jesus was aware of what they were thinking and said, 'Why do you harbor evil thoughts? Which is less trouble to say, 'You sins are forgiven,' or 'Stand up and walk'" Matthew 9: 4, 5? "He who is not with me is against me and he who does not gather with me, scatters" Matthew 12: 30; "Jesus who knew their thoughts, took a child and placed it beside him, after which he said to them, 'Whoever welcomes this little child on my account welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes him who sent me; for the least one among you is the greatest'" Luke 9: 47, 48.

The genuine believer must be in position to always share his God-given faith gift as St. Peter admonishes his listeners, "Should anyone ask you the reason for this hope of yours, be ever ready to reply, but speak gently and respectfully" 1 Peter 3: 15, 16. The greatest challenge and inspiration any believer has is the example of the Lord following the Resurrection when two of his disciples were walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus. "As they were speaking and discussing," says the gospel account, "Jesus himself approached and began walking with them; but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. He said to them, 'What are these matters you debate between yourselves as you walk along?' And they stood still with sad faces. In answer the one named Cleopas said to him, 'Are you dwelling as an alien by yourself in Jerusalem and so you do not know the things that have occurred there in these days?' And he said to them, 'What things?'" The Great Teacher listened as they explained that Jesus of Nazareth taught people, performed miracles and was crucified. Now some were saying He had been raised from the dead. Jesus let Cleopas and his companions express themselves. Then He explained what they needed to know, "...fully opening up the Scriptures to them" Luke 24: 13 - 27, 32.

Believers may know nothing about the spiritual or religious viewpoint of those they encounter and to find out what it is, one may say that he enjoys listening to what people think about prayer. Then proceed to ask something like, "Do you think anyone really listens to prayer?" The answer will reveal a great deal about the person's viewpoint and religious background. If he is religiously inclined one may be able to draw him out further by asking, "Do you think God listens to all prayer or might there be some prayers He does not approve of?" Such questioning can lead to a relaxed conversation. When it is appropriate to share scriptural wisdom from Christ our Saviour and the centuries-old tradition of the Church, you will then want tactfully, not attacking what the person believes, but share it with the listener. If he enjoys listening to you, he may be pleased to hear more at which point an invitation to a Scripture Study class can be made or eagerness expressed to accompany the listener to worship at our Divine Liturgy. Or you may simply volunteer to bring them a weekly copy of the Parish Bulletin in which so many educational and informative articles are published. But suppose he asks a question you cannot answer? You can agree to do some research and return prepared to provide the reason why we believe as we do. Inform them we have a huge library and dearth of information available to respond to any question.

Believers must be convinced it is not alone the task or responsibility of the parish priest and deacon alone to attract non-Orthodox into our midst. They must enrich themselves with Orthodoxy not as mere worldly rule, not to be an walking encyclopedia which does not make a difference in their relationship with God, but as a way of life, one which inspires their daily living and decision-making and life-values. The time of playing church is long past. In

everyone's life there is time for seriousness to be exhibited and Christ's challenge to be personally accepted and acted upon.

Jesus Taught Those Who Deserved To Be Taught

The lifestyle of Jesus Christ, the perfect man, come down from heaven to redeem us and to teach us to live a worthwhile lifestyle that leads to eternal life had discernment that enabled him to identify those who deserved to be taught. We find it much more of a challenge to locate those "...rightly disposed for everlasting life" Acts of the Apostles 13: 28. To be truthful, not everyone wishes to save their soul. So likewise did the apostles who to whom the Lord said, "Into whatever city or village you enter, search out who in it is deserving" Matthew 10: 11. Just like the apostles of Jesus Christ, every baptized person must search for people who are willing to listen and so be taught the truth of God's revelation to mankind in the tradition of the Church He bequeathed to us to sustain and help grow. We will find deserving ones listening carefully to one person after another, taking note of the attitude they exhibit; if they are serious or just playing.

After encountering a person who has some interest in the Eternal Kingdom, the salvation of their soul and living the life of Christ, you would do well to continue thinking about his spiritual needs. Prayer is absolutely vital and they should be on the top of your list. If you write down what you have learned after conversing with someone about the real Good News, this will help in assisting the person spiritually. Further reading material may be helpful, pamphlets, brochures, booklets, etc. During return encounters perhaps an invitation of the parish priest or deacon to accompany you may be necessary. Listen carefully always if you are to learn more about the individual's predisposed beliefs and their willingness to be reborn in Christ, about their attitude and circumstances.

How can you encourage people to tell you how they feel about the revelation of God to us in Scripture? In some areas, it is effective to ask "Have you found Scripture hard to understand?" The answer to that question often reveals a person's attitude toward spiritual and important lifestyle matters. Another way is to read some Scripture together and ask for their understanding of it. "How does that sound to you?" is a likely way to continue. Like Jesus, you may accomplish much more in your apostolic mission by using good questions. However, a word of caution is in order.

Jesus Used Questions Effectively

Show interest in the viewpoint of others without making them uncomfortable. Follow the method of Jesus. He often answered a question with a question of his own. He was not a tactless interrogator; but He used thought-provoking questions. He was a kind listener who refreshed sincere people and put them at ease. "Rather, he said, 'Blessed are they who hear the word of God and live it'" Matthew 11: 28. All sorts of people felt free to approach him with their concerns. "A leper approached him with a request..." Mark 1: 40; "He had not finished speaking when people from the official's house arrived saying, 'Your daughter is dead. Why bother the teacher further?' Jesus disregarded the report that had been brought and said to the official, 'Fear is useless, what is needed is trust'" Mark 5: 35, 36; "People were bringing their little children to him to have him touch them, but the disciples were scolding him for this. Jesus became indignant and when he noticed it said to them, 'Let the children come to me and do not hinder them. It is to just such as these that the kingdom of God belongs'" Mark 10: 13, 14; "As he was setting out on a journey a man came running up, knelt down before him and asked, 'Good Teacher, what must I do to share in everlasting life?' Mark 10: 17; "Jesus, son of David, have pity on me. Many people were scolding him to make him keep quiet, but he shouted all the louder" Mark 10: 46, 47.

If individuals are to feel at ease with Orthodox believers to tell you what they think about their spiritual life and how they evaluate it, about the teachings of the Lord in his Body, the Church, interrogating them is to be avoided. Permit them to voluntarily make admissions or dissatisfactions.

In addition to using questions effectively a believer can encourage conversation by saying something interesting and then listening to the response. For instance, Jesus told Nicodemus, "Unless you are born again, you cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven" John 3: 3. Those words were so intriguing and compelling that Nicodemus could not hold back from responding and further listening to Jesus (John 3: 4 - 20). A good and practical believer may also be able to draw people into conversations in a similar, personally effective way.

Today, the appearance of many new religious sects which have no other tradition than what they have literally conceived of in their own minds, while hoping to do some good, cannot claim to be the one true Church of Jesus Christ which alone has the heavenly approval and mandate to be witness for Jesus Christ in the world. One way to approach this as a conversation starter is to say "I am concerned that there are so many religions even though Christ established but one vehicle of salvation. I hope soon to see people from around all nations united in true worship. Does that sound good to you?" By saying something surprising

about your hope, you may be able to get people to express their view. And questions are easier to answer when there are two replies. "Then Jesus, on entering the house asked, without giving him time to speak: 'What is your opinion Simon? Do the kings of the world take tax or toll from their sons or from foreigners?' When he replied, 'From foreigners,' Jesus observed, 'Then their sons are exempt'" Matthew 17: 25. After someone has commented on your question, answer it yourself with a fortifying scripture or two. "There shall be no harm or ruin on all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be filled with knowledge of the Lord, as water covers the sea" Isaiah 11: 9; "Therefore as I love, says the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, Moab shall become like Sodom, the land of Ammon like Gomorroah; a field of nettles and salt pit and a waste forever. The remnants of my people shall plunder them, the survivors of my nation dispossess them. Such shall be the requital of their praise because they reviled and boasted against the people of the Lord of Hosts. The Lord shall inspire them with fear when he makes all the gods of the earth to waste away. Then, each from his own place, all the coastlands of the nations shall adore him" Zephaniah 2: 9, 10. By listening carefully and noting the person's response, a believer may be able to determine what to discuss at another time if this is necessary and feasible.

Jesus Listened To Children

Jesus was interested not only in adults, but also in children. He knew about the games youngsters played and the things they liked to say. Sometimes he would invite children to come to him. "What comparison can I use for the men of today? What are they like? They are like children squatting in the city squares and calling to their playmates, 'We piped you a tune but you did not dance, we sang you a dirge and you did not wail'" Luke 7: 31, 32; "They even brought babies to be touched by him. When the disciples saw this, they scolded him roundly; but Jesus called for the children saying, 'Let the little children come to me. Do not shut them off. The reign of God belongs to such as these. Trust me when I tell you that whoever does not accept the kingdom of God as a child will not enter into it'" Luke 18: 15 - 17. Many children were among the crowds listening to Jesus. When young boys shouted out in praise of the Messiah, Jesus took note and showed that the Scripture foretold this. "Those who were fed numbered about five thousand, not counting women and children" Matthew 14: 21; "The people who were fed numbered four thousand, apart from women and children" Matthew 15: 38; "The chief priests and the scribes became indignant when they observed the wonders he worked, and how the children were shouting out in the temple precincts 'Hosanna to the Son of David!' 'Do you hear what they are saying?' they asked him. Jesus said to them, 'Of course I do! Did you never read this: 'From the speech of infants and children you have framed a hymn of praise'" Matthew 21: 15, 16?

To hear a child spiritually, one must listen to him. It has to be understood what ideas he has that may be out of harmony with the thought of our heavenly Father. Regardless of what a child says, it is wise to respond first with a positive remark, then an appropriate example, even scripture from the tradition of the Church can be used to help children understand the God who made and loves them.

Questions have their place, but children do not enjoy being interrogated anymore than adults do. Rather than place on a child the burden of answering a number of difficult questions, instead make a brief statement about a particular truth or about your experience of it. Depending on the matter under discussion, you may say you used to feel a certain way and explain why. Then you might ask, "Do you feel that way too?" Your child's response may well lead to helpful and encouraging discussion of faith response to the first-shown love of our heavenly Father.

Always Imitate the Great Disciple Maker

Whether in a discussion with a child or adult, good listening is vital. Indeed, it is an expression of love. Simply by listening, we act in a humble way, showing their insights are important. The one speaking is being shown respect and loving consideration. Of course, listening requires we pay attention to the person's expressions because their subliminal message to us is perhaps even more important than the sounds of their words.

As each baptized believer takes seriously his wholehearted agreement to share salutary faith with others, he pays close attention to what they say so that it can be discerned which aspect of God's revelation to us will be especially appealing and soul as well as heart-touching. Then very seriously, employ all the methods used by the Saviour in teaching them with word and lifestyle example in serious and sincere conviction. In so doing, you will fulfill your destiny and be rewarded with joy and satisfaction because you imitate the Great Disciple Maker.

O Lord, may we never lack desire to speak of Your glorious splendor and Your wonderful works, declaring Your greatness from one generation to the next. May we proclaim and celebrate the power of Your awe-inspiring works, giving testimony of Your great goodness and joyfully singing of Your righteousness (Ps. 145:5-7).

Re-Evangelization in Action

In a certain on-going sense, the role of Orthodox Christians in this new century is essentially the same as it has always been. First of all, we are disciples of Jesus Christ, witnesses in word and action to his saving mission. At the same time, we must seriously reflect on what particular role Orthodoxy must play in shaping the world in the new millenium.

One place Orthodox believers can play a vital role is in affecting public opinion and policy. Unfortunately, the role of faith in public life is often not understood. Orthodox do not want to impose their faith on others, because it must be freely embraced out of conviction but simply seek to propose a way of living, a way of loving, that will bring true freedom and happiness to all who believe in and espouse it.

Orthodox can make a contribution to public discourse on a whole host of issues. Our vision, like that of Christ in the gospel, begins with wonder and awe at the dignity of each human being. Created in the image of God, we are unique and the primary conviction we bring into the public realm concerns

the dignity of human life. Even those who are self-described as "pro-choice" can appreciate a vision of society where each person is loved and cared for, respected and protected in law.

Likewise, Orthodox believers speak to the importance of marriage for a virtuous society. The best place to rear a child is between a mother and father bonded together for life. While you can raise a child successfully in another setting, and we ought to celebrate this when it happens, we should work all the harder to ensure that more children grow up with a mother and father united seriously in marriage. The Church, the state and each individual play an important role in this regard.

This vision of human dignity also has implications for economic and immigration policy, how we conduct foreign relations and the special care we should have for the poor and neglected. Our vision of human dignity and human destiny is a great contribution we can make to the social order and to a hopeful vision for the future of our nation.

All these things, though, do not represent the most important contribution Orthodox will make in our world. The first requirement of discipleship is not in public policy or political discourse, but in holiness of life. We are invited firstly to deeper

friendship with the Lord to know the God who loves us and to reflect that love in our lives. In doing so, we can point upward to a God with a human face, not only one who is far away or indifferent.

The great contribution involves Orthodox simply going about their lives in family, school and work, as people marked by the Christian character of love. We should live – and love – in such a way that it compellingly invites further reflection on the source of our love.

Our greatest influence on others and on the culture is going to take place primarily in this way: through friendship and the personal example we give to those we meet each day. It is the testimony of our quiet lives of self-giving, self-emptying as spouses, devoted parents and concerned friends.

That might not sound as heroic or dramatic as a big political victory at the polls in the culture wars or a mass revival of religious faith, but it certainly has value and is important. It is the heroism and the drama of a life inspired by faith, lived for others and made possible by grace. You can truly transform a society and culture through a life of service to friends, family, fellow parishioners and colleagues.

This is re-evangelization in action, the positive influence we can have on the souls we touch each day. The life of each individual Orthodox believer will be the source of new evangelization in which the Church must always be engaged.

One way this is realized is in the gift we bring to an often dark and dreary world. It is the gift that should mark our lives and be evident in each of us who are baptized, chrismated and pursue a Eucharistic life. It is the gift of hope in God's guidance and leadership in the world. The one who hopes in Jesus Christ and all his promises to us, therefore, lives differently.

The society of the 21st century will certainly be grateful for people of faith, who are marked by hope and whose love can transform the world. It happens one soul at a time, beginning firstly and primarily with one's own.

We have a divinely revealed mandate, now let us make it our own and pursue it for the glory of our God in the Trinity and the edification of all who surround us in daily living!



He Proceeds From The Father

The Creed follows ancient baptismal practices where a person is baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. In the third part of the Creed, therefore, we profess that the third person of the Blessed Trinity, the Holy Spirit, is actually and truly God. It is then necessary to reaffirm the unity of God, that there is truly only one God.

That in God there are three distinct, what Greek language describe as *hypostases* and what the Latins describe as *personae* and what in English we describe as *persons*, does not compromise or detract from this absolute unity in any way whatsoever. The Creed expresses this by saying that the Holy Spirit *proceeds* from the Father. The Father is the source or cause of unity within the Trinity. God is one because the Father is God and God is the Father. The Father begets the Son and breathes forth the Holy Spirit.

Of course, this also does not mean the Son or the Spirit are in any way less God or subordinate to the Father because the Father would not be God unless He is the Father of the Son and the Father of the Holy Spirit.

The inner life of God belongs to his essence. We are unable to understand it in any way, and indeed, some of the teachers of the Church implied that we are not completely sane if we inquire into the inner life of the Holy Trinity. Nonetheless, God has revealed himself to us as Trinity; and it must be important for our salvation to believe in the Trinity or He would not have showed himself in this way.

Perhaps the understanding of this is that if God is indeed a plurality of persons, a community, yet truly one in his essence, and if we are made in the image and likeness of God, then we too, are a plurality of persons, many persons, in fact, but we find a common unity in the being of our Creator who made us. Therefore, we affirm that the Father “begets” a Son and the Spirit “proceeds” from the Father.

St. Gregory of Nyssa in his work *Against Macedonius*, wrote therefore, “One does not think of the Father without the Son, one does not conceive of the Son without the Holy Spirit. For it is impossible to attain to the Father except by being raised by the Son, and it is impossible to call Jesus Lord except by the prompting of the Holy Spirit.” However, it is not possible for the human mind to understand what “begetting” and “procession” are or mean in the being of the Holy Trinity.

Scripture speaks of the Son as coming forth from the Father to dwell among us. In the gospel of St. John, the Son is called the Word of the Father and John says, "And the Word became flesh and dwelled among us." John 1: 14, and "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish, but have eternal life" John 3: 16.

The Trinity is revealed to us because the Trinity has meaning for our salvation. There is no doubt, though, that the Son and Word of God is God, so with the Father, as John further testifies, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God" John 1: 1; and "...we proclaim to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was made visible to us," 1 John 1: 2; and in "...in these last days he spoke to us through the Son, whom he made the heir of all things and through whom he created the universe, who is the refulgence of his glory, the very imprint of his being" Hebrews 1: 2, 3.

The Fathers gathered in Council wanted also to confirm our faith in the Holy Spirit, and so they turned to St. John for testimony to the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the Father and chose specifically chapter 15, verse 26; "When the Advocate comes whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth that proceeds from the Father, he will testify to me" John 15: 26. Again we see the importance of this for our salvation and welfare; the Spirit is one with the Father and comes forth from the Father in order to lead us to all truth.

This passage of the Creed was, unfortunately, later to become a source of disagreement between the Eastern portion and the Western part of the Church. It is very clear that the Fathers of the Council of Constantinople in 381 wanted to quote the Holy Scriptures, the gospel of St. John to confirm our faith in the Spirit as the third person of the Holy Trinity, equal to the Father and the Son. Indeed, they immediately added the phrase, "together with the Father and the Son He is worshipped and glorified."

However, some time in the fifth or sixth centuries, the Western Church separated by so many political circumstances and isolated from truth, fell victim to the influence of Charlemagne with whom the papacy was interested in establishing a political mutually beneficial relationship to enhance its own position. It was Charlemagne who wanted to enhance the Creed, to make it more understandable and acceptable to barbarian minds inundating the Church, who insisted on topping the inspired wisdom of the Council Fathers and insisted the "Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son." Recognizing its own perilous existence at the hand of politicians, the papacy acceded to the overtures of insight from Charlemagne and finally made this an official part of the creedal profession of faith. However, there was initial refusal to the royal insistence and a silver plaque with the original unchanged Creed was

bolted on the inner wall of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. It today stands as witness to the truth of Orthodoxy because it does not contain the added Latin word, *filioque*.

This caused undue problems in the relationship of the west with the Church of Christ. The Latin Church because of its political uneasiness unilaterally chose to make amendments to the faith of the Lord simply due to exaggerated perceived claims of the full ecclesiastical power of the papacy. This has led to all sorts of changes, even minor ones, in the fold of the believing body simply because of disagreement over practices that were essentially eastern, therefore Orthodox. Much nonsense has been introduced into western life even with simple name change and descriptions of celebrations because they became offended with eastern practices and approaches. They wanted their own western insights even if they violated reality and so introduced heresy.

One does not treat the Creed lightly, since it is a proclamation of the faith in which we live and the adding of this phrase, "and the Son," was found in the works of some western theologians as well, particularly the seemingly great, Augustine of Hippo. There were from the western approach which was many times continually devastated by the Arian controversy, serious reasons for this addition. The Arian heresy which held that the Son was created by the Father and was inferior to the Father, diminished faith in the Trinity and in Christ. They thought to uphold the equality of the Son with the Father, then, and the Holy Spirit of God was declared to come forth from God the Father and God the Son.

If there had been better theological education and insight in the wild west, a change to the Creed would not have been seen as necessary; the challenge in their culture could have been explained with a footnote: "proceeds from the Father through the Son."

There is hope, of course, that this dispute can be overcome. Orthodoxy accepts that the Son has a role in the procession of the Holy Spirit, for the Trinity is one and interrelated. The Holy Spirit came forward, after all, only from the Father of the Son. Apparently Romans are willing to assert that the Holy Spirit comes from the Father as from one principle, since God is one. They insist there was no heretical intent with the words "and from the Son," which were added to combat Arianism because of the insistence of Charlemagne.

Rome has allowed its churches of the Byzantine Rite to drop the filioque clause from the Creed in its celebrations, so that as St. Paul tells us, we will strive, "...to preserve the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace; one God and one Spirit, as you were also called to the one hope of your call; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and in all" Ephesians 4: 4 - 6.

Solemn Holyday Greetings

As we jubilantly celebrate the birthday and conception of the Body of Christ in our midst, we are overwhelmed our loving God has established for the sake of our salvation this glorious vehicle of redemption, to lift us, to elevate us, to sanctify us and restore us to our rightful dignity by delivering us to the portals of eternity holy and forgiven and reconciled.

How particularly fortunate and specially blessed is the man who is baptized, chrismated and sustained on Eucharistic nourishment to be a communicant of this Body of the Saviour. What heavenly joy is already experienced in the soul of him who is called by grace to salvation in sanctity by the Saviour by membership in the embracing and affirming Church of Jesus Christ.

As we celebrate the Descent of the Holy Spirit on the disciples transforming them from learners/students into ambassadors/apostles of the Son of God, we recognize our own inherent dignity because ours is an identical vocation. We too are invited and commanded to go forth and preach the gospel by our lifestyle, by our actions and our sustained commitment to Christ.

In celebrating the birth and inception of the Church, we also celebrate our ongoing baptismal Christian lifestyle made possible only by the grace of the Holy Spirit. "Come, Holy Spirit," we pray. "Lead us, guide us, strengthen and affirm us," we beseech the third Person of the Trinity. "Thank You for coming among us!" we never tire of saying. As new life is apportioned in nature to all that was seemingly resting and apparently dead, so we ask for similar grace for our souls that so oftentimes dead to sin, they are restored to living radiance by the flaming tongues of fire which set upon the heads of the disciples. Burn away within us the misery of separation from the Father which sin produces so that Christ's Resurrection will have eternal value for us. Help us appropriate the grace of Christ's victory for ourselves that we may enjoy God's glory for all eternity. Take us to yourself, O Holy Spirit of God that we live and reign together with Christ the Saviour and the Eternal Father. Because of your infused, shared and sustained grace, may we partake of heavenly joy with the Blessed Mother of God, all the saints and the bodiless powers. May our loved ones be joined to us in eternal beatitude to sing forever the glories of our God.

This is our ardent, sincere and devoted prayer for each communicant of our parish as we celebrate the Birthday of our blessed Church and witness the awesome Descent of the Holy Spirit for renewal of life and regeneration of faith and salvation of souls.



Pentecost

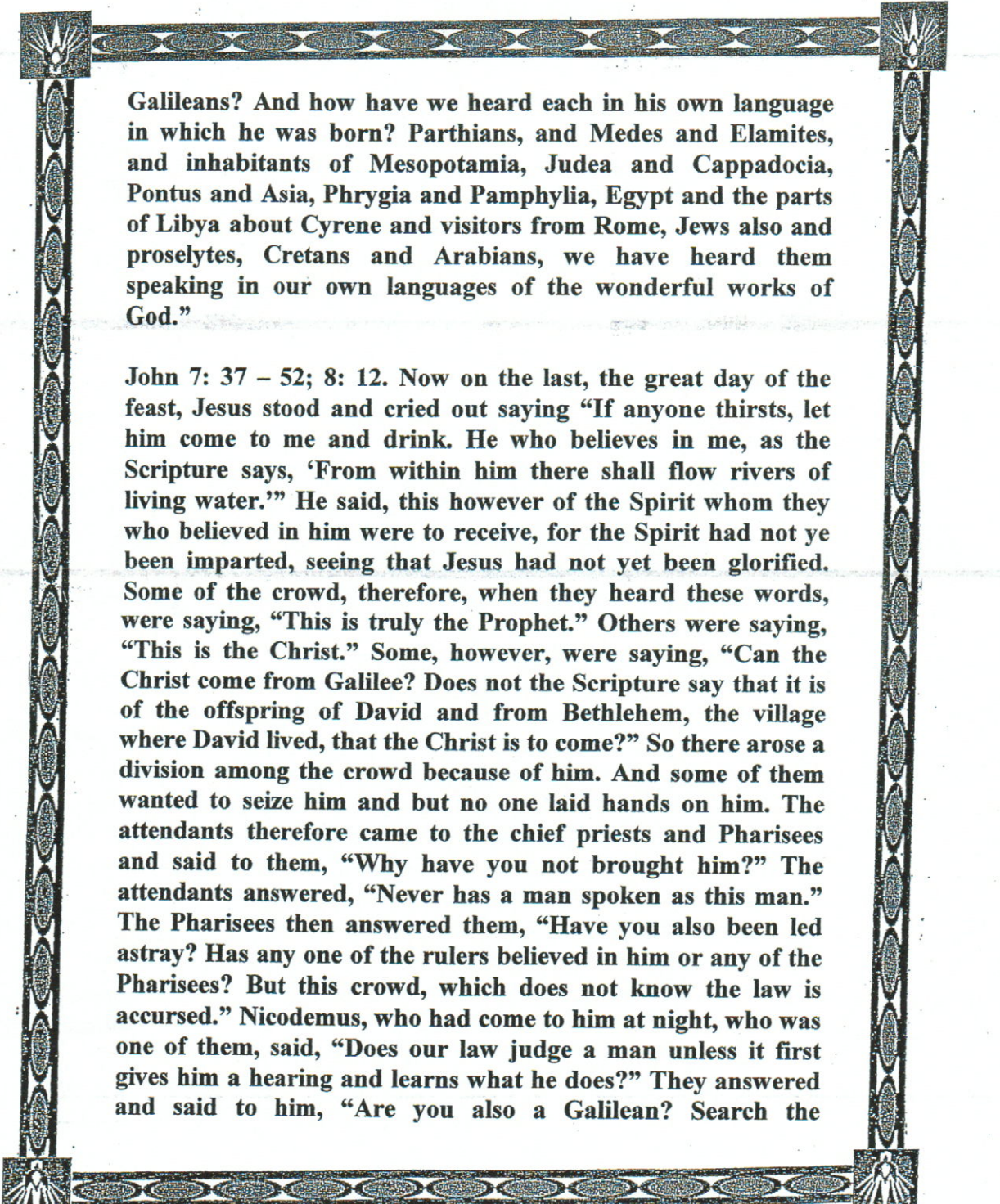
The Descent of the Holy Spirit

At Matins

John 20: 19 – 23. When it was late that same day, the first of the week, though the doors where the disciples gathered had been closed for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst of them and said, "Peace be to you!" And when he said this, He showed them his hands and his side. The disciples therefore rejoiced at the sight of the Lord. He said to them again, "Peace be to you!" As the Father has sent me, so I also send you." When he said this, he breathed upon them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit, whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained."

At the Divine Liturgy

Acts of the Apostles 2: 1 – 11. At that time, when the days of Pentecost were drawing to a close, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as a violent wind coming and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them parted tongues as of fire, which settled on each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in foreign tongues, as the Holy Spirit prompted them to speak. Now there were staying at Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. And when this sound was heard, the multitude gathered and was bewildered in mind because each heard them speaking in his own language. But they were all amazed and marveled, saying, "Behold are not all these that are speaking



Galileans? And how have we heard each in his own language in which he was born? Parthians, and Medes and Elamites, and inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya about Cyrene and visitors from Rome, Jews also and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians, we have heard them speaking in our own languages of the wonderful works of God."

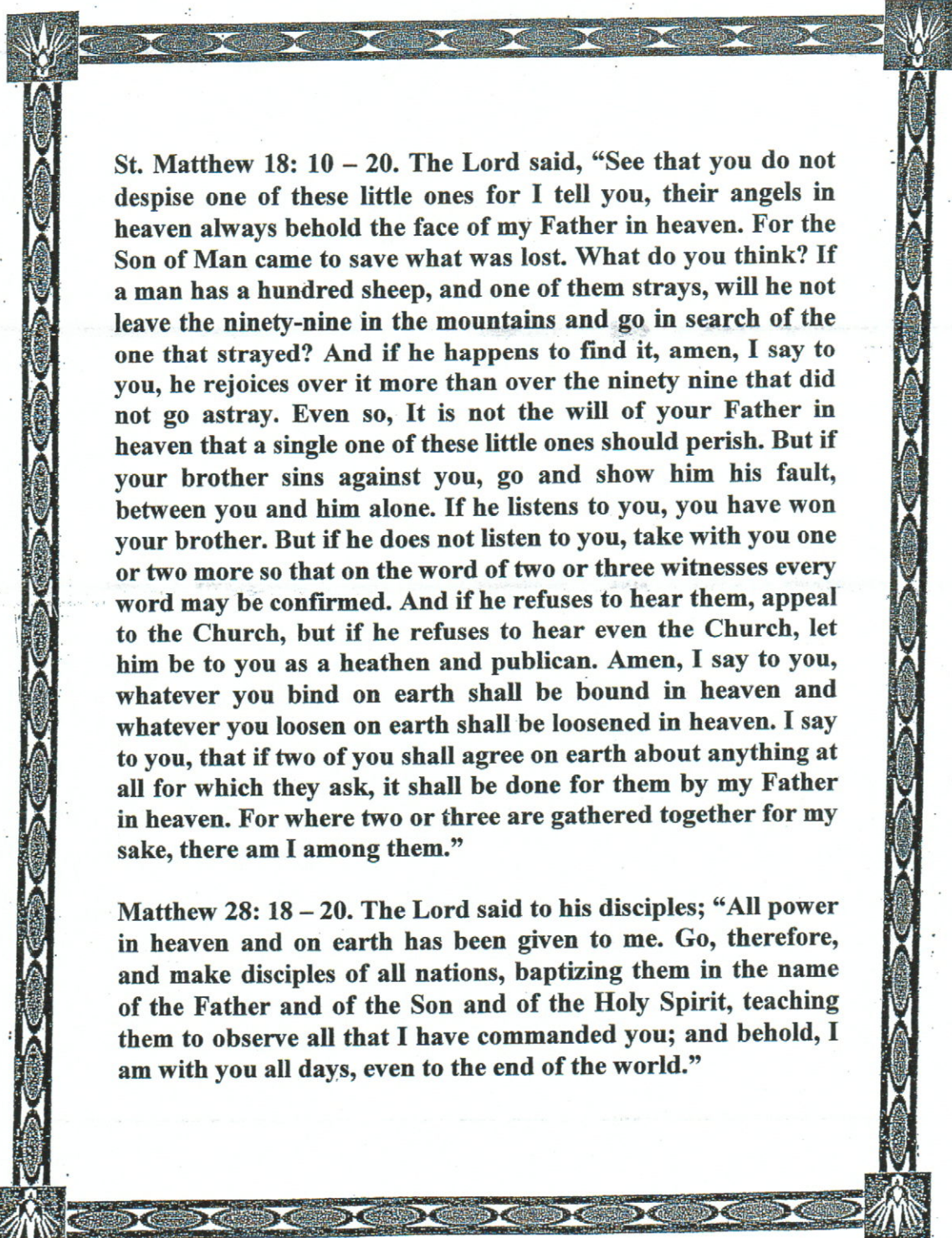
John 7: 37 – 52; 8: 12. Now on the last, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out saying "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the Scripture says, 'From within him there shall flow rivers of living water.'" He said, this however of the Spirit whom they who believed in him were to receive, for the Spirit had not yet been imparted, seeing that Jesus had not yet been glorified. Some of the crowd, therefore, when they heard these words, were saying, "This is truly the Prophet." Others were saying, "This is the Christ." Some, however, were saying, "Can the Christ come from Galilee? Does not the Scripture say that it is of the offspring of David and from Bethlehem, the village where David lived, that the Christ is to come?" So there arose a division among the crowd because of him. And some of them wanted to seize him and but no one laid hands on him. The attendants therefore came to the chief priests and Pharisees and said to them, "Why have you not brought him?" The attendants answered, "Never has a man spoken as this man." The Pharisees then answered them, "Have you also been led astray? Has any one of the rulers believed in him or any of the Pharisees? But this crowd, which does not know the law is accursed." Nicodemus, who had come to him at night, who was one of them, said, "Does our law judge a man unless it first gives him a hearing and learns what he does?" They answered and said to him, "Are you also a Galilean? Search the

Scripture and see that out of Galilee arises no prophet." Again, therefore Jesus spoke to them saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows me does not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

Pentecost Monday
Feast of the Holy Trinity

Ephesians 5: 8 – 19. Brethren, walk, then as children of light, for the fruit of the light is in all goodness and justice and truth, testing what is well-pleasing to God; and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For of the things that are done by them in secret it is shameful even to speak, but all the thing that are exposed are made manifest by the light: for all that is made manifest is light. Thus it says, "Awake, sleeper and arise from the dead, and Christ will enlighten you." See to it therefore, brethren, that you walk with care; not as unwise, but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not become foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, for in that is debauchery; but be filled with Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord.

2 Corinthians 13: 11 – 13. Brethren, rejoice, be perfected, be comforted, be of the same mind, be at peace; and the God of peace and love will be with you. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.



St. Matthew 18: 10 – 20. The Lord said, “See that you do not despise one of these little ones for I tell you, their angels in heaven always behold the face of my Father in heaven. For the Son of Man came to save what was lost. What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them strays, will he not leave the ninety-nine in the mountains and go in search of the one that strayed? And if he happens to find it, amen, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety nine that did not go astray. Even so, It is not the will of your Father in heaven that a single one of these little ones should perish. But if your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take with you one or two more so that on the word of two or three witnesses every word may be confirmed. And if he refuses to hear them, appeal to the Church, but if he refuses to hear even the Church, let him be to you as a heathen and publican. Amen, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven and whatever you loosen on earth shall be loosened in heaven. I say to you, that if two of you shall agree on earth about anything at all for which they ask, it shall be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together for my sake, there am I among them.”

Matthew 28: 18 – 20. The Lord said to his disciples; “All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and behold, I am with you all days, even to the end of the world.”

"THEN THERE APPEARED TO THEM DIVIDED TONGUES AS OF FIRE . . ."

The Book of Acts dramatically describes the coming of the Holy Spirit into the world on the first Pentecost. The Apostles had followed our Lord's command and had returned to Jerusalem after His Ascension, waiting for **"the promise of the Father."** They gathered in the same Upper Room where they had shared the Mystical Supper with their Master. Suddenly, the room was filled with a **"rushing, mighty wind"** and tongues of fire could be seen over the head of each Apostle. Indeed, the Holy Spirit had come! This phenomenon of fiery tongues was a fulfillment of the prophecy of John the Baptist, who proclaimed that Christ would **". . . baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."** (Luke 3:16) In a figurative and symbolic manner, the tongues of the Apostles were **"on fire"** that day, as they went out into the streets of Jerusalem and boldly proclaimed the Gospel of Jesus Christ to anyone who would listen to them. Though the Holy City was filled with visitors and foreigners who had come to celebrate the feast, these faithful followers of Christ were able to make their teachings understood. Some 3,000 people were baptized after hearing about the Risen Lord.

But Pentecost was just the beginning. The fiery tongues had kindled and ignited an unquenchable **"flame"** within the Apostles. Their burning desire was to have their **"voices resound throughout the world"** and to take their message out **"to the ends of the earth."** These once-timid fishermen had been transformed into fearless missionaries. The high priests and scribes tried to silence them. The Romans threatened them with imprisonment, torture and execution. But nothing could extinguish the raging **"fire"** that the Apostles started. Yes, they would eventually lose their lives, but the **"torch"** they carried was passed on to others who were filled with the same zeal and fervor for the Faith. Indeed, 12 men were able to change the world - through the power and grace of the Holy Spirit.

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