



ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA  
DIOCESE OF NEW YORK & NEW JERSEY

33 Hewitt Avenue - Bronxville, NY 10708  
Office (914) 779-6580 Fax (914) 779-6581  
www.nynjoca.org

## Archpastoral Letter for the Feast of Pentecost 2019

Prot. No. 01-003/2019  
The Feast of Pentecost  
Sunday, June 16, 2019

Dearly Beloved of Our Diocesan Family:  
*Christ is in our midst! – He is and ever shall be!*

*When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit ... (Acts of the Apostles 2: 1-4).*

As we celebrate the Great Feast of Pentecost this year, the Descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles, the Revelation of the Holy Trinity, and the Birthday of the Orthodox Church, each of us individually and all of us together should reflect upon all that the Triune God has given us.

He has given us existence and breathed life into us – not only the physical life of our body, but the spiritual life that makes us one with Him, His Life. He has given us to know Him, the One, True and Living God; and He has given us to meet, both in the Holy Gospel and in life, His Only-Begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Besides life itself – our health, our families, our talents, our life circumstances – He has given us so much. And in Baptism, in the Anointing with Holy Chrism, in the Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ, in the mysterious and silent communion of prayers, and in the moments when God Himself came near us, although we were not thinking of Him – He has indeed given us more than we can ever measure or comprehend.

As we reflect on all these gifts from above, we must ask ourselves whether we are truly disciples of Christ. We know from Saint Paul what it means to be a disciple: he said, *“For me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain”* (Philippians 1:21) ... because as long as Paul was in the flesh, he was separated from Christ, the Lord Whom he loved, the One Who had become everything to his life – both in time and for all eternity.

And yet the Apostle said he was prepared to live, not to die, because his presence on earth was necessary to others. This was the measure of communion he had with the Son of God. Whatever was the desire of Christ, became the desire of Paul. Both the Lord and His disciple told their

followers that they were going back to the Father, that the time of their departure had come. And even though Saint Paul longed to be with Christ, he had learned something more than merely longing for freedom from the shackles of this life and for communion with God – he learned that to give is a greater joy than to receive (Acts of the Apostles 20:35).

The Apostles had heard Christ say, *“Greater love than this has no one, that he lay down his life for his friends”* (John 15:13). Paul, the other Apostles, and innumerable saints after them gave their lives, sacrificing their own desires day after day, forgetting themselves, rejecting every thought and every concern about themselves, and thinking only for those who needed God, who needed the word of truth, who needed God’s steadfast love. They lived for others; they gave as generously as they had received.

We also are called to learn the lightness, the exhilaration, the wonderful joy of giving, of turning away from ourselves to be free to give ... of our time, our talent, and our treasure ... and of giving on all levels, the smallest things and the greatest things. And this can be taught us only by the power of the Holy Spirit Who unites us to Christ, makes us into one body with Him, a body of people, bound with each other in our total togetherness, one with the God who is the Source of our unity – in His holy Church.

On this great day of Holy Pentecost, let us think of all we have received from God and ask ourselves: What can we give first to Him so that He can rejoice in us, so that He can know that He has not lived and died in vain? And what can we give to all those who surround us ... beginning with the smallest, the humblest gifts to those closest to us ... and ending with giving all we can to those who need more? Then and only then will Pentecost truly be a gift of life to us, a gift that unites us, welds us into one body capable of being to others a vision on earth of the Heavenly Kingdom, and also a source of life and of joy ... so that truly our joy, and the joy of all those whom we meet, will be fulfilled to the glory of the God Who loves us more than we love ourselves

With my humble prayers, my archpastoral blessing, and my sincere love,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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