



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

THE HOLY AND GREAT FEAST OF PENTECOST 2015

The Very Reverend and Reverend Clergy

Honorable Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Esteemed Members of the Metropolitan Council, Esteemed Members of the Parish Councils, Philoptochos Societies, Faculty and Students of the Catechetical and Greek Afternoon Schools, Directors and Participants of all Youth Organizations, and all devout Orthodox Christians of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of New Jersey

My Beloved,

“After this it shall come to pass that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; your sons and daughters shall prophesy” (Joel 3:1). “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” (Acts 2:1-4).

According to St. John Chrysostom, the strong wind that “filled” the house where the disciples were sitting underlines the fullness of the Holy Spirit and that Pentecost is a source and baptismal font of the Spirit. The Old Testament was void of such occurrences because, with Pentecost, the Church not only has the grace of the Holy Spirit but most especially the permanent hypostatic or personal presence of the Spirit Himself, the third Person of the Holy, Life-giving, and Consubstantial Trinity. The Spirit’s activity is different than in previous times and infinitely greater as the scriptures recount the “rush of a mighty wind” that “filled all the house” where the apostles were gathered and the “tongues as of fire” that “rested” on their heads. The verb “rested” reveals that the Spirit resided steadily and permanently in the disciples. The disciples did not receive grace this time; rather, they were transformed into “a source of the Spirit” that could dispense grace at will, as a lamp that lights other lamps without diminishing its own light. The Golden-mouth Saint echoes: “As with a lamp, one can light as many other lamps as he likes, without diminishing its light. This is what happened with the apostles at that time. For the word ‘fire’ does not indicate merely the profuseness of grace, but also that they received the very source of the Spirit. This is why the Lord said that those who believe in him will receive a ‘living water’ that ‘will become in him [or her] a spring of water welling up to eternal life’ (John 4:14).” The “wind” that entered into the disciples became like a baptismal font of living water, a source of spiritual power, with which the disciples carried out their ministry. In the case of the apostles, the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in their mind “to well up” as an inexhaustible source, to act without intermissions and interruptions, since it is a “living” source that is always active. “That which is always active is called ‘living.’ For the grace of the Spirit, once it has entered the mind to dwell there, springs up every source and is not interrupted, nor emptied, and does not stand still. Thus, by referring to springs and rivers, the Lord also indicated the inexhaustible abundance” of Spiritual power and presence.

“Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, who has the ‘essence’ and the ‘authority’ of the Father and the Son, we become like angels as we approach the grace. We are not changed by nature, but in a way

that is even more marvelous: remaining in human nature, we demonstrate the way of life of the angels." As the fire in the hands of the craftsman transforms the amorphous and shapeless matter into beautiful vessels and objects, so also in many ways the Holy Spirit transforms human beings into a new creation. Then, such men and women, while "remaining in their human nature, they become like angels in their way of life." The radical and realistic activity of the Spirit is further likened by Chrysostom to "the sun who appears and darkness is dispelled."

"Come, all peoples, let us worship the Godhead in three persons: the Son in the Father, with the Holy Spirit. For the Father begat the Son before all ages, co-eternal and equal in majesty, and the Holy Spirit was in the Father, glorified with the Son: a single power, a single essence, one Godhead, which we all worship saying, 'Holy is God, Who created all things with the Son, with the cooperation of the Holy Spirit. Holy and mighty, through Whom we have known the Father and the Holy Spirit came into the world. Holy immortal, the Paraclete Spirit, which proceeds from the Father and abides in the Son: Holy Trinity, glory to You'" [Doxastikon, Great Vespers of the Holy Spirit].

The Feast of Pentecost is an eschatological event. It is the day of the final and perfect end; it is living in perfect and complete eternity right here and now – the *eschaton*. The "last days" are inaugurated as St. Peter the Apostle preached in the first sermon to the Christian Church on Pentecost Sunday from the prophecy of Joel 3:1. Pentecost ushers in a new era, in which we are called to pursue sainthood by acquiring the Holy Spirit, by opening ourselves to the fullness of Christ's revelation to mankind, and by anticipating the Kingdom of God, yet to be fully revealed, but already fully present in our midst as we entreat the Holy Spirit to "come and abide in us" now and in the life of the world to come.

"Blessed are You, O Christ our God, who made fishermen all wise, sending upon them the Holy Spirit and, through them, netting the world. O Loving One, glory to You." [The Apolytikion of Pentecost]

My beloved and spiritual children in the Lord, receive the mystical descent of the Holy Spirit upon your hearts and souls in order to strengthen your discipleship and allegiance to the Master and Only-Begotten Son of God, just as He descended and energized the Twelve Apostles and made them Fishers of Men. May He catch all of us with the net of the Holy Gospel and inspire us, too, to be heralds of the Good News of the Resurrection and of the Kingdom among mankind through our faith and deeds.

Furthermore, the week of June 1-7 is totally fast free in honor of the Third Person of the Holy, Consubstantial, Life-giving and Undivided Trinity – God the Holy Spirit. What a blessed time of the year!

With Paternal Love and Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Metropolitan Evangelos". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

† E V A N G E L O S
Metropolitan of New Jersey