

HOMILY ON THE HOLY SPIRIT (June 7, 2020)

Today is the joyful celebration of Holy Pentecost! In the Acts of the Apostles, we hear in detail how the Holy Spirit came down upon the Apostles and those first faithful who were devoted to the Lord, some one hundred and twenty of them. What happened after is amazing, in that three thousand people were baptized on the same day, and the Holy Church of Christ was revealed on earth. The great event of Pentecost gives us the opportunity to get to know the Holy Spirit, including His relationship with the faithful, and how we as the faithful can receive His blessings.

In the Creed (or the Confession of Faith), we declare that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father, and that He is of the same essence with the Father and the Son. As one of the three Persons of the Holy Trinity, He shares in the same honor and glory as the Father and the Son. That is why we usually end all prayers and supplications with glory, honor, and veneration to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, being true God, cooperates in all things with God the Father and God the Son. In the creation of the world, the Holy Spirit *“was hovering over the face of the water”* (Genesis 1:2) and with His vibrant energy, gave life to the waters as a spring of the new creation. Also, when Adam was created, the Holy Spirit provided the *“breath of life”* (Genesis 2:7) to his body, and man became a living being with a rational soul. This is what gives life, motion and energy to the human body. The Holy Spirit enlightened the Prophets on what they would say and do in communicating God’s will to the people. The Holy Spirit came to the Virgin Mary in Nazareth, and through His incomprehensible power, made her the Mother of the Word of God. At the Baptism of Jesus, The Holy Spirit descended *“in the form of a dove”* to reaffirm the voice of the Father that Jesus is His beloved Son, and that it is to Him that we should all listen. The Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost, and turned simple fishermen into *“All-wise men,”* as the Dismissal chant of the Feast proclaims. He gave them the strength to boldly declare in front of thousands, that Christ is the true God. It is this same Holy Spirit that we too receive, after our Baptism through Holy Chrismation (Confirmation), becoming *“the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in us,”* as St. Paul the Apostle says (1 Corinthians 6:19).

All of the Sacred Mysteries (Holy Sacraments) are celebrated and concluded by the Holy Spirit. In the Holy Eucharist that takes place during the Divine Liturgy, it is through the Holy Spirit that the bread and wine become the Precious Body and Blood of Christ. It is through the Holy Spirit that the water used in Holy Baptism is sanctified. This is also true at the Great Blessing of the Water on the Feast of Theophany. It is the Holy Spirit that consecrates the oil used by the priests for Holy Unction to anoint a sick person, praying for their health. During Ordination, it is *“the Grace of the Most Holy and Life-giving Spirit”* that ordains a man to be Deacon, Presbyter (Priest), and Bishop. Even the Holy Scriptures, which were written by men of God, are the result of the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit. This is why it is only with the guidance of the Holy Spirit that the Scriptures can be understood correctly (see 2 Peter 1:20-21). Everything becomes perfect through the Holy Spirit, and all things are accomplished (to use a theological expression) *“From the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit.”*

Knowing all of this, we can see that the development of the spiritual life of a Christian is done through the Holy Spirit. To even believe in and confess that Jesus Christ is our Lord and our God, is only possible by the power of the Holy Spirit (see 1 Corinthians 12:3). The Holy Spirit teaches us every truth of our faith, as the Lord had said to His Disciples: *“When He, (the Comforter) the Spirit of truth has come, He will guide you into all truth”* (John 16:13).

“Likewise”, St. Paul the Apostle reveals, “the Spirit helps in our weakness. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession (to God the Father) for us with groaning which cannot be uttered” (Romans 8:26).

There are many other gifts that the Holy Spirit provides for us (see 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 and Galatians 5:22-23), but given our lack of time, let us focus on one more key point: the Holy Spirit, after we repent and ask Him for repentance, cleanses our souls from every sin. That is why in every Church service, and also in the private prayers of the faithful, we begin with the familiar Prayer *“Oh Heavenly King, Comforter, the Spirit of truth ...”*, in which we pray that the Holy Spirit may come and *“dwell”* within us and cleanse us *“from every blemish”* that is, from every sin.

My brothers and sisters, on this great day, let us get on our knees and ask the Holy Spirit to rekindle within us the blessing that we received from Him after our Baptism with the Holy Oil. To be motivated to keep our souls in such a state that the Holy Spirit may be pleased and reside in us, constantly warming and illuminating us with the flames of Pentecost. Amen.