

Archpastoral Letter of His Eminence, Archbishop Michael,

For the Feast of Holy Pentecost 2015

Sunday, May 31, 2015

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!

“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 of the Apostles 2:1-4)

There is no more transformative an experience in the history of the Church than what took place on the very first Pentecost. Weeks earlier, immediately after the Lord’s arrest, His apostles showed themselves to be the weakest of men. They scattered from the scene; most of them went into hiding behind locked doors; Peter denied he ever knew Jesus; their faith and love for Christ were traded away for safety and security.

But on Pentecost, fifty days after the Risen Lord had first appeared, their faith was restored and their fear was removed ... and they opened themselves to the coming of the Holy Spirit. His appearance, in the form of fiery tongues, not only restored their faith but emboldened it; not only removed their fear but made them fearless. The Holy Spirit turned those cowards into great heroes; those men who had been hiding behind locked doors became powerful witnesses who knocked on the doors of men’s hearts, proclaiming that Jesus is the Messiah, that He who was crucified is risen from the dead, and that through faith in Him and repentance for our sins, we can be saved! Guided by the Comforter, those apostles would turn the world upside down. They would add to their fledgling community 3,000 new Christians baptized that Sunday alone ... and the Church, born that day, would bring an entire empire to its knees, worshipping the Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ, over the next three centuries!

This is an incredible account ... but it must be clearly noted, that the Feast of Pentecost is not merely the celebration of a happening which took place nearly 2,000 years ago. It is the celebration of what must happen and does happen to us in the Church today. Saint Paul assures us: *“To each (person) is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good”* (I Cor. 12: 7). So on this very Sunday – May 31, 2015 – we must open our minds and our hearts, our souls and our wills, to the coming anew of the Holy Spirit into our lives. We must allow him to transform each of us into a worthy “vessel of clay” to carry forth the message of our Savior and His Church “to the very ends of the earth.”

We must allow the Holy Spirit to do with us what He did with those first disciples: to focus our faith, our very lives, on the One Who died and rose for our salvation. We must open our minds to be illuminated by the light of His truth, accepting it over the theories espoused by a secular mindset. We must open our hearts to be warmed by His love, which will kindle goodness and kindness in a cold, dark world, and we must share that love with others. We must open our souls to be emboldened – to proclaim our commitment to Christ in thought, word and deed – through our giving of time, talent and treasure, not succumbing to the claims of the world and its ways. We must open our wills to be obedient to His teachings and commandments, listening to His voice amid the cacophony of others who would call us away from His fold.

I pray that on this Pentecost all of us will open ourselves to the coming of the Holy Spirit; that we will not simply recite by rote: *“O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, Who art everywhere present and fillest all things; Treasury of blessings and Giver of life: Come and abide in us, and cleanse us from every impurity, and save our souls, O Good One.”* Rather, as we offer this prayer, may we fervently entreat the Holy Spirit to permeate our very being – and enable us to be changed into even better Orthodox Christians. May He guide us to know Christ ever more richly, serve Him ever more faithfully, and become each day ever more and more like the One Who loves us more than we love ourselves.

Assuring each of you of my humble prayers, my archpastoral blessing and my sincere love, I remain

Devotedly yours in His service,

+ MICHAEL

Archbishop of New York and the
Diocese of New York and New Jersey