

Saints Peter and Paul Orthodox Church

Albanian Archdiocese - OCA

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SUNDAY, JUNE 4

8th Sunday of Pascha

Holy Pentecost – Feast of the Holy Trinity

The First Antiphon

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

Refrain: Through the prayers of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us!

Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge. *(Ps. 18:2)*

(Refrain)

Their proclamation has gone out into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the universe.

(Ps. 18:4)

(Refrain)

The Second Antiphon

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

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

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

(Refrain)

May He remember all thine offerings, and fulfill all thy plans! *(Ps. 19:3)*

(Refrain)

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

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

The Third Antiphon

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

Tone 8 Troparion

Blessed art Thou, O Christ our God,
Who hast revealed the fishermen as most wise
by sending down upon them the Holy Spirit,
and through them Thou didst draw the world into Thy net.//

O Lover of Man, glory to Thee!

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

Troparion of the Feast

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

Troparion of the Feast



**Tone 8
Troparion**

*Blessed art Thou, O Christ our God,
Who hast revealed the fishermen as most wise
by sending down upon them the Holy Spirit,
and through them Thou didst draw the world into
Thy net.
O Lover of Man, glory to Thee!*

**Tone 8
Kontakion**

*When the Most High came down and confused
the tongues,
He divided the nations;
but when He distributed the tongues of fire, He
called all to unity.
Therefore, with one voice we glorify the All-holy
Spirit.*

(Instead of the Trisagion, we sing:)

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

Prokeimenon

Tone 8 (Pentecostarion)

Their proclamation has gone out into all the earth, / and their words to the ends of the universe. (Ps. 18:4)
V. The heavens are telling the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims His handiwork. (Ps. 18:1)

Holy Pentecost

In the Church's annual liturgical cycle, Pentecost is "the last and great day." It is the celebration by the Church of the coming of the Holy Spirit as the end—the achievement and fulfillment—of the entire history of salvation. For the same reason, however, it is also the celebration of the beginning: it is the "birthday" of the Church as the presence among us of the Holy Spirit, of the new life in Christ, of grace, knowledge, adoption to God and holiness.

This double meaning and double joy is revealed to us, first of all, in the very name of the feast. Pentecost in Greek means fifty, and in the sacred biblical symbolism of numbers, the number fifty symbolizes both the fulness of time and that which is beyond time: the Kingdom of God itself. It symbolizes the fulness of time by its first component: 49, which is the fulness of seven (7 x 7): the number of time. And, it symbolizes that which is beyond time by its second component: 49 + 1, this one being the new day, the "day without evening" of God's eternal Kingdom. With the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Christ's disciples, the time of salvation, the Divine work of redemption has been completed, the fulness revealed, all gifts bestowed: it belongs to us now to "appropriate" these gifts, to be that which we have become in Christ: participants and citizens of His Kingdom.

THE VIGIL OF PENTECOST

The all-night Vigil service begins with a solemn invitation:

*"Let us celebrate Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit,
The appointed day of promise, and the fulfillment of hope,
The mystery which is as great as it is precious."*

In the coming of the Spirit, the very essence of the Church is revealed:

*"The Holy Spirit provides all,
Overflows with prophecy, fulfills the priesthood,
Has taught wisdom to illiterates, has revealed fishermen as theologians,
He brings together the whole council of the Church."*

In the three readings of the Old Testament (Numbers 11:16-17, 24-29; Joel 2:23-32; Ezekiel 36:24-28) we hear the prophecies concerning the Holy Spirit. We are taught that the entire history of mankind was directed

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✠ The Epistle Reading ✠

Acts 2:1-11

When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs – we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God."

Veprat e Apostujve 2:1-11

Edhe kur erdhi dita e Pendikostisë, ishin të gjithë me një zemër, në të njëjtin vend. Edhe papritur u bë një oshtimë nga qielli si e një ere që fryn me fuqi, edhe mbushi gjithë shtëpinë ku ishin duke ndenjur. Edhe u dukën mbi ta gjuhë porsì prej zjarri që ndaheshin, edhe ndenjën mbi gjithsecilin prej tyre. Edhe u mbushën të gjithë me Frymë të Shenjtë, e zunë të flisnin me gjuhë të tjera, sikundër Fryma u jepte të flisnin. Edhe po rrinin në Jerusalem Judenj, burra me frikë Perëndie prej çdo kombi nën qiell. Edhe kur u bë ky zë, u mblodh turma dhe u turbullua; sepse gjithsecili i dëgjonte ata duke folur në gjuhën e tij. Edhe të gjithë habiteshin e çuditeshin, duke i thënë njëri-tjetrit: Ja, a nuk janë Galileas të gjithë këta që flasin? Edhe si gjithsecili nga ne dëgjojnë në gjuhën tonë, në të cilën kemi lindur? Partë e Medë e Elamitë, edhe ata që rrinë në Mesopotami e në Jude e në Kapadoki, në Pont e në Azi, në Frigji e në Pamfili, në Egjipt e në anët e Libisë pranë Kirenës, edhe të ardhurit nga Roma, Judenj e prozelitë, Kretas e Arabë, i dëgjojmë ata duke folur në gjuhët tona madhëritë e Perëndisë.

Деяния 2:1-11

При наступлении дня Пятидесятницы все они были единодушно вместе. И внезапно сделался шум с неба, как бы от несущегося сильного ветра, и наполнил весь дом, где они находились. И явились им разделяющиеся языки, как бы огненные, и почили по одному на каждом из них. И исполнились все Духа Святаго, и начали говорить на иных языках, как Дух давал им провещевать. В Иерусалиме же находились Иудеи, люди набожные, из всякого народа под небом. Когда сделался этот шум, собрался народ, и пришел в смятение, ибо каждый слышал их говорящих его наречием. И все изумлялись и дивились, говоря между собою: сии говорящие не все ли Галилеяне? Как же мы слышим каждый собственное наречие, в котором родились. Парфяне, и Мидяне, и Еламиты, и жители Месопотамии, Иудеи и Каппадокии, Понта и Асии, Фригии и Памфилии, Египта и частей Ливии, прилежащих к Киринее, и пришедшие из Рима, Иудеи и прозелиты, критяне и аравитяне, слышим их нашими языками говорящих о великих [делах] Божиих?

Tone 1

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

V. By the Word of the Lord the heavens were made; and all their host by the Spirit of His mouth. (Ps. 32:6)

V. The Lord looked down from heaven, and saw all the sons of men. (Ps. 32:13)

“The grace of the Holy Spirit which is given mystically to every Christian when he is baptized acts and is manifested in proportion to our obedience to the commandments of the Lord. That is, if a Christian obeys the commandments of the Lord more, grace acts with him more, while if he obeys them less, grace acts within him less.”

✠ The Gospel Reading ✠

John 7:37-52, 8:12

On the last day, that 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 has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. Therefore many from the crowd, when they heard this saying, said, "Truly this is the Prophet." Others said, "This is the Christ." But some said, "Will the Christ come out of Galilee? Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the seed of David and from the town of Bethlehem, where David was?" So there was a division among the people because of Him. Now some of them wanted to take Him, but no one laid hands on Him. Then the officers came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, "Why have you not brought Him?" The officers answered, "No man ever spoke like this Man!" Then the Pharisees answered them, "Are you also deceived? Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed in Him? But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed." Nikodemos (he who came to Jesus by night, being one of them) said to them, "Does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing?" They answered and said to him, "Are you also from Galilee? Search and look, for no prophet has arisen out of Galilee." Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

Joanit 7:37-52, 8:12

Edhe ditën e fundit, ditën e madhe të së kremtes, Jisui qëndroi e thirri, duke thënë: Kush të ketë etje, le të vijë tek unë e le të pijë. Ai që më beson mua, siç tha Shkrimi, lumenj uji të gjallë do të rrjedhin nga barku i tij. Edhe këtë e tha për Frymën që kishin për të marrë ata që do t'i besonin; sepse ende s'ishte dhënë Fryma e Shenjtë; sepse Jisui ende s'ishte lavdëruar. Shumë pra, prej turmës kur dëgjuan këtë fjalë, thoshin: Ky është me të vërtetë profeti. Të tjerë thoshin: Ky është Krishti. Të tjerë thoshin: Mos vjen Krishti nga Galilea? A nuk tha Shkrimi se Krishti vjen nga fara e Davidit dhe nga fshati Betlehem, nga ku ishte Davidi? U bë pra një përçarje në turmë për të. Edhe disa prej tyre donin ta kapnin; po asnjë s'vuri duart mbi të. Erdhën pra shërbëtorët te kryepriiftërinjtë e te Farisenjtë, edhe ata u thanë atyre: Pse nuk e prutë? Shërbëtorët u përgjigjën: Kurrë s'ka folur njeri kështu, si ky njeri. Farisenjtë pra iu përgjigjën atyre: Mos u gënjyet edhe ju? Mos i ka besuar atij ndonjë prej të parëve a prej Farisenjve? Po kjo turmë që s'di ligjin, janë të mallkuar. U thotë atyre Nikodhimi, ai që pati ardhur natën tek ai, i cili ishte një prej atyre: Mos e gjykon njeriun ligji ynë, pa e dëgjuar më parë atë, e pa marrë vesh se ç'bën? U përgjigjën e i thanë: Mos je edhe ti nga Galilea? Kërko e shih, se profet nga Galilea nuk është ngritur. Jisui pra, përsëri u foli atyre, duke thënë, Unë jam drita e botës. Ai që më vjen pas, nuk do të ecë në errësirë, por do të ketë dritën e jetës.

От Иоанна 7:37-52, 8:12

В последний же великий день праздника стоял Иисус и возгласил, говоря: кто жаждет, иди ко Мне и пей. Кто верует в Меня, у того, как сказано в Писании, из чрева потекут реки воды живой. Сие сказал Он о Духе, Которого имели принять верующие в Него: ибо еще не было на них Духа Святаго, потому что Иисус еще не был прославлен. Многие из народа, услышав сии слова, говорили: Он точно пророк. Другие говорили: это Христос. А иные говорили: разве из Галилеи Христос придет? Не сказано ли в Писании, что Христос придет от семени Давидова и из Вифлеема, из того места, откуда был Давид? Итак произошла о Нем распря в народе. Некоторые из них хотели схватить Его; но никто не наложил на Него рук. Итак служители возвратились к первосвященникам и фарисеям, и сии сказали им: для чего вы не привели Его? Служители отвечали: никогда человек не говорил так, как Этот Человек. Фарисеи сказали им: неужели и вы прельстились? Уверовал ли в Него кто из начальников, или из фарисеев? Но этот народ невежда в законе, проклят он. Никодим, приходивший к Нему ночью, будучи один из них, говорит им: судит ли закон наш человека, если прежде не выслушают его и не узнают, что он делает? На это сказали ему: и ты не из Галилеи ли? рассмотри и увидишь, что из Галилеи не приходит пророк. Опять говорил Иисус [к народу] и сказал им: Я свет миру; кто последует за Мною, тот не будет ходить во тьме, но будет иметь свет жизни.

(Instead of "It is truly meet...", we sing the following)

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

Communion Hymn

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

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towards the day on which God "would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh." This day has come! All hope, all promises, all expectations have been fulfilled. At the end of the Aposticha hymns, for the first time since Easter, we sing the hymn: "O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth..." the one with which we inaugurate all our services, all prayers, which is, as it were, the life-breath of the Church, and whose coming to us, whose "descent" upon us in this festal Vigil, is indeed the very experience of the Holy Spirit "coming and abiding in us." Having reached its climax, the Vigil continues as an explosion of joy and light for "verily the light of the Comforter has come and illumined the world." In the Gospel reading (John 20:19-23) the feast is interpreted to us as the feast of the Church, of her divine nature, power and authority. The Lord sends His disciples into the world, as He Himself was sent by His Father. Later, in the antiphons of the Liturgy, we proclaim the universality of the apostles' preaching, the cosmical significance of the feast, the sanctification of the whole world, the true manifestation of God's Kingdom.

THE VESPERS OF PENTECOST

The liturgical peculiarity of Pentecost is a very special Vespers of the day itself. Usually this service follows immediately the Divine Liturgy, is "added" to it as its own fulfillment. The service begins as a solemn "summing up" of the entire celebration, as its liturgical synthesis. We hold flowers in our hands symbolizing the joy of the eternal spring, inaugurated by the coming of the Holy Spirit. After the festal Entrance, this joy reaches its climax in the singing of the Great Prokeimenon:

"Who is so great a God as our God?"

Then, having reached this climax, we are invited to kneel. This is our first kneeling since Easter. It signifies that after these fifty days of Paschal joy and fulness, of experiencing the Kingdom of God, the Church now is about to begin her pilgrimage through time and history. It is evening again, and the night approaches, during which temptations and failures await us, when, more than anything else, we need Divine help, that presence and power of the Holy Spirit, who has already revealed to us the joyful End, who now will help us in our effort towards fulfillment and salvation.

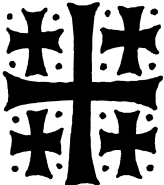
All this is revealed in the three prayers which the celebrant reads now as we all kneel and listen to him. In the first prayer, we bring to God our repentance, our increased appeal for forgiveness of sins, the first condition for entering into the Kingdom of God.

In the second prayer, we ask the Holy Spirit to help us, to teach us to pray and to follow the true path in the dark and difficult night of our earthly existence. Finally, in the third prayer, we remember all those who have achieved their earthly journey, but who are united with us in the eternal God of Love.

The joy of Easter has been completed and we again have to wait for the dawn of the Eternal Day. Yet, knowing our weakness, humbling ourselves by kneeling, we also know the joy and the power of the Holy Spirit who has come. We know that God is with us, that in Him is our victory.

Thus is completed the feast of Pentecost and we enter "the ordinary time" of the year. Yet, every Sunday now will be called "after Pentecost"—and this means that it is from the power and light of these fifty days that we shall receive our own power, the Divine help in our daily struggle. At Pentecost we decorate our churches with flowers and green branches—for the Church "never grows old, but is always young." It is an evergreen, ever-living Tree of grace and life, of joy and comfort. For the Holy Spirit—"the Treasury of Blessings and Giver of Life—comes and abides in us, and cleanses us from all impurity," and fills our life with meaning, love, faith and hope.

Father Alexander Schmemmann (1974)

PRAYERS	Birthdays, Names-days, & Anniversaries	SCRIPTURE THIS WEEK
<i>For Those Who Have Fallen Asleep</i>		Church Lectionary
<p>Newly Departed Margaret, Newly Departed David, Newly departed Miles, Newly Departed child Luke, Robert</p> <p><i>[To be inserted after the petition for the departed]</i> Again we pray for those who have lost their lives because of the war in Ukraine: that the Lord our God may look upon them with mercy, and give them rest where there is neither sickness, or sorrow, but life everlasting.</p>	<p>June 4 – June 10 Niko Chochelli (B) Barbara Vesho (B) Sasha Dellermann (B) Julianna Dellermann (B)</p> <p><u>Seven-Day Vigil Candles</u></p> <p>Michael – Prayers for health</p>	<p><u>Today</u> Acts 2:1-11 John 7:37-52, 8:12</p> <p><u>Monday</u> Ephesians 5:9-19 Matthew 18:10-20</p>
<i>For Those Who Are Sick And Home-bound</i>		
<p>Virginia, Denise, Olvian, Marie, James, Alexandra, Andrew, Christina, Louise, Porter, Alvin, Tracy, Kathy, Andrew, Maria, Helen, John, Tom, Nina, Sophia, Jim, Spresha, Kristin, Niko, Spiro, Angjeliki, Melod, Olgay, Ruth, Fr. Milorad, Naomi, Terry, Naomi, Annette, Tatiana, Aleena, Lester Jr., Natalia, Otari, Lasha</p>	<p>Seven-Day Vigil Candles are used for the Eternal Light that hangs above the Royal Doors and are often placed in front of the icons of Christ or the Birth-giver of God. If you would like to donate a Seven-Day Vigil Candle, Please include the name or names of those for whom the candle is donated, and we will place them in this section for special prayers.</p>	<p><u>Tuesday</u> Romans 1:1-7, 13-17 Matthew 4:25-5:13</p> <p><u>Wednesday</u> Romans 1:18-27 Matthew 5:20-26</p>
<i>Prayers In General</i>		
<p>Fr. Dennis and his family, Fr. Ioan, Christian, Michael, Erica, Kaida, DuDash family, Michael, Robert, Ally, Steve, Jake and Amanda and their children, Katherine, Ron, Anthony, Volodymyr, Nick, Sophia, Michael, Rafael, Bob, Barbara, Juliya and the child born of her, Ansley and the child to be born of her, Sandra, Enoch, John, Victoria, Melenie, Grace, Michael, Barbara, Giorgi, Molly, Jim, Chloe</p>		<p><u>Thursday</u> Romans 1:28-2:9 Matthew 5:27-32</p> <p><u>Friday</u> Romans 2:14-29 Matthew 5:33-41</p>
<i>[To be inserted after the petition for the living]</i>		
<p>Again we pray for mercy, life, peace, health, salvation, for those who are suffering, wounded, grieving, or displaced because of the war in Ukraine.</p>	COFFEE HOUR	<p><u>Saturday</u> Romans 1:7-12 Matthew 5:42-48</p>
<i>[Petitions at Augmented Litany]</i>		
<p>Again we pray for a cessation of the hostilities against Ukraine, and that reconciliation and peace will flourish there, we pray thee, hearken and have mercy.</p>	<p>June 04 – Vesho Memorial 11 – Dellermann Family 18 25 – Hot Dog Sunday</p>	<u>Reading the Bible in a Year</u>
<p>We give thanks to You, O Lord our God, Who in Your mercy and providential care, has called forth Archimandrite NIKODHIM to become a shepherd of wisdom and strength for our Albanian Archdiocese. We ask that You Bless Father NIKODHIM as he readies himself to become our future archpastor so he may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • care for our spiritual well-being, • unite us in a zealous confession of our holy faith, • commit us in loving service to one another in bright witness to the glory of Your holy Name. <p>Hear us and have mercy.</p>	<p>Coffee Hour is a wonderful chance for us to get together to break bread and spend time with each other, to celebrate those whom we have held memorials for, and to come together as the family of God outside of worship. To sign up, to host a coffee hour, contact Fr. Nicholas or Donna Bacon.</p>	<p>June 04: Psalms 145-148 June 05: Psalms 149-150 June 06: Proverbs 1-4 June 07: Proverbs 5-8 June 08: Proverbs 9-12 June 09: Proverbs 13-16 June 10: Proverbs 17-20</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div>

The Dispute Is Always About Christ

June 1, 2023 · Fr. Barnabas Powell



“It’s not a “what.” It’s a “Who.” And with that caveat, my initial lesson in becoming Orthodox began.

You see, I always thought that the Christian Faith was about giving mental assent to certain doctrinal precepts and saying the “proper” words. I thought that I could argue and use “apologetics” to convince others that my version of Christianity, or even morality, was the “right” one. I was wrong.

Oh, to be sure, we must use our intellect to formulate coherent arguments, and the intellect is certainly a gift we need to develop

and discipline. But, in the end, all the fussing and disagreements and moral positions we take are ultimately about Who Jesus Christ really is. AND who I am in being created in the image of God.

I have some acquaintances who are academics and it seems they pride themselves (I use that word purposefully today) on finding this or that nuance in the Church’s timeless message of faith and morality. In their academic world, discovering some “new” insight is the mark of a “real” scholar. But that short-sighted and, frankly, obvious weakness only leads to an abandoning of the Faith, never its strengthening. These “scholars” are absolutely “sure” the consistent moral teachings of the Church need to be “nuanced” so we can better “fit in” with the prevailing mindset of their academic “ivory tower.”

But, what this is really about is Jesus Christ. In fact, I’ll go even further and insist that, ultimately, all issues and questions, from big to small, are really about Jesus Christ. He is the defining Human for all of us, even those who hate Him.

Look at our lesson today in Acts 25:13-19:

IN THOSE DAYS, Agrippa the king and Bernice arrived at Caesarea to welcome Festus. And as they stayed there many days, Festus laid Paul’s case before the king, saying, “There is a man left prisoner by Felix; and when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews gave information about him, asking for sentence against him. I answered them that it was not the custom of the Romans to give up any one before the accused met the accusers face to face, and had opportunity to make his defense concerning the charge laid against him. When therefore they came together here, I made no delay, but on the next day took my seat on the tribunal and ordered the man to be brought in. When the accusers stood up, they brought no charge in his case of such evils as I supposed; but they had certain points of dispute with him about their own superstition and about one Jesus, who was dead, but whom Paul asserted to be alive.”

St. Paul is under arrest. Since he is a Roman citizen, the leaders in Jerusalem can’t treat him like they treated non-citizens. Paul has certain rights when it comes to the courts as a Roman citizen and he presses that advantage, not to save his own life, but to gain an audience with the Roman Emperor so that he can share the Gospel with him and the whole Roman capital.

Here we read of how the legal proceedings against Paul were progressing. Festus, the Roman representative, brings Paul’s case before the puppet king of Israel, Agrippa. And it is fascinating to see how this Roman leader perceives the whole matter. Festus can’t see what all the fuss is about. It seems to him that the whole matter centers around Paul’s claim that Jesus was alive, and the insistence by the

religious leaders in Jerusalem that He was dead. OK, smart guys, if He's dead, produce the Body! And Festus gets this part exactly right. This really is a dispute about Jesus Christ. Make no mistake, dear one, most disputes in culture and morality, and even philosophy all center in one way or another on Jesus Christ. Even the enemies of the Church spend most of their time trying to deal with this Man Jesus. Because no other Man in history has shaped and formed and molded human history like Jesus Christ. Even those who wish to return to some "pagan" worship or even the elevation of politics to religion or the madness of immorality as "really moral" proclamations all come into confrontation with Jesus Christ. Everything that happened before Christ came was to bring us to Christ and everything that happens after Christ came is because of Christ.

So it makes perfect sense when society wants to indulge its self-destructive ways by insisting that people have the "right" to destroy themselves, they have a "right" to destroy life, even their own children's lives through abortion or even the modern fad of mass hysteria over gender identities and such, they have a "right" to engage in all kinds of self-destructive lifestyles that are strangers to peace and sobriety, all the while claiming that all this foolishness is wisdom and "freedom." Of course, the timeless wisdom of the Faith is going to enrage them, and claims of "bigot" "homophobe" or "anti-woman" or any other manner of slander meant to either silence these timeless words of wisdom or, better yet, destroy the voices of those who preach this wisdom.

And yet, the timeless wisdom is never overcome. The only decision we believers need to make is are we willing to embrace the hatred of the world so that we can value the love of God more than our own comfort? These "too small" idols will always fall. The elevation of "pride" as some virtue to "empower" those who have been "marginalized will show itself for the shallow narcissism it is. And the casualties of this madness will be mourned by those who tried to warn the world.

Just to show you this focused wisdom is not anti-intellectual, as our fearmonger interlocutors will inevitably claim, today we remember a great saint named Justin the Philosopher. St. Justin was a disciple of Plato and came to the Christian Faith as an older man. St. Justin never took off his distinct philosopher's garb and even made such a defense of the Christian Faith before the pagan Roman Emperor Antonius Pius (reigned from 138 AD - 161 AD) that the Emperor ordered the halt on the persecution of Christians for a time. Because of envy, a certain pagan philosopher hated St. Justin and pushed for his imprisonment. St. Justin was beheaded by the pagan philosopher Emperor Marcus Aurelius in 167 AD.

Today, the world, gripped by darkness" is always going to hate the Light. The present age will insist that "pride" is a good thing, and they will call good bad. But we have been blessed with God's Holy Spirit to give us words and courage as we live every day as Normal Orthodox Christians who will pay the price to hold to the timeless faith.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

You emptied the cup of the wisdom of the Greeks, and you did thirst yet again, till you came unto the well where you found water springing to eternal life. And having drunk deeply thereof, you also drank the cup that Christ gave to His disciples. Wherefore, O Justin, we praise you as a philosopher and Martyr of Christ.

<https://blogs.ancientfaith.com/faithencouraged/2023/06/the-dispute-is-always-about-christ/>



Yet Our God Never Abandons Us

Even though we seem overpowered by temptations, God never abandons us. God knows how our weakness makes us vulnerable, yet never allows us to be tempted beyond our ability to resist. We sometimes feel as though we were beasts of burden, carrying loads that weigh us down. Saint Paul tells us in Romans 7:15: "For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate."

We feel like a potter's clay bowl, being fired in a kiln, burning with temptations. Yet the potter is Christ Himself, Who will not allow the clay to stay in the fire long enough to crack, for Christ tempers the flame, that we might be formed in His image, made whole by His grace. Remembering Christ's promise not to leave us alone, we grow in faith and holiness because God's grace sustains and strengthens us. We are never abandoned, nor left alone.

With love in Christ,
Abbot Tryphon

<https://abbottryphon.com/the-religious-and-secular-divide-2/>

June/July Events

June

- 04 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy
Feast of Pentecost
- 07 – 7:15pm Bible Study via GoogleMeets
- 11 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy
- 14 – 7:15pm Bible Study via GoogleMeets
- 18 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy
- 21 – 7:15pm Bible Study via GoogleMeets
- 25 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy
Education Sunday
- 28 – 6:30pm Vespereal Liturgy
Feast of Ss. Peter and Paul

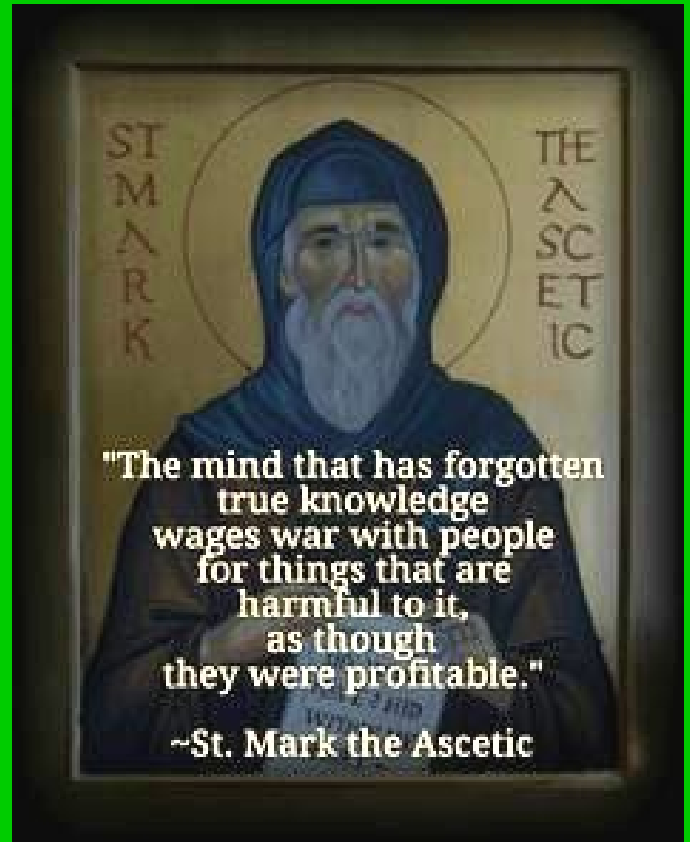
July

- 02 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy
Patronal Feast Celebration
- 05 – 7:15pm Bible Study via GoogleMeets
- 07 – 6:00pm Fun Night
- 09 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy
- 12 – 7:15pm Bible Study via GoogleMeets
- 16 – 10:00am Divine Liturgy

Can't join us in person?

We stream our services on our YouTube Channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/@sspeterpaulortho doxchurchoi810>



Pentecost – the indwelling of the Holy Spirit

On this day we recall that just 50 days after the Glorious Resurrection, the Holy Spirit came upon the Holy Apostles and all those gathered with them in a new and different way. For the first time, the Holy Spirit actually took up residence within the human soul.

Before this the Spirit of God would descend upon a person for various reasons - such as when one of the prophets was inspired to speak or write or act in a particular way so that God's will might be made known to His people, but He did not make His abode within their soul. But something new happened at Pentecost, something wondrous, something marvelous - God came and dwelt not only among us as our Lord Jesus Christ, but within us through the Holy Spirit. The promise of our salvation that we would be united with God, began to be made manifest.

This indwelling of the Holy Spirit has a profound effect on the person, for by this action a transformation is begun. The soul has come into contact with God and cannot remain the same. Now it is simple to see how one's behavior might change when he has been joined to the Church. In his eagerness to learn and absorb all that our Holy Mother Church has to give us, he will follow her instructions concerning behavior and do things differently than he did before. But this change does not end there, for these new actions have an effect of their own; they begin to change the way that one thinks and perceives the world around him. If, for example, you wished to develop compassion for someone, then the best way to begin is to act as though you were compassionate and through consistent compassionate actions on the part of the body, the mind will begin to think in terms of compassion and the heart will begin to feel compassion. If you act towards someone in a loving manner, even though you may have no feeling or even feelings of dislike for them, then after even a short time, you will begin to love them in actual fact, for such is the effect of the body's action on the heart. (This truth, by the way, contradicts the idea in our society of "falling in or out of love" by demonstrating that love is not something that strikes out of the blue for some mysterious reason, rather it is the result of and is maintained by effort) But even here this change does not end, for once we develop new feelings and thoughts, then our spirit also changes and begins to develop in the soul the spiritual fruits of these changes, called virtues, and these virtues attract the grace of God. This grace then transforms our very nature so that we no longer have a nature of sin, but begin to develop a nature which has the likeness of God.

Pascha and Pentecost are about transformation. In Pascha, we are reborn; we die and are resurrected with Christ. This new resurrected nature is then shaped and molded by the Church and it is filled with the Holy Spirit. Our Lord spoke of an unclean spirit which had been cast out of a man, and finding no place to rest thought that it would return to its former host. "And when he comes, he finds it swept and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of the man is worse than the first." (Luke 11:25 &26). When at Pascha, we are reborn and our soul is "swept and put in order", then it is necessary for our soul to be occupied, so as to prevent the demons from taking advantage, and so God in His infinite love and mercy comes Himself to dwell in us through the Holy Spirit. This is the feast of Pentecost, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and the transformation which was begun at Pascha is further fulfilled in the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. And the Holy Spirit within us, Himself, has the effect of transforming and shaping the soul into more perfectly taking on His own image and likeness.

But God does not act towards us as a tyrant, Who imposes His own will with no regard for our own desire, but rather He acts as a loving Father, Who enables us by our voluntary action, to submit to His will and Who works with us that we might be changed. It is therefore necessary for us to cooperate with God, to allow Him to work in us and to shape our own will to His will. If we resist Him and refuse to cooperate with His direction and His leading, then He will withdraw and will not force Himself upon us unwilling. Therefore we must develop within ourselves a desire for God which surpasses all other desire and a love for Him which is greater than any other love.

How do we develop this desire and this love? What did we just say? If you wish to love someone, then act as though you love them, and in a short time that love will begin to grow within your heart. And so if we wish to develop a supreme love for our Lord Jesus Christ, then we must begin to act as though we had such a love already. If we adjust our behavior to conform with a supreme desire and love for God, then that desire and love will grow within our heart and soul. When we desire Him, then He will fulfill our desire; when we love Him, then He will come to us. And when He comes, He will transform us into His own image and likeness and will dwell within us, uniting us to Himself.