

Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Pentecost Sunday

June 8, 2014

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

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

+++ Every Monday, we have prayerful devotions before the Myrrh bearing icon at 6:00 PM. Everyone is invited to be present in praise. The Birthgiver invites us to manifest our faith in response to her first

shown love, to unite our prayers with hers for the salvation of our souls. Invite your friends and neighbors to join us.

+++ TODAY, a special offering for the feast of Pentecost, the Birthday of our blessed Church, is taken place. Please be generous.

+++ Next Sunday is Fathers' Day and we ask our faithful to say an extra prayer for our fathers and light a seven day candle light in their honor or memory.

+++ This Monday is the simple feast of the Holy Spirit. The Divine Liturgy will be celebrated at 7:30 PM. Please come and join us in prayer and praise.

+++ Please keep the intentions of these members of our parish intercession community in your daily prayers: Father George, Anna, Barbara, Betty, James, Yevlogia, Maria, Pani Anna Marie and Father George.

+++ 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 last Sunday: Tithe Offering, \$321.00; Candles, \$11.00; Food Coupons, \$240.00; Pentecost Flowers, \$129.00; June Bulletin, \$25.00; June Web Site, \$25.00, for a total of \$751.00. We express our profound gratitude to the parishioner communicants who offer their God-given treasure and labored for the sake of the Lord and the good of our parish. God bless and reward you good and faithful souls!

+++ 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, Anna Zacharyczuk, Eleanor Korba, Marilyn Korba 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 \$1809.00 from this apostolate. Even your pennies can help and are a blessing to our parish.

+++ Please be certain to see a member of the Parish Council if you would like to help our parish by using Shop Rite Food Coupons available in \$20.00 denominations. We invite ALL to be caring and supportive and use Grocery Coupons for food shopping as we have gratefully realized \$5750 on this project to date!

+++ The Clothing Drive is a permanent on-going project in our parish. Please bring any type of clothing and fabrics along with stuffed animals and shoes for the benefit of our parish. The bags can be left in the vestibule or on the front porch of the rectory. Please invite your friends and neighbors to assist us in disposing of unwanted clothing, shoes and fabrics.

LORD



TEACH
US

Perfection

O God, you have declared me perfect in your eyes, you have always cared for me in my distress, now hear me as I call again Psalms 4: 2.

He is just and fair and knows right from wrong. The good man – what a different story! For the good man – the blameless, the upright, the man of peace – he has a wonderful future ahead of him. For him there is a happy ending Psalms 37: 31- 37.

I will try to walk a blameless path, but how I need your help, especially in my own home, where I long to act as I should Psalms 101: 2.

Happiness comes to those who are fair to others and are always just and good Psalms 106: 3.

Happy are all who perfectly follow all the laws of God. Happy are all who search for God, and always do his will, rejecting compromise with evil, and walking only in his paths. Then I will not be disgraced, for I will have a clean record. Nothing is perfect except your words Psalms 119: 1- 6.

For only good men enjoy life to the full Proverbs 2: 21.

And there is not a single man in all the earth who is good and never sins Ecclesiastes 7: 20.

Happy are those who long to be just and good, for they shall be completely satisfied. But you are to be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect Matthew 5: 6, 48.

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.

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.

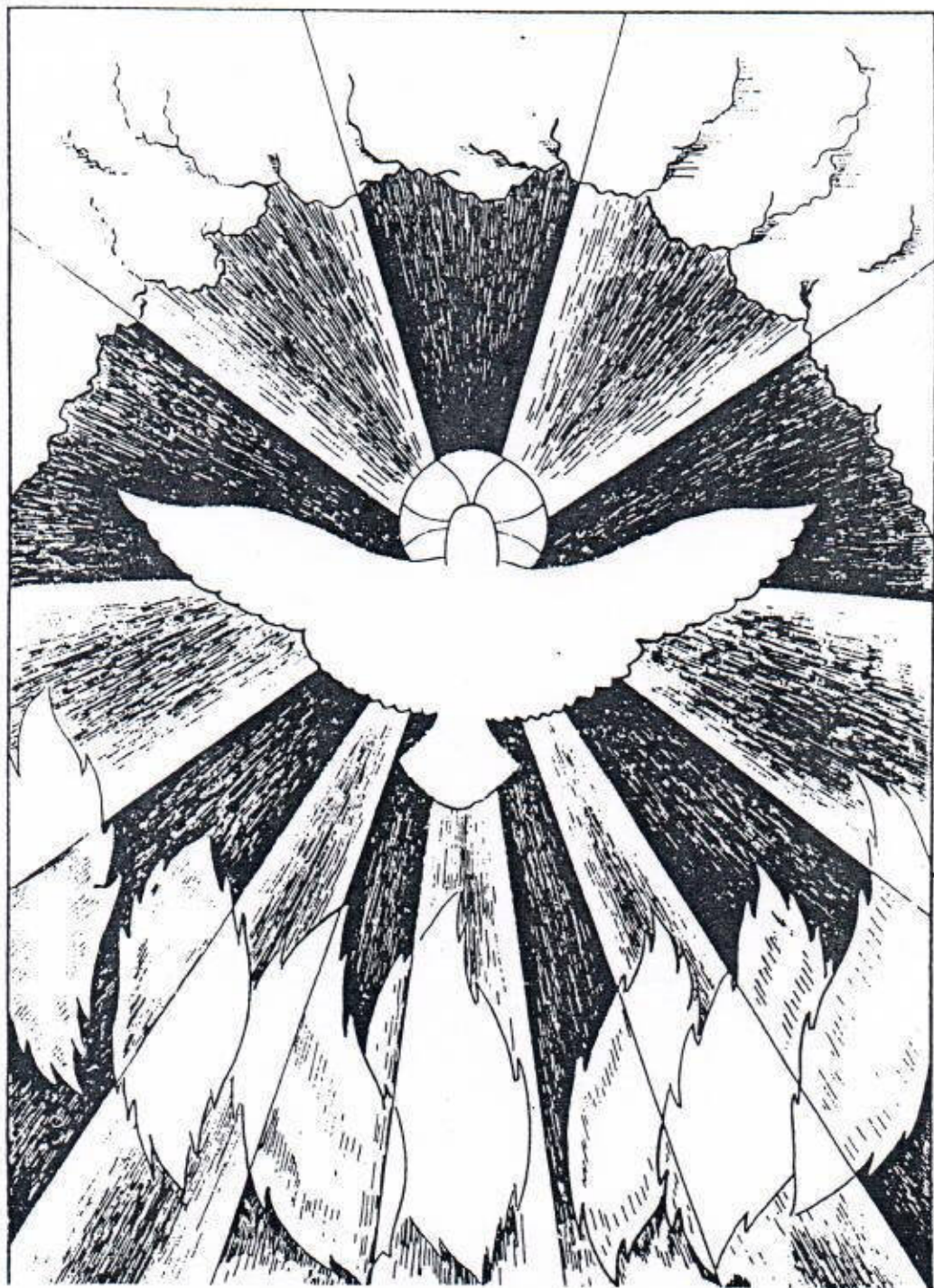
When the Most High came down and confused tongues, He scattered the nations; but when He distributed the tongues of fire, He called all men to unity. Therefore, with one voice, let us praise the Holy Spirit. Kontakion, Feast of Pentecost.

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 GREATEST WORDS EVER SPOKEN ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT

What Christ Tells Us About the Third Person of the Trinity

If you could have any new automobile in the world, what would you choose?

Now, imagine there is an urgent knock on your front door. You go to the door and find a smiling automobile dealer point to that particular car, now parked in your driveway with a big celebratory ribbon tied around it. He hands you the keys and says it is yours, free and clear. As you scream with excitement, the auto dealer mentions there is good news and there is bad news. The good news is that this car has a brand new kind of engine that will power it faster than any car on the planet, and it can travel more than a 100,000 miles on a single tank of its unique and remarkable fuel. The bad news is, that required fuel is a refined plutonium pellet that sells for a little over \$35 million and your car was delivered without the pellet. As wonderful as the car and its nuclear powered engine might be, it is worthless to you. Without the fuel it will never leave your driveway.

In reality, however, the greatest gift given to us, to you and to me is a gift from God, the sacrificial death of his only begotten Son followed by his triumphal Resurrection. This gift is free to us, yet it cost our heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ *everything*. God's revelation to us in the life of his Body and Bride, our blessed Church teaches us that when the first man and woman sinned, the spirit they had been endowed with from God died within them. From that point on, all of humanity – though born with a heart, mind, body and soul, was born spiritually dead.

Just as in Adam all die, so in Christ, all will come to life again, but each one in proper order: Christ the first fruits and then, at his coming, all those who belong to him 1 Corinthians 15: 22, 23.

You were dead because of your sins and offenses, as you gave all allegiance to the present age and to the prince of the air, that spirit who is even now at work among the rebellious. All of us were once of their company; we lived at the level of the flesh, following every whim and fancy, and so by nature deserved God's wrath like the rest. But God is rich in mercy, because of his great love for us, he brought us to life with Christ when we were dead in sin. By his favor you were saved Ephesians 2: 1 – 5.

Jesus tells Nicodemus the only way a person can enter the kingdom of God is by being born again and being born from above. Every person must receive a spiritual birth which comes only in the Holy Spirit.

Jesus gave him this answer: "I solemnly assure you, no one can see the reign of God unless he is begotten from above." "How can a man be born again once he is old?" retorted Nicodemus. "Can he return to his mother's womb and be born over again?" Jesus replied: "I solemnly assure you, no one can enter into God's kingdom without being born again of water and Spirit. Flesh begets flesh; Spirit begets spirit. Do not be surprised that I tell you that you must all be born again from above. The wind blows how it does. You hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone born again by the Spirit John 3: 3 – 8.

But our spiritual birth is just the beginning of our new relationship with our heavenly Father. After being born again, we need to grow spiritually. And our spiritual growth is dependent on the priceless gift that our God gives us to empower our spirit and soul to follow Christ in every aspect of our daily living and activity. Amazingly, this priceless fuel is the outworking of the third Person of the Divine Trinity, the Holy Spirit. Without his ministry to us and His presence within us, we would be powerless to become what God wants us to be, to live the way He wants us to live, to achieve what He wants us to achieve, and to influence others the way He wants us to provide an example for them.

The Lord further reveals that although the Holy Spirit was present with the disciples, there would come a time when He would actually be "in" them. *I will ask the Father and he will give you another Paraclete, to be with you always, the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot accept, since it neither sees him nor recognizes him, because he remains with you and will be within you* John 14: 16, 17.

The Holy Spirit came later, on the day of Pentecost, to dwell in believers. *When the day of Pentecost came it found them gathered in one place. Suddenly from up in the sky, there came a noise like strong driving wind which was heard all through the house where they*

were seated. Tongues as of fire appeared which parted and came to rest on each of them. All were filled with the Holy Spirit. They began to express themselves in foreign tongues and make bold proclamations as the Holy Spirit prompted them....It shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out a portion of my spirit on all mankind. Your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams Acts of the Apostles 2: 1 – 17.

Although we can live what the world would consider a perfectly normal, although self-centered life without the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit, we can not produce any eternal or truly spiritual fruit unless He dwells within us. Equally important, we cannot be the person God desires us to be. On the other hand, when the Holy Spirit dwells within us and we yield our will to his guidance, He will produce all the necessary spiritual fruit our heavenly Father desires to be produced within us and through us.

During the Mystical Supper, our Lord identifies some ten roles the Holy Spirit would fulfill in his ministry to believers (John 14 – 16). He said the Holy Spirit will

teach us all things and guide us in all truth,

cause us to remember everything Christ taught us,

be a testifying witness of Christ to us and through us,

be our Helper and Comforter,

convict unbelievers of their sin,

reveal the righteousness of Christ.

reveal the condemning judgment of God,

reveal future events to believers,

endow believers with spiritual power,

enable believers to be zealous witnesses for Christ.

During his ministry among us, Jesus could be in only one place at a time. The Holy Spirit, on the other hand, can be in all places at the same time. As the third person of the Holy Trinity, He is coequal and coeternal with God the Father and God the Son.

Our Lord teaches the disciples that on a particular day the Holy Spirit, who has been *with you* John 14: 17, will be *in you* John 14: 17. *On that day you will know that I am in my Father and you in me and I in you* John 14: 20. In other words, beginning at Pentecost, the eternal Father and the Son would dwell in the soul of believers with the Holy Spirit making the souls of believers alive and entering into a union with their spirit. The Holy Spirit comes to live within the soul of every true, born again child of God.

Walking in the Holy Spirit

Years later, St. Paul recorded aspects of the ministry of the Holy Spirit to the Church as a whole and to individual believers in particular. *In contrast, the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patient endurance, kindness, generosity, faith, mildness and chastity. Against such there is no law! Those who belong to Christ have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the spirit, let us follow the spirit's lead. Let us never be boastful or challenging or jealous toward one another* Galatians 5: 22, 23. The Apostle to the Gentiles reveals the fruit that the Holy Spirit produces in the life of each believer.

It is impossible for our human nature to produce them by ourselves. But it is natural for the Holy Spirit to produce all in the life of a believer because each one is inherent in God. And yet a daily battle rages between the natural outworking of our own nature and our soul which longs to yield to the Holy Spirit. *It is obvious what proceeds from the flesh: lewd conduct, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hostilities, bickering, jealousy, outbursts of rage, selfish rivalries, dissensions factions, envy, drunkenness, orgies and the like. I warn you as I have warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God!* Galatians 5: 19 – 21. In a simple single one sentence, St. Paul reveals the only way we can overcome the power of our own nature: *So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature* Galatians 5: 16.

Unfortunately, many believers have focused so intently on the gifts of the Holy Spirit that they lost sight of the fruit of the Spirit and the other vital ministries of the Holy Spirit. The words of Christ form the perfect foundation upon which our beliefs must rest. Interestingly, the first role or ministry of the Holy Spirit the Lord revealed is that *He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all things I have said to you* John 14: 26.

The Holy Spirit and His Ministry

JOHN 3:5-8 Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. ⁶Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. ⁷You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' ⁸The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

JOHN 14:15-16 "If you love me, you will obey what I command. ¹⁶And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever."

JOHN 14:26 "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."

JOHN 15:26 "When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. ²⁷And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning."

JOHN 16:6-11 "Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief. ⁷But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; ¹⁰in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; ¹¹and in

regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned."

JOHN 16:12-15 "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. ¹³But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. ¹⁴He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. ¹⁵All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you."

JOHN 16:20, 22-23 "I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy. ²²So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy. ²³In that day you will no longer ask me anything. I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name."

MATTHEW 10:19-20 "But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, ²⁰for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you."

MATTHEW 28:18-20 Then Jesus came to them [the eleven disciples] and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

MARK 13:11 "Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit."

LUKE 4:18-19 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, ¹⁹to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

LUKE 11:5-13 Then he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, ⁶because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.' ⁷Then the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' ⁸I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs. ⁹So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ¹⁰For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. ¹¹Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? ¹²Or if

he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

LUKE 12:8-12 "I tell you, whoever acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge him before the angels of God. ⁹But he who disowns me before men will be disowned before the angels of God. ¹⁰And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. ¹¹When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, ¹²for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say."

ACTS 1:4-5 On one occasion, while he was eating with them [the apostles], he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. ⁵For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." (See also Acts 11:16.)

ACTS 1:8 "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."



“Gracious Master,
infuse in our hearts
the spotless light
of Your divine wisdom
and open the eyes of
our mind that we may
understand the teach-
ings of Your Gospel.”

The Early Church

A Grave Lie

Strengthened by the Holy Spirit, the apostles keep on preaching with zeal and more and more people believe in Jesus. One day a man named Barnabas brings the apostles a large bag of money. St. Peter asks him, "Why are you giving all this money to us?" Barnabas replies, "I sold a field. I want you to use the money to help followers of Jesus." Another man, Ananias, wants to appear generous too. But he also wants to keep most of his money for personal use, so he lies, but the Holy Spirit speaks and inspires St. Peter. Ananias tells him, "We, too, have sold our land and we are giving all of the proceeds to help the Church." St. Peter remarks, "Ananias, you could have done anything you wanted with your money, but do not pretend you are giving all of it when you are not. You have not lied not me; you have lied to Almighty God!"

At Peter's words, Ananias falls down dead. Some young men come and wrap up his remains and take it away. A few hours later, his wife, Sapphira, approaches and does not know what happened. She answers St. Peter's questions with the same lie her husband told. St. Peter calmly tells her, "Sapphira, how dare you try to trick the Holy Spirit? Listen! Here come the same men who already buried your husband; you will need their services as well." Instantly Sapphira falls dead down on the floor. The followers of Jesus see this as heaven's warning to anyone who tries to deceive God or his Body and Bride, the Church.

Prison Break

The threats of the Jewish temple leaders do not keep the apostles from doing the work of God. They keep on teaching, preaching, healing in the name of the Lord. Families bring their sick into the streets, hoping that St. Peter will pass by and cure them. Crowds also gather from towns around Jerusalem.

One sad mother brings her child with expectation, saying "He cannot walk. Please make him strong so he can run and play like other children." St. Peter reminds her, "I cannot heal him, but Jesus, the Son of God certainly can. He raises his hand, In Jesus' name, I tell you your son is healed."

Everyone who comes is healed. The High Priest and the ones who work with him are so jealous they cannot contain themselves. They hate seeing the people come into town to be healed and made whole. In a fit of rage, they have the apostles arrested and thrown into jail. In so-doing they think to themselves, "This time they are not getting away with these activities. We will put an end to this nonsense."

During the night an angel from heaven comes to SS. Peter and John in jail, "Go stand in the temple courtyard and tell the people about the new life God has promises to anyone who believes in Jesus." The next morning the High Priest call the Jewish court into session and sends the temple guards for the prisoners. When the officers return he determines from them that the prison door and gates are locked and the guards are on duty, but the prisoners are not there; they are gone. He questions them about who opened the doors if no one was there. Deeply upset, he asks, "Gone? not there? Where are they?" But there are no rational answers.

A short while after, word arrives that men who were consigned to a jail cell the night before are in the temple teaching about Jesus. The High Priest orders the apostles brought to the court at once. He insolently approaches them "Do we not warn you not to preach or speak about Jesus?" But St. Peter calmly answers, "We must obey God, not man." This response makes the temple priests furious and they want the apostles killed as public enemies at once. But a famous and respected teacher named Gamaliel sends the apostles out of the hearing room and addresses the assembly. "Be careful what you do with these men. If this teaching is their own idea, it will soon fade. But if it is from God, you cannot defeat it. You do not want to end up fighting against the will of Almighty God."

The gathered court is forced to admit the wisdom of his advice. Still furious, however, they order that the apostles be beaten. Then they release them with the threat of more punishment if they keep on preaching about Jesus. Their response for all to hear is that it is an honor to

suffer for the name of Jesus. They admit they cannot stop because they are impelled to keep telling and sharing the Good News.

The apostles keep on doing the work that God give them to fulfill and so the number of people who believe keeps growing. So many people want to follow Jesus that the apostles decide to choose others to help lead the work. They choose seven deacons to help care for the needs of the people. One of them, Stephen soon shows that he is an outstanding preacher as he arouses within hearts and souls a worthwhile response to astounding faith in Christ and his message.

Some Jewish leaders begin to debate with Stephen, to their embarrassment. They find they are no match for Stephen's wisdom and insights and his ability to defend the faith of Jesus Christ. Secretly they begin plotting their revenge. They consider they must be careful not to turn the people against themselves. They conclude they can stir up the people against Stephen just like they did in the case of Christ.

The Stoning

Stephen is full of God's power and does miracles among the people. His preaching is so persuasive that many people in Jerusalem decide to follow Jesus, but the religious leaders have an old trick up their sleeves. They agree on a strategy to spread the word around Jerusalem that Stephen is preaching against the Law that God give to Moses. They assume when the people hear that they will turn against him.

The plot works and Stephen is arrested and brought before the Jewish court, the Sanhedrin. The false witnesses tell their lies about Stephen. Then Stephen boldly responds, inspired by the Holy Spirit. "You are stubborn with pagan hearts! You are just like your ancestors who killed God's prophets. Now you have murdered God's chosen One. You may know the law, but you do not obey it yourselves."

The court rises up in fury, but Stephen courageously continues, manifesting in his words the Spirit of God. "I can see heaven! Look, the Son of Man is standing at the right hand of the Father."


Stephen's words are too much for the self-denied guilt of the court. Like pack of savage beasts, they seize Stephen and drag him outside the city where they throw rocks and stones at him. As the stones batter his body, Stephen continues to pray, "Lord do not hold this against them!" Finally, Stephen takes his last breath and dies saying, 'Jesus, receive my spirit.'"

A young man named Saul watches the stoning and encouraging it. He keeps his eye on the pile of coats the attackers have taken off to free themselves all the better and easier to deliver the fatal rock blow. He is pleased at the death of this mis-led and troublesome follower Jesus.



Pentecost Teaches Us

THE NEW BIRTH

 Early in His ministry, Jesus revealed the way to enter God's eternal Kingdom. We must be "born again" (3:3), a birth from above realized by water and the Spirit.


In His conversation with Nicodemus, Christ states, "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (3:5). From the beginning, the Church has recognized the "water" to be the water of baptism, "the Spirit" to be the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the new birth consists of being joined to Christ in the water of baptism and receiving the Holy Spirit through anointing or "chrismation."

Salvation, then, is more than forgiveness of sins, more than a mental acceptance of Christ and His teachings. For in salvation we are given union with God through Christ, a right and full relationship with the Holy Trinity, and the restoration of our full humanity. All these things are accomplished through the Incarnation, the union of God and man in the Person of Jesus Christ. Salvation, then, is founded on a substantial union of the believer with Christ in His full humanity, a flesh-to-flesh relationship. Paul likens it to the joining of husband and wife (Eph 5:23-32).


Throughout their epistles, the apostles remind us the new birth is necessary for salvation. We die to sin; then, buried with Christ and risen with Him, we are united to Christ and to His body, the Church. We are cleansed, justified, and sanctified—all in baptism, "the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Tts 3:5). Without our repentance and faith, however, immersion in water would be of no effect.

Some Christians bypass baptism and stress only faith. Why is the mystery of the water necessary? Because just as Christ actually died on a cross, was buried, and rose again—all through His faith and God's grace—so we must actually be immersed in the sacramental waters of baptism, made effectual through our faith and God's grace.

The basic form of baptism is simple. The person to be born again, joined to Christ, is immersed in the water three times in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (see Mt 28:19). The first-century *Didache* teaches, "If you do not have running water, use whatever is available. And if you cannot do it in cold water, use warm. But if you have neither, pour water on the head three times—in the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit."

In the new birth, a true mystery takes place. For in the sacrament of baptism, we die, going down into the water to be mystically united to Christ in His death, and we live again, rising up out of the water in His resurrected humanity. In short, we are born again. 

✠ HOLY BAPTISM ✠

 *What is baptism?* Simply put, baptism is our death, burial, and resurrection in union with Jesus Christ. It is a rite of passage, given by Christ to the Church as an entrance into the Kingdom of God and eternal life.

The apostle Paul describes the promise of God in this “mystery,” as most Orthodox call it, most succinctly when he writes, “Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Rom 6:4). To baptize (Gr. *baptizo*) literally means “to immerse, to put into.” Historically, the Orthodox Church has baptized by triple immersion, “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt 28:19).

In the Old Testament, baptism was pictured by the passage of God’s people with Moses through the Red Sea (1Co 10:1, 2). John the Baptist, the last prophet of the old covenant, baptized in water for repentance (Mk 1:4; Acts 19:4). Jesus received John’s baptism, thereby transforming the water and baptism itself. In the new covenant, baptism is the means by which we enter the Kingdom of God (Jn 3:5), are joined to Christ (Rom. 6:3), and are granted the remission of our sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).

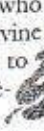
What results from baptism? From the start, the Church has understood baptism as:

1. *A first and second dying.* Our first dying with Christ in baptism was our death with Him on the Cross. In the fourth century, St. Cyril of Jerusalem instructed his new converts, “You were led by the hand to the holy pool of divine baptism . . . and each of you was asked if he believed in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. And you made that saving confession, you descended into the water and came up again three times. In the very same moment you died and were born.”


The second death of baptism is continual—dying to sin daily as we walk in newness of life. St. Paul writes to the Colossians concerning baptism (Col 2:12) and concludes by saying, “Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry” (Col 3:5).

2. *The resurrection of righteousness.* This is our life in Christ, our new birth and entrance into God’s Kingdom (Jn 3:3), our “newness of life” (Rom 6:4). It is our being joined to Christ in His glorified humanity and indwelt by God Himself (Jn 14:23). Our relationship with God is not something static, a legal fiction given to us by a Divine Judge. Rather, this is a dynamic and real life in Christ, holding the promise of everlasting life. Our resurrection to new life now forms a prelude to the resurrection of our body at Christ’s second coming.

3. *An intimate and continual communion with God.* We are raised to new life for a purpose: union and communion with God. In this sense, baptism is the beginning of eternal life. For this reason, Peter writes that baptism now saves us (1Pt 3:21)—it is not the mere removal of dirt from our bodies, but provides us with “a good conscience toward God.”

Because of these promises, the priest prays for the newly baptized, thanking God, “who have given us, unworthy though we be, blessed purification through holy water, and divine sanctification through life-giving chrismation, and who now also have been pleased to bring new life to Your servant newly illuminated by water and the Spirit, and granted remission of sins—voluntary and involuntary.” 

CHRISMATION

 From earliest times the Church has practiced chrismation immediately following baptism. In the sacrament of chrismation (Gr. *chrismatis*, "anointing") the newly baptized person receives the Holy Spirit through anointing with oil by the bishop or priest. The roots of this sacrament are clear in both the Old and New Testaments and are especially brought to light on the Day of Pentecost.

Promises of the Holy Spirit from the Old Testament. In his sermon on Pentecost, St. Peter quotes the well-known prophecy of Joel, "I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh" (2:17; see Joel 3:1). This promise was significant because under the old covenant, the gift of the Spirit had been given only to a few—the patriarchs, the prophets, and some of the judges. Certain leaders of Israel were indwelt with the Holy Spirit to accomplish their tasks. Joel, however, prophesied that the Holy Spirit would be given to all God's people, "all flesh." This was fulfilled at Pentecost, for Peter exclaims, "this [outpouring of the Spirit] is what was spoken by the prophet Joel" (2:16).

Other Old Testament prophets who speak of this same promise of the Spirit include Jeremiah (Jer 38:31–34) and Ezekiel (Ezk 36:25–27). In fact, the Ezekiel passage ties together the water and the Spirit in a prophetic vision of baptism and chrismation.

Jesus promises the Holy Spirit. Our Lord Jesus Christ repeatedly promised the gift of the Holy Spirit to His disciples. Early in His public ministry He said, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." But this He spoke concerning the Spirit" (Jn 7:37–39). Jesus also said, "I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever" (Jn 14:16).


Christ promised the Holy Spirit would reveal truth to the Church. "When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you" (Jn 16:13, 14). Jesus says the Holy Spirit will bring glory to Him, Christ. This gives us an excellent means of testing whether or not acts attributed to the Holy Spirit do indeed belong to Him.

The last words of Christ before His Ascension include a promise: "John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now" (1:5). This word was fulfilled ten days later on the Day of Pentecost.

How is the Holy Spirit given to us? The people who heard Peter speak at Pentecost asked him how they might receive salvation. He answered, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (2:38). We repent (turn from our sins and toward Christ); we are baptized; we are given "the gift of the Holy Spirit," chrismation. That practice has never changed.

In Acts 8, Philip, the deacon and evangelist, preached in Samaria (vv. 5–8). Many believed and were baptized (v. 12). The apostles came and later confirmed these new believers with the gift of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands (vv. 14–17). Here is the sacrament of chrismation following Holy Baptism. Later, the apostle Paul met some disciples of John the Baptist who had not been present when Peter spoke at Pentecost (19:1–7). They believed in Christ, "were baptized" (v. 5), and "the Holy Spirit came upon them" (v. 6), again through the hands of an apostle.

The promise of God includes both our union with Christ in Holy Baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit at chrismation.



THE LAW

One key to understanding Romans is to distinguish properly between the several ways Paul uses the word "law" in this epistle.

1 *The Mosaic Law* (2:12, 13) was written by God on tablets of stone (2Co 3:3, 7) and given to the Jews through Moses. This Law reveals God's righteousness to prepare men for the Messiah and for God's grace. When Paul speaks of "the law," he is most often referring to the Mosaic Law.

The Law is good, but cannot be kept. It is revelation from God, but not an end in itself. The purpose of the Mosaic Law is (a) to reveal the difference between good and evil; (b) to make the world accountable to God (3:19); (c) to manifest sin (3:20); and (d) to be a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ (Gal 3:24). Though it is not opposed to the grace of God, the Law cannot save us or make us righteous.

2 *The natural law* (2:14, 15) has been "written" by God in the heart of every human who has ever lived as the voice of conscience. It is a reliable guide to God's righteousness for those who are pure in heart; but it can be dulled or obscured completely by habitual sin.


3 *The law of works* (3:27) is our attempt to establish righteousness before God on the basis of keeping the natural law and/or the Mosaic Law. This law reveals human weakness and sin.

4 *The law of faith* (3:27) is the synergy, the cooperation, of our faithfulness with God's. It alone is the means by which we attain the righteousness of God. God has been revealing His righteousness by this law little by little since the time of creation, but now has revealed it fully in Christ. As both the natural law and the Mosaic Law bear witness to this law of faith, so those who become righteous by grace through faith fulfill in Christ both the natural and the Mosaic Law.

5 *The law of sin* (7:25; 8:2) is the power of the sinful passions in our mortal humanity. Passions—desires for such things as food, sex, praise, possessions—are natural; their sinful overindulgence is not. Carnal (physical) passions are especially strong. They aid the unnatural domination of the body over the soul. Sometimes carnal passions overpower the will. The law of sin coupled with the Mosaic Law breeds intense warfare between sin and righteousness. Only God's grace can bring victory for righteousness.

6 *The law of the Spirit* (8:2) is also called "the law of Christ" (Gal 6:2) and "the law of liberty" (Jam 1:25; 2:12). It is the power and life of the Holy Spirit active in those who by faith in Christ live out their baptism and chrismation to the fullest possible degree. This makes the righteousness of God gained by faith real in one's life. Coupled with the law of faith, the law of the Spirit defeats the law of sin and fulfills the natural and Mosaic Law. It orients one's innermost being toward God and restores the power of the spirit over the flesh, the soul over the body.

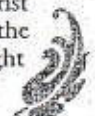
THE BASIS OF GOD'S JUDGMENT

 Even as believing Christians, we must not take the outcome of God's final judgment for granted. In every Divine Liturgy Orthodox Christians pray, "For a good defense before the dread Judgment Seat of Christ, let us pray to the Lord: Lord have mercy." Romans 2:2-16 describes God's judgment, showing how we can prepare ourselves for it. God's righteous judgment will be:


1 *According to truth* (2:2, 3): Nothing is hidden from God. He sees everything and knows the truth about each of us. One of mankind's great self-deceptions is to say, "Who sees us?" (Is 29:15) and think there is no judgment.

2 *According to impenitent hearts* (2:4, 5): An unrepentant or hard heart despises God's goodness, treasuring up the wrath of God at the judgment. A repentant heart, on the other hand, is grateful for God's patience and abides in Christ, practicing a lifetime of repentance, which produces confidence before Him at the judgment (1Jn 2:28).

3 *According to our deeds* (2:6-15): The "doing good" referred to in 2:7 is not an attempt to gain merit with God. Rather, it is the unity of intentions with actions, faith with works. Even unbelievers are rewarded for good works, apart from spiritual understanding (2:14, 15). But note the following:

- (a) "Doing good" means seeking God's glory (2:10), not our own glory; God's honor, not our own honor; the eternal reward of immortality, not reward here and now. "Doing good" is seeking first the Kingdom of God (Mt 6:33).
 - (b) Good intentions alone, or faith without works, will not save (2:13). Simply to hear and not do is religion without reality. Those with true faith, "the doers" of the truth, practice virtue from pure and repentant hearts (Jam 1:21-27).
 - (c) "By nature" (v. 14) people are inspired by and cooperate with God's grace. Therefore, good deeds are natural to us, whereas evil deeds are contrary to nature. Because we all fail, we need God's mercy (3:9-19). The presence of God's law in our conscience (2:15) condemns anything we do contrary to true human nature. Therefore, even Gentiles—people not under the Law of Moses, those who do not know of Christ—have an internal law from God, the natural law written in their hearts, according to which God will judge them. Melchizedek, Job, and the Ninevites are Old Testament examples of non-Jews judged to be righteous. Jews, then, have two laws from God—the Law of Moses and conscience—and are accountable to Him for both (2:12).
 - (d) Those who are condemned *choose* to reject God. There is no automatic, fated condemnation: God's just judgment of us is based on our exercise of free will. Although sin impairs our powers, it does not destroy God's image in us or our free will.
 - (4) *By Jesus Christ* (2:16): In the day of judgment we are not judged directly by God the Father, whom we cannot see, but by the incarnate Son whom we do see, Christ Jesus (Acts 17:31; see Jn 3:16-21, 35, 36). Christ will judge on the basis of the light He Himself has given to each of us (Jn 1:9) and our response to His light (Jn 3:16-21). "The secrets of men" (Rom 2:16) are "the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb 4:12).
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THE EUCHARIST

 "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks [Gr. *eucharistesas*], He broke it and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me' (1Co 11:23-25).

With these words—quoting the words of Christ in Luke 22:19, 20—St. Paul instructs the Corinthians concerning the Eucharist, the giving of thanks. Some two thousand years after Jesus gave Himself "for the life of the world" (Jn 6:51), there are in Christendom at least three different interpretations of His words.

For the first thousand years of Christian history, when the Church was visibly one and undivided, the holy gifts of the Body and Blood of Christ were received as just that: His Body and Blood. The Church confessed this was a mystery: The bread is truly His Body, that which is in the cup is truly His Blood, but one cannot say *how* they become so.

The eleventh and twelfth centuries brought on the scholastic era, the Age of Reason in the West. The Roman Church, which had become separated from the Orthodox Church in 1054, was pressed by the rationalists to define *how* the transformation occurs. They answered with the word *transubstantiation*, meaning a change of substance. The elements are no longer bread and wine; they are physically changed into flesh and blood. The sacrament, which only faith can comprehend, was subjected to a philosophical definition. This second view was unknown in the ancient Church.

Not surprisingly, one of the points of disagreement between Rome and the sixteenth-century reformers was this issue of transubstantiation. Unable to accept this explanation of the sacrament, the radical reformers, who were rationalists themselves, took up the opposite point of view: the gifts are nothing but bread and wine, period. They only represent Christ's Body and Blood; they have no spiritual reality. This third, symbol-only view helps explain the infrequency with which some Protestants partake of the Eucharist.

What do the Scriptures teach concerning the Eucharist?


1 Jesus said, "This *is* My body . . . this *is* My blood" (Lk 22:19, 20). He never says these gifts merely symbolize His Body and Blood. Critics have charged that Jesus also said of Himself, "I am the door" (Jn 10:7), and He certainly is not a seven-foot wooden plank. The flaw in that argument is obvious: at no time has the Church ever believed He was a literal door. But she has always believed the consecrated gifts of bread and wine are truly His Body and Blood.

2 In the New Testament, those who receive Christ's Body and Blood unworthily are said to bring condemnation upon themselves. "For this reason many *are* weak and sick among you, and many sleep" (literally, "are dead"; 1Co 11:30). A mere symbol, a quarterly reminder, could hardly have the power to cause sickness and death!

3 Historically, from New Testament days on, the central act of worship, the very apex of spiritual sacrifice, took place "on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread" (Acts 20:7). The Eucharist has always been that supreme act of thanksgiving and praise to God in His Church.



DEIFICATION

 *Deification* is the ancient theological word used to describe the process by which a Christian becomes more like God. St. Peter speaks of this process when he writes, "As His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness . . . you may be partakers of the divine nature" (1:3, 4).

What does it mean to partake of the divine nature, and how do we experience this? To give an answer, let us first address what deification is not, and then describe what it is.

What deification is not. When the Church calls us to pursue godliness, to be more like God, this does not mean that human beings become divine. We do not become like God in His nature. That would not only be heresy, it would be impossible. For we are human, always have been human, and always will be human. We cannot take on the nature of God.

St. John of Damascus makes a remarkable observation. The word "God" in the Scriptures refers not to the divine nature or essence, for that is unknowable. "God" refers rather to the divine energies—the power and grace of God that we can perceive in this world. The Greek word for God, *theos*, comes from a verb meaning "run," "see," or "burn." These are energy words, so to speak, not essence words.

In John 10:34, Jesus, quoting Psalm 81:6, repeats the passage, "You are gods." The fact that He was speaking to a group of hypocritical religious leaders who were accusing Him of blasphemy makes the meaning doubly clear: Jesus is not using "god" to refer to divine nature. We are gods in that we bear His image, not His nature.


What deification is. Deification means we are to become more like God through His grace or divine energies. In creation, humans were made in the image and likeness of God (Gn 1:26) according to human nature. In other words, humanity by nature is an icon or image of deity. The divine image is in all humanity. Through sin, however, this image and likeness of God was marred, and we fell.

When the Son of God assumed our humanity in the womb of the blessed Virgin Mary, the process of our being renewed in God's image and likeness was begun. Thus, those who are joined to Christ, through faith, in Holy Baptism begin a process of re-creation, being renewed in God's image and likeness. We become, as St. Peter writes, "partakers of the divine nature" (1:4).


Because of the Incarnation of the Son of God, because the fullness of God has inhabited human flesh, being joined to Christ means that it is again possible to experience deification, the fulfillment of our human destiny. That is, through union with Christ, we become by grace what God is by nature—we "become children of God" (Jn 1:12). His deity interpenetrates our humanity.

Historically, deification has often been illustrated by the example of a sword in the fire. A steel sword is thrust into a hot fire until the sword takes on a red glow. The energy of the fire interpenetrates the sword. The sword never becomes fire, but it picks up the properties of fire.

By application, the divine energies interpenetrate the human nature of Christ. When we are joined to Christ, our humanity is interpenetrated with the energies of God through Christ's glorified flesh. Nourished by the Body and Blood of Christ, we partake of the grace of God—His strength, His righteousness, His love—and are enabled to serve Him and glorify Him. Thus we, being human, are being deified.



THE FEAST OF WEEKS — PENTECOST

 The Feast of Weeks was the festival celebrated at the beginning of the grain harvest (Ex 34:22). This was the feast at which the Hebrews offered their firstfruits of the harvest to the Lord at the tabernacle. It was one of the three major Jewish feasts, along with the Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles (see Ex 23:14-17; 34:18-23; Dt 16:1-17).

According to Leviticus 23:15, 16, the Feast was celebrated for seven consecutive weeks beginning "the morning following the Sabbath day" of Passover. Thus comes its title, the "Feast of Weeks." Later in the Old Testament this feast became known as "Pentecost" ("fiftieth"), since it was celebrated on the fiftieth day after Passover (see Tb 2:1; 2Mc 12:32).

‡ PENTECOST: A FULFILLMENT OF THE JEWISH FEAST ‡

The Jewish Feast of Pentecost was fulfilled as described in Acts 2. On this Day of Pentecost came the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples of Christ, as Christ Himself had promised (Jn 14:16, 17). The descent of the Holy Spirit fulfills the Jewish Feast of Pentecost in a number of ways.

1 The reaping of the firstfruits of the grain harvest is fulfilled by the first harvest on the Day of Pentecost, which consisted of the Jews who believed and were baptized. St. John Chrysostom says the Holy Spirit "came down as the keen-edged sickle."

2 The offering of the two "deposit loaves" of leavened bread (Lv 23:17, 18) is prophetic of the ingathering of both Jews and Gentiles (Bede). St. John Cassian says the preaching of the apostles on the Day of Pentecost was "the true bread of the first fruits . . . when five thousand men were filled with the gift of its food" (Acts 4:4).

3 The fiftieth day—seven consecutive weeks following Pascha plus one day—indicates the fullness of time in a mystery, similar to the Christian understanding of the eighth day.


4 The giving of the Law to Moses by the Son of God is brought to completion by the giving of the Spirit (see Rom 8:3-11; Gal 5:3-6; Eph 2:13-18) to the Church.

‡ THE SERVICES FOR PENTECOST ‡


The Orthodox services for Pentecost place their emphasis on the descent of the Holy Spirit in all His fullness. His descent means that the Mosaic Law, given by the Lawgiver and honored on the Jewish feast day of Pentecost, is now transcended: "The All-Holy Spirit, who freely distributes gifts to all, has descended and come to earth; not as He formerly had in the Law's dark shadow, shining in the Prophets, but now in very truth, He is bestowed in us through Christ" (Vespers, Thursday after Pentecost).

The worship services for Pentecost repeatedly emphasize how Old Testament prophecies of the Holy Spirit are fulfilled on this day. Two of the greatest of these prophecies are found in the Old Testament readings for this Feast—Ezekiel 36:24-28 and Joel 2:23-32. St. Peter directly quotes the passage from Joel in his exhortation to the Jews on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:16-21). A third reading—Numbers 11:16-17, 24-29—relates how the Lord commands Moses to select seventy of the elders of Israel, who, when the Spirit comes upon them, prophesy at the tabernacle. The comment of Moses regarding this event, "Would that all the Lord's people might be prophets when the Lord would put His Spirit upon them" (Nm 11:29), is prophetic of the Day of Pentecost.

A hymn for the Feast of Pentecost declares, "Once, when He descended and con-founded the tongues, the Most High divided the nations [Gn 11:1-9]; and when He divided the tongues of fire, He called all men into unity; and with one accord we glorify the All-holy Spirit."



GOD'S COVENANTS WITH HIS PEOPLE ISRAEL

 The Lord had a covenantal relationship with the Israelites whereby He promised to always protect and provide for them as well as rescue them. In return, they agreed to worship and serve only Him, as prescribed. When foreign armies invaded Israel, or when other disasters occurred, the Prophets consistently interpreted such calamities as resulting from the people falling away from their covenantal commitment to the Lord.

The Prophets convey God's grief and anger when the Hebrews stray from Him (Is 1:1-31; 24:1-12; Am 3:1-6:14). Yet He remains faithful to His covenant, even when His people do not. God even commands the Prophet Hosea to marry a prostitute in order to demonstrate His unfailing fidelity to Israel despite all the times she has played the harlot with other gods (Hos 1:2-3:5; Jdg 2:17).

The Old Testament records several covenants between God and His people. Through these successive, overlapping covenants, God gradually draws all of mankind, through His chosen people, closer to Himself:

1 The covenant with Noah (Gn 9:8-17). God pledges that there will never be another flood like the one which destroyed the previous civilization.

2 The covenant with Abraham (Gn 12:1-3; 15:1-21; 17:1-21; see Ps 104:1-15). God promises to Abraham a great multitude of descendants, who will inherit the land of Canaan and always be His people. Through them, "all the tribes of the earth shall be blessed" (Gn 12:3).

3 The covenant under Moses (Ex 19:1-31:18; 34:1-28; Dt 5:1-30:20). Established by the Lord shortly after He miraculously rescues His people out of Egypt, this covenant provided the lengthy and detailed Mosaic Law to guide the Hebrews in their relations with one another and with Him.

4 The renewal of the Mosaic Covenant under Joshua (Jos 23:1-24:27).

5 The covenant with David (2Kg 7:1-29; 23:1-5; Ps 88:1-37; Is 55:3, 4) and his son Solomon (3Kg. 8:1-9:9). This covenant establishes the house of David forever: "His seed shall remain forever, and his throne as the sun before Me" (Ps 88:37). From this promise comes the expectation of a great King and Savior, David's descendant (Jer 23:5, 6) who will deliver Israel from all her enemies and will rule the earth with righteousness and peace.

The Prophet Ezekiel prophesies a "covenant of peace" inaugurating a future era of peace and prosperity for Israel under the care of "one shepherd . . . My Servant David" (Ezk 34:20-31; see 37:15-28). Jeremiah and Ezekiel envision this "new covenant" (Jer 38:31-34; Ezk 36:22-28) to be based on the spiritual cleansing and renewal of men's hearts. Isaiah foresees the new, "everlasting covenant" when God will gather all peoples to share in the blessings of Israel (Is 2:1-4; 49:6; 55:5; 60:1-6; see Jer 3:12-17; 4:1, 2; Ps 71:1-19).

The New Testament (or New Covenant), prophesied by Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Isaiah, is inaugurated on earth by Jesus Christ, the "Son of David" (Mt 21:9-11; Mk 10:46-48), the one Shepherd (Jn 10:1-16, 25-28) who comes to gather all people to Himself in spiritual unity and who sends the Holy Spirit (Jn 15:26) on Pentecost to dwell in His followers. Jesus declares at the Last Supper, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood" (Lk 22:20), thus directly linking this new covenant with a covenant meal—the Eucharist. Calling Christ the "Mediator of a better covenant" (Heb 8:6), the Book of Hebrews dramatically demonstrates how He fulfills and supersedes the old covenant made with the Israelites (3:1-10:22).

In the Church, the New Israel (Gal 6:12-16; see 2Co 3:12-18; Eph 2:11-16; Mt 21:33-46); we all have the opportunity to experience the spiritual joy of the new covenant as a foretaste of the heavenly kingdom (Heb 12:18-24), in which believers from all nations will rejoice with God eternally. Hence, it is very fitting that every Divine Liturgy begins with the proclamation, "Blessed is the Kingdom!"



THE INCARNATE SON FULLY REVEALS THE HOLY TRINITY

Luke 1:35—At the Annunciation, the Holy Spirit, the “power” of God the Father (“the Highest”), overshadowed the Virgin Mary; and she gave birth to the Son of God in His flesh.

Matthew 3:16–17—When the Son of God was baptized in the Jordan by John, the Father’s voice was heard from heaven, and the Holy Spirit descended on Him like a dove. As the main hymn for the Feast of Theophany says, “When You, O Lord, were baptized in the Jordan, the worship of the Trinity was made manifest.”



THE TABERNACLE

On Mt. Sinai Moses received not only the Ten Commandments, but also precise and detailed instructions for building the tabernacle—a moveable tent—where God met the assembly of the people Israel (Ex 25:1–27:21). Consequently, the tabernacle is built according to the divine blueprints (Ex 35:4–40:33). Here God’s Presence, His Glory, will be made manifest through the shining cloud filling the holy place (Ex 40:34–38).

The importance of God’s Presence in the tabernacle is apparent in the prayers of the psalms, which express a longing to be with God, a fervent desire to be in His tabernacle (Pss 26:4–6; 60:4; 64:4; 83:1–4, 10; see also 22:6; 25:8). Indeed, the Lord promises that at the tabernacle, “I shall be known to you to speak to you. There I shall give directions to the children of Israel, and I shall be sanctified in My glory” (Ex 29:42–43; see also Ezk 37:26–28). While the tabernacle is the specific place where God was encountered in Israel, this did not exhaust His Presence, for as Almighty God, He has always been everywhere present, filling all things.

Israel’s most sacred objects were kept in the ark of the covenant, located in the holy of holies (Heb 9:2–5). Each object it held was prophetic of Christ: the tablets of the Law inscribed by God (Ex 25:15) prefigure Christ the Lawgiver; the manna (Ex 16:31–34) points to Christ as the Bread of Life (Jn 6:30–58); and Aaron’s staff that budded (Nm 17:16–26) prefigures the life-giving Cross of Christ. Further, the veil separating the holy place from the holy of holies foreshadows the Incarnation (Heb 10:19, 20).

The tabernacle as a whole prefigures Christ, the eternal Word of God, who “became flesh and tabernacled (the usual English translation is ‘dwelt’) among us” (Jn 1:14; see also Col 2:9). St. Gregory of Nyssa observes, “Moses was earlier instructed by a type in the mystery of the tabernacle, which encompasses the universe. This tabernacle would be Christ, who is the power and the wisdom of God (1Co 1:24).” The tabernacle also prefigures Mary the Theotokos, whose womb will be the tabernacle in which the Lord will dwell as He takes His flesh from her.


On the cross, Jesus offers the ultimate sacrifice of His body, which the New Testament calls “the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands” (Heb 9:11). St. John Chrysostom comments that by this greater tabernacle St. Paul “means the flesh [of Christ]. And well did he say, ‘greater and more perfect,’ since God the Word and all the power of the Spirit dwell therein.”

In time, the moveable tabernacle of the wilderness is superseded by the permanent temple in Jerusalem. The temple, in turn, is superseded by Christ (Jn 2:18–21) and the Church, which is His Body (Eph 1:22, 23). Moreover, in Baptism every Christian becomes a tabernacle, a dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. As St. Paul exclaims, “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit?” (1Co 6:19). St. Isaac of Nineveh declares, “Lord, I give praise to Your holy nature, for You have made my nature a sanctuary for Your hiddenness, a tabernacle for Your Mysteries, a place where You can dwell, and a holy temple for Your divinity.”

In his vision of the kingdom of heaven, St. John writes, “But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple” (Rev 21:22). All earthly types vanish as the redeemed behold God and the Lamb in unmediated glory (2Pt 1:4). The ultimate promise of the tabernacle, the temple and the Church is for God Himself to dwell in each believer forever (1Jn 14:16, 17, 23; 17:20–23; see also Rev 3:20).



THE HOLY TRINITY

 The Holy Trinity is revealed both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. In the Old Testament, the Trinity is revealed in subtle ways; in the New Testament, the Trinity is revealed fully and plainly, beginning at the Baptism of our Lord.

The Holy Trinity is one God in three Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. These Persons are distinct, but not separate, and are not three gods. They are One God because They are one in essence or nature. The Father is the unbegotten Fountainhead of Deity. The Son is eternally begotten of the Father (Jn 1:18; 3:16; 16:28). The Holy Spirit is the Helper (Jn 14:16) and Spirit of Truth (Jn 14:17; 16:13), Who proceeds from the Father (Jn 15:26).

THE HOLY TRINITY CREATED THE WORLD

Genesis 1:1—God the Father created the heavens and the earth. The Creed says: "I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth."

Genesis 1:2—The Spirit of God is the Holy Spirit. He hovered over creation in creative power and equality with the Father. He co-created with the Father.

Genesis 1:3—As the Word of God, the Son made the light (Jn 1:1-3). With creative power and equality with the Father, He also co-created with the Father and the Spirit.

Genesis 1:26—The pronouns "Us" and "Our" reveal a plurality of divine Persons. These Persons are the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit operating in complete unity out of the one divine Nature.

THE HOLY TRINITY SAVES THE WORLD

Isaiah 63:16—The Father is our Redeemer. He not only created the world but redeems it as well.

Psalms 2:7, 8—The Father's decree reveals the Son as inheriting the world. This inheritance is the people saved by the Son.

Isaiah 6:1-3—The words "Holy, Holy, Holy" declare the three Persons who save us. The name "Lord" declares the one essence of the Three.

Isaiah 44:3—The Father pours out His Spirit on people like water on dry ground. The Holy Spirit quenches the thirst of the person who thirsts for salvation.

Isaiah 48:16, 17—The Son declares that the Father and the Spirit sent Him to redeem the world. Although the Son alone became a Man, all three Persons save mankind.

THE NEW TESTAMENT AFFIRMS THE HOLY TRINITY

IN THE OLD TESTAMENT


John 1:1-3—The Word is the Son of God, who was present with the Father at the beginning of creation. He was Co-worker with the Father in creating the world.

John 8:58—Jesus identifies Himself as having existed before Abraham. Before His coming in the flesh as Man, Jesus existed as the eternal Son of the Father, for He is begotten from the Father before all time and ages. He appeared to Moses in the burning bush and proclaimed Himself as "I Am" (Ex 3).

Acts 2:17—The Holy Spirit's descent at Pentecost affirms His presence in the Old Testament (Joel 2:28-32).

Hebrews 1:8-10—This Scripture affirms the Father is speaking to the Son in Psalms 44:7 and 101:26-28, in which the Father acknowledges the Son as God and Creator of the world. For the Son was the Father's Co-worker in creation.

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

 For most of church history, salvation was seen as comprehending all of life: Christians believed in Christ, were baptized, and were nurtured in their salvation in the Church. Key doctrines of the faith centered around the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation of the Son of God, the atonement.

In Western Europe during the sixteenth century and before, however, justifiable concern arose among the Reformers over a prevailing understanding that salvation depended on human works of merit, and not on the grace and mercy of God. Their rediscovery of Romans 5 led to the slogan *sola fides*: justification by *faith alone*.

This Reformation debate in the West raised the question for the Orthodox East: Why this new polarization of faith and works? It had been settled since the apostolic era that salvation was granted by the mercy of God to righteous men and women. Those baptized into Christ were called to believe in Him *and* do good works. An opposition of faith *versus* works was unprecedented in Orthodox thought.


The Orthodox understanding of justification differs from the Protestant in several ways.

1 *Justification and the new covenant.* When Orthodox Christians approach the doctrine of salvation, the discussion centers around the new covenant. Justification—being or becoming righteous—by faith in God is part of being brought into a covenant relationship with Him. Whereas Israel was under the old covenant, in which salvation came through faith as revealed in the law, the Church is under the new covenant. Salvation comes through faith in Christ, who fulfills the law. We receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in us, leading us to the knowledge of God the Father. Rather than justification as a legal acquittal before God, Orthodox believers see justification by faith as a covenant relationship with Him, centered in union with Christ (Rom 6:1–6).


2 *Justification and God's mercy.* Orthodoxy emphasizes it is first God's mercy—not our faith—that saves us. "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom 5:1, 2). It is God who initiates or makes the new covenant with us.

3 *Justification by faith is dynamic, not static.* For Orthodox Christians, faith is living, dynamic, continuous—never static or merely point-in-time. Faith is not something a Christian exercises only at one critical moment, expecting it to cover all the rest of his life. True faith is not just a decision, it's a way of life. Thus, the Orthodox Christian sees salvation in at least three aspects: (a) I have been saved, being joined to Christ in Holy Baptism; (b) I am being saved, growing in Christ through the sacramental life of the Church; and (c) I will be saved, by the mercy of God at the Last Judgment.

Justification by faith, though not the major New Testament doctrine for Orthodox as it is for Protestants, poses no problem. But justification by faith *alone* brings up an objection. It contradicts Scripture, which says, "You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only" (Jam 2:24). We are "justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law" (Rom 3:28), but nowhere does the Bible say we are justified by faith "alone." On the contrary, "faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead" (Jam 2:17).

As Christians we are no longer under the demands of the Old Testament law (Rom 3:20), for Christ has fulfilled the law (Gal 2:21; 3:5, 24). By God's mercy, we are brought into a new covenant relationship with Him. We who believe are granted entrance into His Kingdom by His grace. Through His mercy, we are justified by faith and empowered by God for good works or deeds of righteousness that bring glory to Him. 

WORKS IN PAUL'S WRITING

 St. Paul uses the term "works" extensively in his letters, especially in Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians. By this term, he means human activities which he generally classifies in two categories:

1 *Dead works*: These can be works that are evil, such as murder, adultery, idol worship, and robbery—which the Scriptures also call "works of the flesh" (Gal 5:19) and obviously condemn. But in addition, dead works can be works—even good works—done for the wrong reasons. These are works that are good in themselves—such as fasting, giving money, and feeding the poor—but are done to call attention to oneself or to gain standing in the community. Selfish motivation turns good works into dead works. (The solution to this problem is not to cease fasting, giving, or helping, but rather to turn from the sin of self-glorification.)


2 *Living works*: These are deeds that are both good in themselves and done for a good purpose: the glory of God. Good works the Scriptures commend. Paul teaches they are an outgrowth of our salvation when he writes, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Eph 2:10). They contribute to our faith, as James teaches, "You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only [or alone]" (Jam 2:24). When we do living works, we rely on the strength and grace of God, and we seek to bring glory to Him and not to ourselves through what we do.

Some have erroneously interpreted Paul, particularly in Romans 4, to be condemning all works. A careful reading of Romans, however, reveals Paul is not putting down works in general, but *dead works*. St. Maximos the Confessor, writing in the seventh century, states clearly the view of the Church concerning dead works:


Many human activities, good in themselves, are not good because of the motive for which they are done. For example, fasting, vigils, prayer, psalmody [the singing of hymns], acts of charity and hospitality are by nature good. But when performed for the sake of self-esteem [vainglory, self-glorification] they are not good. In everything we do, God searches out our purpose to see whether we do it for Him or for some other motive . . . quite clearly He bestows blessings only when something is done for the right purpose. For God's judgment looks not at the actions, but at the purpose behind them.

Thus, the Christian actively cultivates a habit of doing good works for the glory of God, and as a way of life. The writings of Paul are clear. If we are joined to Christ and cleansed from the dishonor of the past, we become "a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work" (2Ti 2:21). God sets us apart to Himself so we will be productive and useful to Him.

"Therefore, my beloved brethren," Paul tells the Corinthians, "be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1Co 15:58).



THE ETERNAL KINGDOM

 Few saints have been blessed with a vision of heaven while still in this life. Isaiah saw heaven (Is 6:1-8), as did Ezekiel (Ezk 1:1-28), and the apostle John saw a new heaven—God's eternal Kingdom revealed as a city (Rev 21:1—22:5).

When we read these passages, we note an abundance of mystical, apocalyptic imagery. But the strong similarities between these passages suggests an inspired consistency of reporting on the visions. The living creatures, the light, the cherubic beings, the throne, and the glory of the Lord all work together to unveil a Kingdom of celestial majesty and splendor.

While confessing with the prophet Isaiah and the apostle Paul that “eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him” (1Co 2:9), we nonetheless find, taking the Scriptures as a whole, that certain things can be said about the eternal Kingdom.

1 *The saints who inhabit God's Kingdom live in active fulfillment of His eternal plan.* In the Kingdom, humanity becomes all it is meant to be. There is nothing at all in Scripture to suggest that eternal life means people passively afloat on huge white clouds strumming harps unto the ages of ages.


Originally created to inhabit Paradise, our first parents chose to sin against God and were expelled from the Garden. The Kingdom of God was closed to mankind (Gn 3:24). But God in His love called His creation back to Himself, speaking to us through the law and the prophets and ultimately through His incarnate Son. Through new life in Jesus Christ, we are brought back by God's mercy into the new creation, His everlasting Kingdom. As kings and priests we will reign with Him forever (Rev 1:6).

2 *We experience a foretaste of the Kingdom in the Church.* The very first words of the Divine Liturgy spoken by the priest are, “Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.” The Church at worship enters or ascends to the heavenly Kingdom. For it is in the Church that we are seated “together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:6) and are raised to “where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God” (Col 3:1).

In worship we join the heavenly hosts—the saints and the angels—in giving praise to our God. As the body of Christ, we participate with that “great cloud of witnesses” (Heb 12:1) surrounding us as we come to “the throne of God” (Heb 12:2). We come liturgically “to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all” (Heb 12:22, 23). With this heavenly vision, the Orthodox Church each Sunday remembers not only those in the parish but “all those who in faith have gone on before us to their rest.”

3 *Knowledge of the Kingdom motivates us to live in complete devotion to Christ.* In this life, we have a foretaste of the Kingdom that inspires us to seek its fullness. In Paul's words, “For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face” (1Co 13:12). Worship is not a solitary act. Rather it is the Bride of Christ, the one Church—those on earth joining with those in heaven—giving thanks to our God and King, who has made us citizens of His magnificent domain.

The apostle John writes, “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure” (1Jn 3:2, 3).



Did You Know That ...

...God's intention is that each believer have a share in the treasury of divine knowledge so that we can call upon our rightful portion of heavenly treasure?

...holiness means embracing all the virtues of heaven?

...there are people who will make any kind of promise but never intend to keep it?

...the believer in Christ measures himself by the standard of Christ?

...those who are accustomed to doing evil cannot do good with repentance?

...absence from the House of God means absence from the glories of heaven?

...Christian believers rejoice in tough times because they are possessed of hope?

...the kind person has the ability to be sympathetic?

...by himself man will never achieve goodness?

...material possessions are only here today, perhaps tomorrow?

...gentleness is qualification for parenthood?

...laziness is the first step to perdition?

...if we wish to experience God's peace, we must trust in God's purpose?

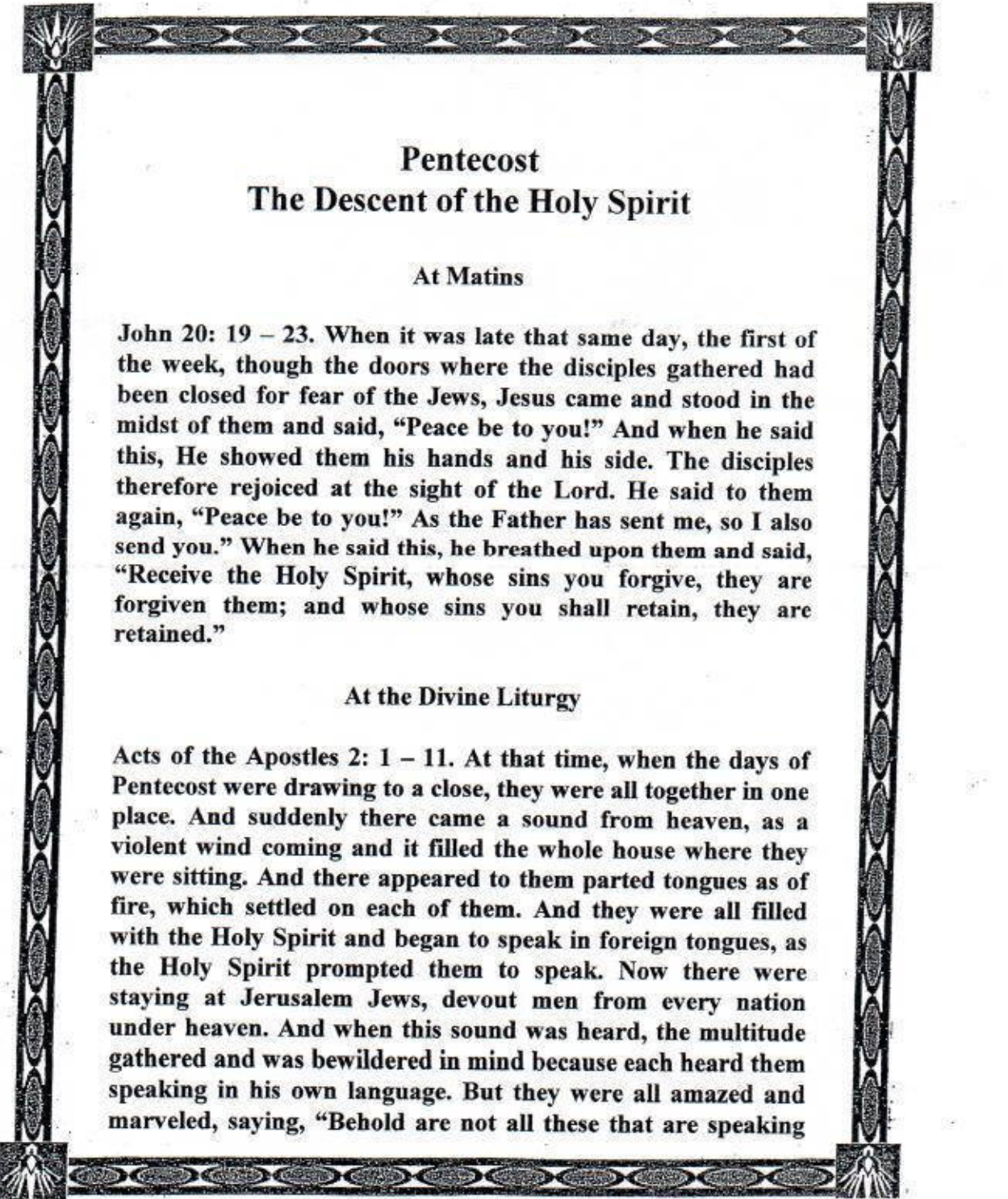
...when jealousy is rampant, there is also present every kind of disorder?

...it is useless to fight a battle if you will not gain anything by winning?

...gentleness is the ability to disagree agreeably?

...if two people agree on everything, one of them is not needed?

....unbelievers particularly need our love and gentle approach?



Pentecost

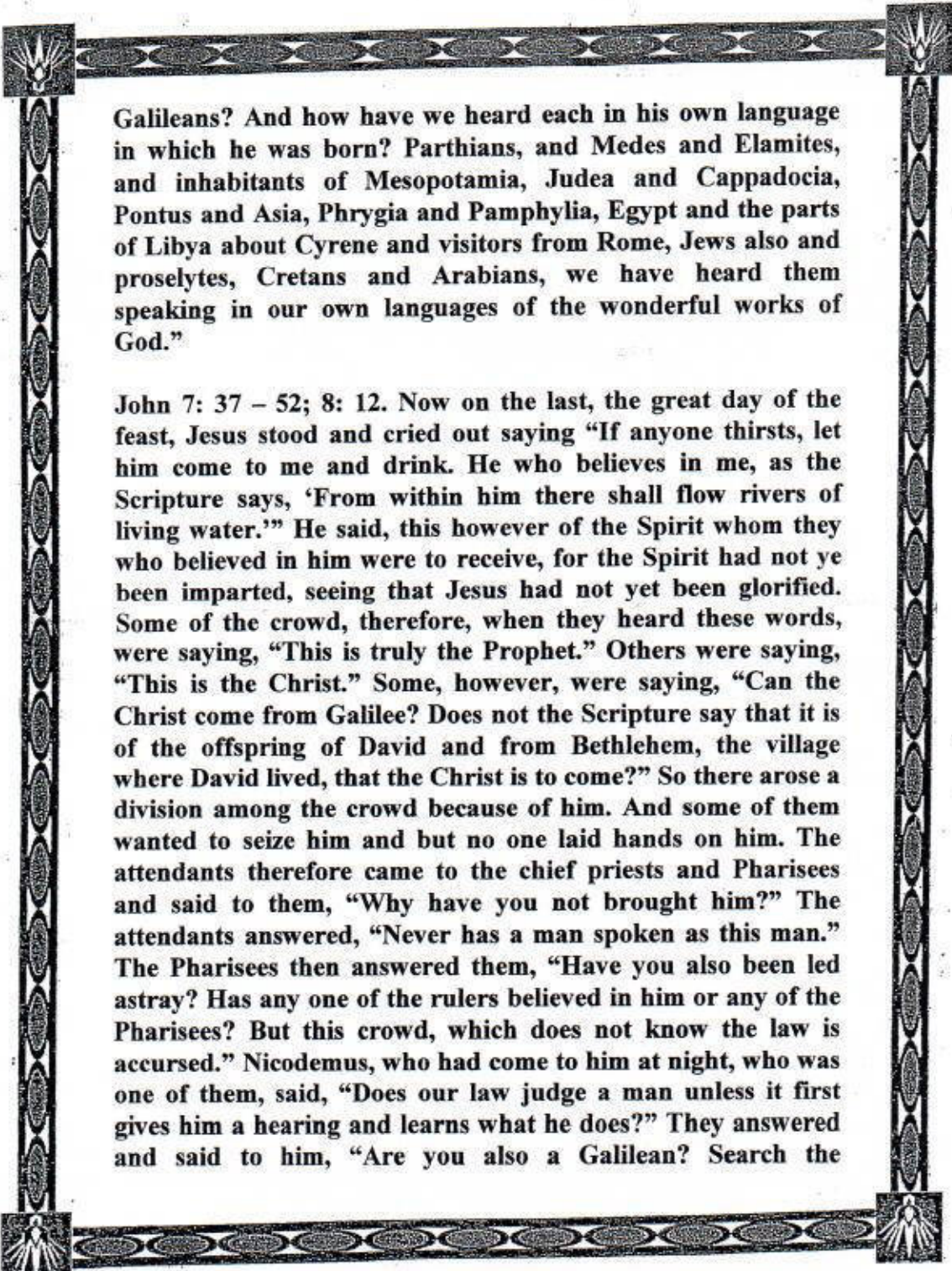
The Descent of the Holy Spirit

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."

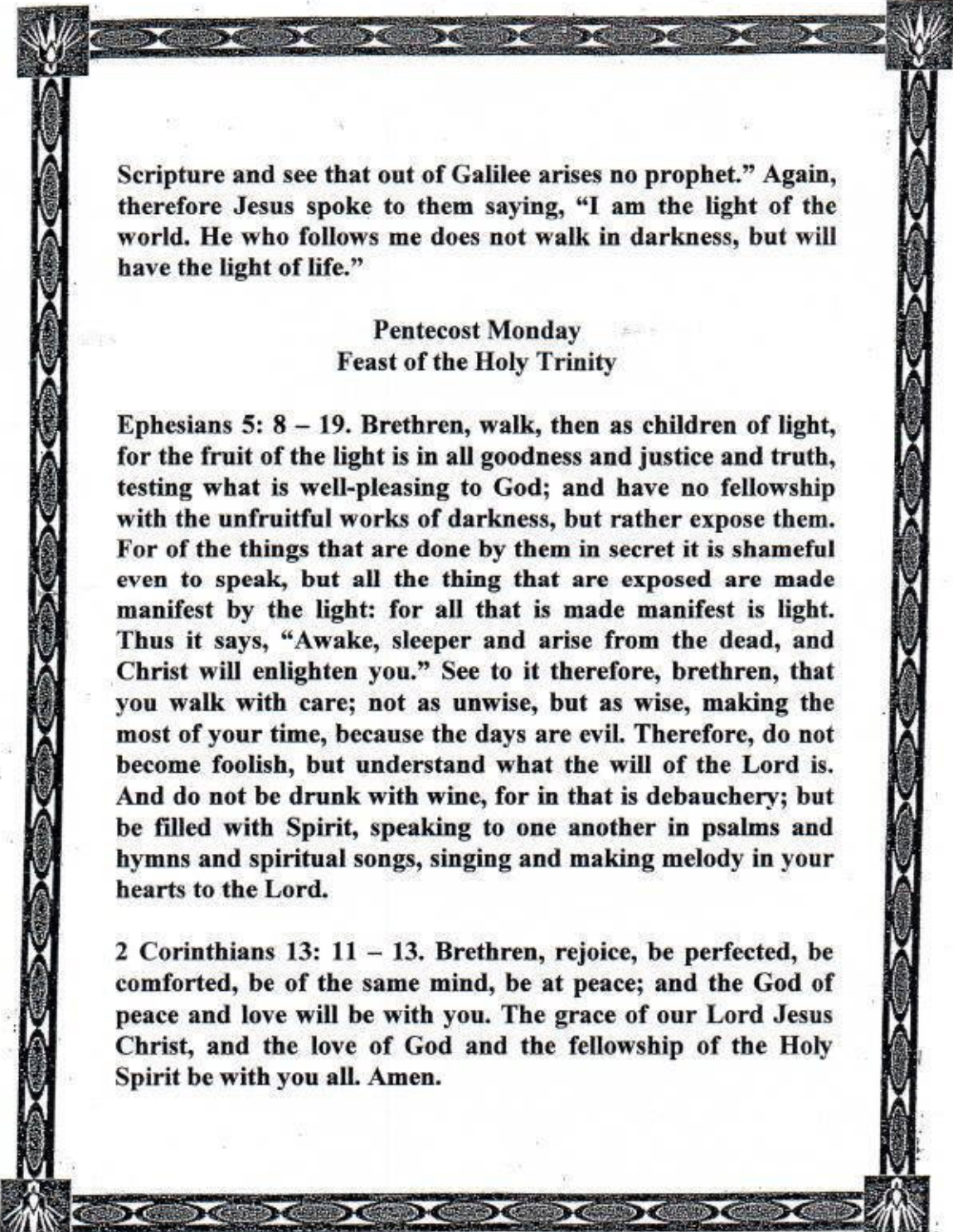
At the Divine Liturgy

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

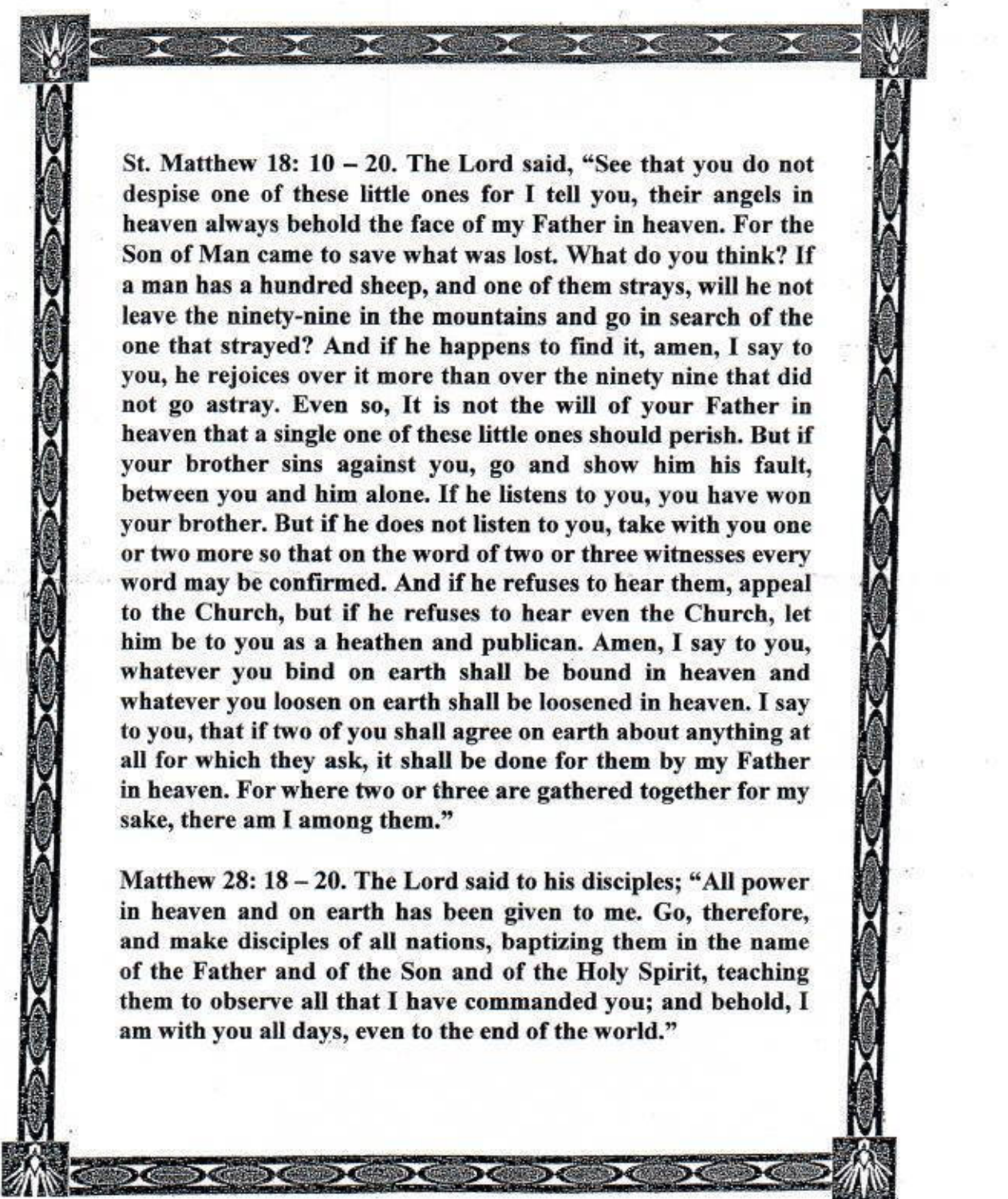


Scripture and see that out of Galilee arises no prophet." Again, therefore Jesus spoke to them saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows me does not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

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.”



The Descent of the Holy Spirit—Pentecost



Pentecost in Jerusalem

Acts 2:1-11

The disciples constantly prayed together after Jesus went away in the cloud.

Fifty days after Jesus was crucified, there was a big holiday. It was called Pentecost. At that time, many thousands of people visited Jerusalem. The disciples were all together that day. Suddenly, a sound like violent wind filled the house. Fire appeared and rested on each of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit made them able to speak in other languages. Then a curious crowd gathered. They were from many different nations. But they each heard the gospel in their own language.

Questions: What was the name of the holiday in Jerusalem? What ability did the Holy Spirit give to the disciples?

Pentecost in Jerusalem

Acts 2:12-39

Everyone was amazed and puzzled. They each heard their own language! "What does this mean?" some asked. Others sneered, "They're drunk on new wine."

Then Peter stood up. "People from Judea and all who live in Jerusalem: We're not drunk. It's only nine in the morning. Long ago the prophet Joel wrote: 'In the last days I'll pour my Spirit on everyone. Then, those who call on the Lord's name will be saved.'

"Jesus of Nazareth did miracles among you, but in God's plan, you killed him. This same Jesus, God brought back from death. We have seen him. He's now at God's right hand. The Father has given Jesus the promise of the Holy Spirit.

Peter's words cut them to the heart. They asked, "What shall we do?"

"Everyone, turn from your sins, be forgiven, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. You'll be given the Holy Spirit as a gift. This promise is for you, your children, and all who are far away." Three thousand people believed in Jesus that day.

*Questions: What happens to those who call on the name of the Lord?
What is the gift people get when they believe in Jesus?*

THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT



As we celebrate the Feast of Pentecost today, it is important that we note that this day is a fulfillment of a promise that Christ gave to His Apostles at the Last Supper. As they gathered for one final Passover meal, our Lord explained to them that although He would be leaving them, He would not be abandoning them – He would send them the Holy Spirit, Who would guide them in all things. When our Lord was about to return to His Heavenly Home, He instructed the Apostles to go back to Jerusalem and wait.

Obediently, they did what they were told. With the rushing of a mighty wind and the appearance of tongues of fire, the Holy Spirit entered the Upper Room where the Apostles were patiently waiting and came into their hearts. The Holy Spirit changed them instantly from timid, fearful men into fearless witnesses for Christ. They went out into the streets of Jerusalem and shared their first-hand knowledge of the Risen Lord, and 3,000 people became Christians that very day because of what they heard.

When we think of Pentecost, there is a great danger of simply viewing it as an event that happened in the life of the Apostles. The Holy Spirit did not come solely to these 12 men. The Spirit comes to all of us, and we are all capable of receiving the same power, enthusiasm, joy and excitement for spreading the Word of God that the Apostles were given. The Holy Spirit came to us on the day of our baptism. When we pray fervently, the Holy Spirit comes to us. Every time we come to confession, the Holy Spirit comes to us. Every time we receive the Eucharist, the Holy Spirit comes to us.

We must remember that we are given a great responsibility that goes along with the gift of the Holy Spirit. We are charged to do what the Apostles were asked to do: "*Go and teach all nations!*" We know what the Apostles were able to accomplish for Christ and His Church through the Grace of the Holy Spirit. How about us? What are we doing?

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