

PENTECOST SUNDAY



Icon of Pentecost



May 15, 2016

PENTECOST SUNDAY – THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
OUR VENERABLE FATHER PACHOMIUS THE GREAT

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES FOR THE WEEK OF MAY 16 – MAY 22

SATURDAY, MAY 21 – THE HOLY EQUALS TO THE APOSTLES, THE EMPEROR CONSTANTINE AND THE EMPRESS HELENA
6:00 PM – Great Vespers for Sunday
SUNDAY, MAY 15 – 1ST SUNDAY AFTER ALL PENTECOST – SUNDAY OF ALL SAINTS; THE HOLY MARTYR BASILISCUS
9:30 AM – Divine Liturgy For All Parishioners

ON THE SAINTS

St. Symeon the New Theologian

The Church is the body of Christ, His bride, the world to come, and the temple of God. The members of His body are all the saints. However, not all of the saints who will please God have yet appeared, nor yet is thus complete, nor the world to come yet filled. I say this about God's Church. There are, though, many unbelievers in the world today who will believe in Christ; many sinners and debauched who will repent and change their lives; many undecided who will be persuaded. There are many, a great many, up to the sound of the last trumpet, who will prove well-pleasing to God and who have not yet been born. All those who are foreknown by God must be born, come into being, before the world beyond our world, the world of the Church, of the first-born, of the heavenly Jerusalem, is filled up. Then shall the end come and the fullness of the body of Christ be complete.

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Parish Rummage Sale

There will be a rummage sale on Saturday, June 18 to benefit the parish. We are already accepting donations. Volunteers are needed. Please contact Olena Bankston at (619) 567-6967.



GOD'S EXTENDED HAND

FOCUS (Fellowship of Orthodox Christians United to Serve) has provided us with a special bin for collecting donations of clothing, toiletries, etc. to be distributed at GEH. It is located near the door of the church hall.



PENTECOST – THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT ON THE APOSTLES

The tenth day after the Ascension of Jesus Christ was the fiftieth day after the Resurrection of Christ. It was the Jews' great feast of Pentecost, which commemorated the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai.

All the Apostles, the Mother of God, and the other disciples of Christ and other of the faithful, were all together in one room in Jerusalem. It was the third hour of the day by the Hebrew reckoning of hours, according to our system—nine o'clock in the morning. Suddenly a sound came from Heaven, like a rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. There descended on them tongues that looked like fire, which rested on each one of them. There were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, previously unknown to them. Thus the Holy Spirit, according to the promise of the Savior, descended on the apostles in the form of tongues of fire, as a sign that He gave the apostles the ability and zeal to preach the teachings of Christ to all peoples. He descended in the form of fire as a sign of the power to cleanse sins, to sanctify and warm souls.

On the occasion of the feast of Pentecost, there were in Jerusalem many Jews who had come from various nations. Hearing the noise, a great multitude of people came together around the house where the disciples of Christ were. They were all bewildered and asked each other, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? How is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? How are they able to tell in our languages the mighty works of God?" In disbelief they said, "Thy are filled with new wine." Then the Apostle Peter, standing with the eleven, said that they were not drunk, but that the Holy Spirit had descended upon them, that it has been prophesied by the Prophet Joel, and that Jesus Christ, Whom the Jews had crucified, had risen from the dead, ascended

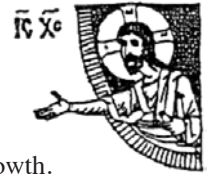
into Heaven and poured out on them the Holy Spirit. Finishing this sermon about Jesus Christ, the Apostle Peter said, "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus, Whom you crucified."

The sermon of Peter so moved those who heard it that many more believed in Jesus Christ. They asked Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; then you shall also receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." So those who believed in Christ readily accepted baptism, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. Thus began the building of the Kingdom of God on earth, the Church of Christ.

From the day of the descent of the Holy Spirit the Christian faith quickly spread with the help of God, and the number of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ multiplied. Instructed by the Holy Spirit, the apostles preached boldly to all about Jesus Christ, the Son of God, about His suffering for us and resurrection from the dead. The Lord helped them with many great miracles which were performed by the apostles in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. At first the apostles preached to the Jews, and then dispersed to various countries to preach to all the people. To perform the sacraments and to preach Christianity the apostles established, by the laying on of hands, bishops, presbyters, and deacons. This grace of the Holy Spirit, which was clearly conferred on the apostles in the form of tongues of fire, is now conferred in our Holy Orthodox Church invisibly in its sacraments, through the successors to the apostles, the pastors of the Church, its bishops and priests.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

- ❖ is God, the third Person of the Holy Trinity;
- ❖ proceeds from the Father;
- ❖ is sent into the world by Jesus Christ;
- ❖ inspires God's People to speak God's truth and to do His will; and
- ❖ is the Giver of Life who upholds and sustains creation in its existence, life, and growth.



Fifty days after His resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ sent the Holy Spirit upon His disciples. What does the Lord Jesus Christ say about the Holy Spirit?



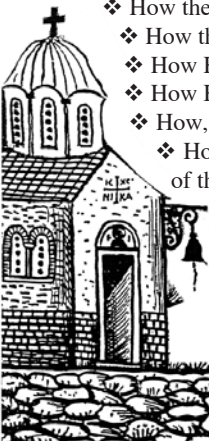
If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, so that He may be with you forever, the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive because it does not see Him nor know Him. But you know Him, for He dwells with you and shall be in you. – John 14:15-17

But the Comforter, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. – John 14:26

When He, the Spirit of Truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth. For He shall not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears, He shall speak. And He will declare to you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will receive of Mine and will declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and will declare it to you. – John 16:13-15

CONTEMPLATION – THE DESCENT OF GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT ON THE APOSTLES

- ❖ How the Apostles stood in one mind at prayer.
- ❖ How, there came a sound from heaven as a rushing mighty wind.
- ❖ How there appeared fiery tongues, one on each of the Apostles.
- ❖ How the Apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in various tongues as the Holy Spirit gave them utterance.
- ❖ How some mocked them saying, “They have had too much new wine.”
- ❖ How the rest wondered and marveled, hearing the Apostles speak to them of the wonderful works of God in their own languages.
- ❖ How the small are made great by God the Holy Spirit.
- ❖ How the fearful are made fearless by Him.
- ❖ How He makes the simple wise.
- ❖ How He makes the inarticulate eloquent.
- ❖ How, from fishermen, He makes fishers of men for the Kingdom of God.
- ❖ How, from shepherds of an irrational flock, He makes shepherds of a rational flock – the true sheep of the House of Israel.
- ❖ How the Apostles, led by the Holy Spirit, traveled throughout the world without means and without friends.
- ❖ How, through the Holy Spirit, the Apostles proclaimed the Lord's Gospel.
- ❖ How, through the Holy Spirit, the Church continues to proclaim the Gospel to the ends of the earth.



Resurrection Victory

Source: Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh Archive

Do we not see that death continues to reap its harvest around us? Are there not graves beside Christian churches as well? How can we say that 'there is none dead in the tomb', that Christ has conquered death by death?

In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Every Sunday throughout the year, century after century, the Orthodox Church proclaims the Resurrection of Christ. Each Sunday we relive once again our joy that Christ is risen. And that joy is so deep, so profound, that it bears witness of itself: we rejoice not only because the Lord is risen, but because his Resurrection is for us the beginning of new, renewed life. In the Sermon of John Chrysostom which is read on the night of Christ's Resurrection each year, it is said that *'Christ is risen, and there is none dead in the tomb...'* And we ourselves continue to pass on this message from one century to the next. Yet is it true? Do we not see that death continues to reap its harvest around us? Are there not graves beside Christian churches as well? How can we say that *'there is none dead in the tomb'*, that Christ has conquered death by death?

We can say this because death has two completely different meanings, and the tombs are indeed empty. Until the coming of Christ, every human being, when he died — whether he was righteous or not — was deprived of the joy of meeting God. According to the Old Testament story of the primal sin of our ancestors, Adam and Eve, the whole human race was deprived of the radiance, the joy, the glory of God. Everyone who died thereafter entered into an abyss of horror, of separation from God and, as a result, of separation from those closest to him. And his death was twofold: not just an earthly death when the soul, separated from the body, flies upward towards God and worships at the throne of the Lord, who consoles it for its earthly sorrows. There was another death as well, a second separation. While someone lived on this earth, he could, in one way or another, with just the tip of his soul, touch at least the border of the Lord's garment. But after death, any separation became final, definitive, dreadful. And age after age people waited for the Saviour, for the one who would unite heaven and earth, God and creation. But until the Lord came, our Saviour Jesus Christ, that separation remained dark and terrible.

And then the Lord came and died on the Cross the death of every man, having first shared in the dreadful loneliness and torment that precedes death. Remember the garden of Gethsemane: *'O my*

Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me...' He shared in the horror of that separation when he cried out to God from the Cross: *'My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?'* And he descended into hell... into hell!

And hell opened wide with joy in the hope that now the enemy whom it had found invincible on earth had been overcome and taken prisoner. Hell opened up, as John Chrysostom says, to take in flesh — and opened itself to God. Hell opened to imprison the incarnate Son of God become man — and before him stood, into him entered the Living God who fills all things, entering hell and destroying it for ever. Hell was no longer that former terrible hell of separation, because in it was the living God.

The Prophet David in his mysterious vision said: *'Whither shall I go then from thy presence? If I go up into heaven, thou art there: If I go down to hell, thou art there also'*. For us this seems simple, because for us that eternal, hopeless hell of the absence of God no longer exists. But for the man of the Old Testament this was a puzzling statement: how can God be where God is not? How can he be in the place of separation from God? But David foresaw — and prophetically foretold — the coming of the Lord and the end of that final separation. Today death has become for us something else. Now it is a falling asleep. In the body we fall asleep to the anxieties of the earth, and peace descends upon our flesh. Our body now lies there like an icon of Christ lying in the grave on that mysterious, blessed Saturday when the Lord ceased from his works, from the work of saving mankind, from the labour of suffering, from the Cross, from crucifixion. Everyone who dies now, falls asleep in Christ, he falls asleep until the day his body rises at the last trumpet, on the day of the resurrection of the dead. *'Blessed are they who die in the Lord'*, as John the Theologian says in the Apocalypse.

This is why for the Christian, death is not something terrible. This is why someone who meant a great deal to me was able to say to me: *'Wait for your death as a young man waits for his bride'*. With the same kind of trembling, with the same rejoicing of soul we can say to death: *'Come, open for me the doors of eternal life, so that my rebellious flesh may*

find peace, and my soul may soar up to the eternal dwelling place of God'. This is why we can say truly and rightfully proclaim that 'there is not one dead in the tomb'. For the grave has ceased to be a prison, a place of final and terrible captivity. It has become a place where the body awaits resurrection while the soul grows, to the extent it can, into eternal life.

Yet death, the separation of death, is none the less still present on earth to a certain extent. It has been defeated even in its own kingdom, yet man himself continues, by cutting off others from the mystery of love, to prolong that separation on earth. Just look at our human society. There is no need to look far: just look at your family, at those closest to you, at your friends, your parish, at the Church. Can we really say that we are so linked together by love that death, that separation, that separation from God, that separation from one another doesn't exist on earth? Sadly, God has conquered death everywhere, but in the heart of man it must be conquered by man himself.

Death and love are inseparable from one another. And it is because of this that it is such a fearsome thing to love. To love just a little, to love irresponsibly, to love in such a way that a relationship is begun and then allowed to end when it becomes painful or difficult or dangerous — we can all do this. But to love as the Lord loved — this we seem unable to do. The Apostle Paul says to us: 'Accept one another, love one another as the Lord loved you...' But do we realize how the Lord loved us? He loved us so much that he did not want to be a stranger to us and became one of us, one among many others — and not just temporarily, but for eternity, for ever — with all the pain, with all the horror of that union.

The glory of God was extinguished when the Word became Flesh. No one knew him. His victory appeared to be defeat. He became the one whom the Holy Scriptures declared would be 'a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief'. He became one with us forever. Can we become one with each other in this way? Can we so love one another that we can say: 'For ever? In sorrow and in joy, in horror and in exultation, whatever happens, I will stand by you for ever'? If this were the case, how marvellous our world would be, how marvellous our Church would be, what parishes we would have, what families, what friends! But our meetings are like two ships meeting on the sea: they meet and pass on. We haven't enough depth, not enough faithfulness, not enough readiness to do what Christ did: to descend into hell, into the hell of suffering of someone whom we love, into the hell of his temptations, into the hell

of his pain, into the hell of his destruction. Instead, we stand on the shore and call out: 'Save yourself, swim over here to me — I will reach out my hand to you!' But we ourselves do not enter that hell, and so it is terrible for us to talk about love, it is so difficult to love — because we should love only as the Lord has loved us. Death and love are bound up together because to love means to forget oneself until one doesn't exist, not to remember oneself. The other becomes so dear to one that to think about oneself gets in the way. We need to say to ourselves what Christ said to Peter when he stood in front of him on the way to Golgotha: 'Get behind me, Satan; you are thinking about earthly things, and not about heaven'. Can we forget about ourselves to that extent, can we love like that, can we die like that?

At the same time, so long as we cannot do this, we are touching only the border of the Lord's garment, we are joined only to the outer edge of the light, the radiant light and brilliance of the Resurrection of Christ. To live the Resurrection is possible only for someone who has passed through death and is on the other side of death, not the death of this world, not material, bodily death, but the death which is also called love, when a person forgets about himself and loves so much that he lays down his life for his friend. Moses is called a 'friend of God' in the Scriptures, and what does he say? '*Lord, if you do not forgive your people their sins, then strike out my name from the book of life. I do not wish to live, if others go to their death*'. The Apostle Paul says that he would prefer, if possible, to be separated from Christ, rather than see the destruction of the people of Israel. These are nonsensical words — nonsensical in the sense that when a man experiences such love, he is already on the other side of death. But humanly speaking that is all we are able to say: '*Yes, it is better that I should perish, than that I should be separated from anyone*'. This is the standard shown us by the Cross — and by the Resurrection, for one is inseparable from the other. And so, from Sunday to Sunday, when you hear the news that Christ has risen, remember that we are all called to be, on this earth, people risen from the dead in love. But for this to take place, we must so love each other as to pass through the gates of death, to descend through the Cross into hell, to share through Love in the suffering of the other, to forget ourselves — and then suddenly discover that I am alive, alive with the life of Christ!

Amen.

Fast-Free Week

During the week after Pentecost (May 15 through May 21) we do not fast, even on Wednesday and Friday. This week is given to us to celebrate the renewal of the Holy Spirit received on Pentecost.

Please Note:

When you go on vacation, please don't forget that the church still relies on your contributions. Our bills do not go on vacation. The summer months are most difficult due to the decrease in attendance. Your absence on any Sunday does not negate your obligation to support your home parish.

A Note on Kneeling

Now that Pentecost has arrived, kneeling is no longer forbidden for weekday Liturgical Services. Kneeling is reintroduced into the weekday Liturgical services with the Kneeling Prayers (which technically are part of Vespers for Monday.) "Because kneeling is a sign of penance in the Eastern tradition, the faithful should be discouraged from kneeling during the Paschal Season and on all Sundays of the year. The faithful should be properly instructed as to the reasons why kneeling at these times is not congruent with the theology of the Eastern Churches." (Art. 464 § 1 - *Pastoral Guide of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in the USA.*)

Three pastors were having lunch together.

One said "You know, since summer started I've been having trouble with bats in my loft and attic at church. I've tried everything – noise, spray, cats – nothing seems to scare them away."

Another said "Me too. I've got hundreds living in my belfry and in the narthex attic. I've even had the place fumigated, and they won't go away."

The third said, "I baptized all mine, and made them members of the church. Haven't seen one back since!"

Mission Days Prayer

O Lord, God, shine forth the light of Your Holy Gospel, so that the Christian faith might spread through us, the baptized, as children of the Light. Let us be witnesses to Your Living Presence in our lives and in our parish community, O Lord, hear us and have mercy. The Holy Spirit provides everything: He sends the prophets, leads priests to perfection, teaches wisdom to the uneducated, makes theologians of fishermen, and unites the entire Christian community, O Comforter, Consubstantial with the Father and Son, glory be to You!

PARISHIONERS THAT ARE HOME BOUND



If you or a loved one cannot make it to Church, Fr. James would be more than pleased visit at your home, in the hospital, at a nursing home, or any other place. It is no inconvenience at all.

Please be sure to schedule a visit.

Pastor:

Fr. James Bankston: (619) 905-5278

Pastoral Council:

Vladimir Bachynsky: (619) 865-1279

Mark Hartman: (619) 446-6357

Luke Miller: (858) 354-2008

Social Committee Chair:

Vacant

Finance Committee:

Bohdan Kniahynyckyj: (619) 303-9698



**Українська Греко-Католицька Церква
Святого Йоана Хрестителя
St. John the Baptizer
Ukrainian Greco-Catholic Church**

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Website: stjohnthebaptizer.org

Pastor: Fr. James Bankston
frjames@mac.com
Fr. James' cell phone: (619) 905-5278

Be Counted Worthy of the Holy Spirit

According to the Apostle, Lord, your Holy Spirit fully understands and penetrates your inmost depths. He also intercedes on my behalf, saying to you things for which I cannot find the words. Nothing can penetrate your being but what is divine already; nor can the depths of your immense majesty be measured by any power which itself is alien or extrinsic to you. So, whatever enters into you is yours already, nor can anything which has the power to search your very depths ever have been other than your own.

I beg you therefore, Father, to preserve in me that pure and reverent faith and to grant that to my last breath I may testify to my

conviction. May I always hold fast to what I publicly professed in the creed when I was baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. May I worship you, the Father of us all, and your Son together with you, and may I be counted worthy to receive your Holy Spirit ... For me there is sufficient evidence for this faith in the words: "Father, all that I have is yours, and all that is yours is mine," spoken by Jesus Christ my Lord who remains, in and from and with you, the God who is blessed for endless ages. Amen.

St. Hilary of Poitiers

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