

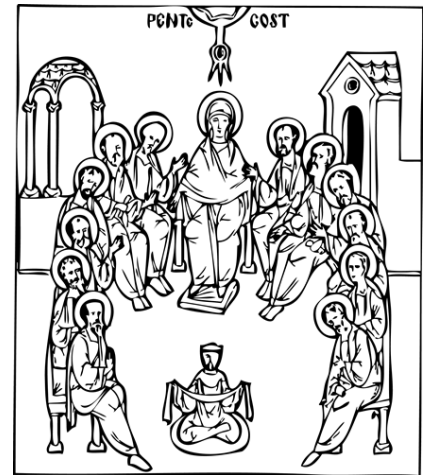
***Archpastoral Letter of His Grace, Bishop Michael,  
For the Feast of Holy Pentecost 2011***

June 12, 2011

Beloved Concelebrants at the Holy Altar  
and Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord:

***Christ is in our midst! – He is and ever shall be!***

On this great feast of Pentecost, we Orthodox Christians celebrate both the coming down of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles and the Birth of our Holy Church. Today we are challenged to be as faithful to the Holy Spirit and to Christ's Holy Church as the apostles and disciples were nearly 2,000 years ago.



What does this mean? It means being faithful to our Church's Holy Tradition. For many, Tradition means customs or practices of years ago – things that are almost relics of ages past. But on the contrary, Tradition is a *living on* of the Truth that is Jesus Christ, believed and lived by His first followers and generations after them. In the words of the eminent theologian Vladimir Lossky, Tradition is “the life of the Holy Spirit in the Church.” This means our faith is unchanging in dogma, yet dynamic in its application; the same in essence, but growing in its expression.

Why should we be faithful to Tradition? Because, we know from Saint Paul that the “pillar and ground of truth” is not solely the Scripture itself, but the Church (1 Timothy 3:15). Upon the rock of the apostles' faith, Jesus built His Church ... and we believe that the Holy Orthodox Church is that one Church to this very day. How can we say that? Because the Orthodox Church alone has kept the deposit of faith given by Our Lord, “delivered once for all to the Saints” (Jude 3), passed on from one generation to the next without addition, alteration, or subtraction. Ours remains the faith of the early Church unchanged; ours remains the Tradition of undivided Christianity unaltered. In an era of religious indifferentism, such bold statements stand apart from what is viewed as politically correct; but like the first Christians, “we must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).

The Scripture clearly tells us that the faithful followers of Our Lord in the early Church, guided by the Holy Spirit from the day of Pentecost, “continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine ...” (Acts 2:42). That remains our challenge in the 21<sup>st</sup> century – to be faithful to the True Church that Jesus Christ established, to be true to the Tradition handed down to us by the holy apostles.

