



61st Year

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THE INDWELLING OF THE COMFORTER

The presence of the Holy Spirit in this world on the day of Pentecost completed the Orthodox faith and theology and defined the spiritual life of the believers of the Church. In every liturgical gathering but also in every personal expression of prayer to God, the grace of the Comforter has a first place which cleanses, inspires and enlightens, sanctifies and saves every believing heart, every Christians soul. It is the gift of heaven to people. It is the revelation of the third person of the Holy Trinity. It is the content of the theology of the Fathers of the Church.

The pre announcement

Beyond the prophecies about the birth of Christ, the prophecies of the Old Testament referred also to the presence of the Holy Spirit. Already the prophetic lips of Joel, many centuries before, preannounced the event of Pentecost: "Grace will be poured out of my spirit to every person and your sons and your daughters and your elders will prophesy". In other words, that the grace of the Holy Spirit would be imparted to everyone who will believe in his divine Hypostasis. But also the prophetic word of all the prophets was the fruit of the Comforter. Because, as the Apostle Peter writes, "borne by the Holy Spirit holy people of God spoke" (2 Peter 1:21). The Holy Spirit was inspiring the prophets to speak and to prophesy and indirectly revealed His presence.

The promise

But also the Lord Himself, before His Resurrection, promised with certainty to the Apostles that his Father would send the Holy Spirit. "He shall give you another comforter... the Spirit of truth" (Jn. 14: 16- 17). He calls the Holy Spirit the Comforter. Because He comforts, mediates for us to God "with unspeakable sighs" (Rom. 8:26), in other words, with divine sighs which words cannot express. So great is the love of the Triune God for man. Christ calls the Comforter the Spirit of truth as well. Because the Lord Jesus through the Spirit "enlightens every man who comes into the world" (Jn. 1:9). He guides every person who desires to know the true God.

After His Resurrection Christ again reminded them to not depart from Jerusalem until He would send them "the promise" of his Father. An event which occurred on the day of Pentecost.

The indwelling

Fifty days after the three day burial and resurrection of Christ, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit took place in the upper room of Jerusalem upon the head of the Apostles. It resembled the sound of a violent strong breath of wind which began blowing unexpectedly and abruptly. A supernatural phenomenon which nevertheless was sensed by those present. The presence of the Comforter was felt for the first time by people. And it filled the area they were in from one end to the other, in order to show the wealth of the gift of God.

Subsequently another strange event occurred. Fiery tongues of fire appeared which were distributed and sat on the heads of the Apostles. It was the drastic energy of the Holy Spirit which burns and simultaneously cleanses every shred of sin. But it also enlightens the mind and heart with divine knowledge and wisdom, so that they perceive the divine things and interpret them. And the grace of the Holy Spirit in the form of fiery tongues was made firm, stayed permanently in the Apostles. And it became permanent with the performing of the sacred Mysteries in the Church which became the treasury and provider of the divine grace of the Comforter.

The spiritual life

With the power of this grace, the believers are drawn, they cultivate themselves in the holy spiritual life of the Church, and the unity of her members is secured. They distinguish their actions from the actions of sin, they distinguish the truth from falsehood, they hope with certainty in the resurrection of the dead in eternal life and they give a blessed content to their personal life here on earth. They are possessed of a spirit of repentance, a spirit of kindness and love, a spirit of humility, of meekness and peace, a spirit of spiritual bravery and of a firm train of thought, a spirit of sanctification and salvation. They are engraced and already foretaste Paradise from this life, without being corrupted in the vanity of the world.

The amazing hymn of the Divine Liturgy, "we have seen the true life, we have received the heavenly spirit, we have found the true faith, Trinity one in essence. For this has saved us", reveals the permanent experience of faith to the members of the Church. It is the fruit of the presence of the Holy Spirit, the inexhaustible fruitfulness of the Spirit of Pentecost in the body of the Church.

Archim. Ch. N.

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"UNTO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH"

Historical missionary studies

(Published (in Greek) by Apostolic Ministry, shape 15, 5x22,5 388 pages)

The present collection of studies of His Beatitude, Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana and all Albania comprises a publication event, the readers are able to understand ecclesiastically the spreading of the truth of the sacred Gospel throughout the world. The author shows forth the deeper theological meaning of missionary work, which is interwoven with the nature of the Church itself. The Church ought to be missionary, to open her embrace to her nonmembers, and to preach the word of the Gospel, realizing thus the commandment of our Lord "Be ye going forth make disciples of all nations" (Mat. 28:19).

The work is separated into two parts: The first one is dedicated to the missionary activity of the monks of the desert and of the first Christians, as also to the glorious age of the Christianization of Eastern Europe, thanks to the concentrated and organized missions of the Byzantine Empire. In the second part the until recently unknown to the wider public Orthodox missions of the more recent years to China, Japan but also to Alaska are extensively presented. The width of the presented information and the rich bibliography, the author refers to, makes the work not only easy to comprehend for the wider public, but also a necessary handbook for every scholarly researcher.