



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](http://www.nynjoca.org)

**Archpastoral Letter for the Feast of Pentecost 2023**

Prot. No. 01-003/2023  
Pentecost Sunday, June 4, 2023

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

*"I shall give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you.  
I shall take the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a  
heart of flesh. I shall put My Spirit within you and cause you to  
walk in My commandments, and you will keep My judgments  
and do them" (Ezekiel 36:26-27).*

Pentecost Sunday is the holyday on which we commemorate the Descent of the Holy Spirit – the incredible moment when Jesus, having risen and ascended to Heaven, sent the Holy Spirit upon the Holy Apostles in the form of fiery tongues. It also marks the Birthday of our Holy Orthodox Church. And – it commemorates the feast that makes us able to understand the One True God as the Holy Trinity.

The Holy Church prescribes three Old Testament readings to be chanted at the Great Vespers the night before Pentecost. These readings give us three prophecies – prophecies about the promise of the sending of the Holy Spirit, which would happen on the 50th day after Pascha: Pentecost.

The first reading, from Numbers (11:16-17,24-27), recounts how Moses was commanded by God to select seventy elders for Israel, that God might bestow the Spirit upon them. This "partial" granting of the Spirit foretells the fullness of the Holy Spirit, Who "provides all things", and would one day be sent upon the twelve Apostles.

The second reading, from the prophecy of Joel (2:23-32), proclaims the Lord God's promise: *"I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh"* (Joel 2:28). The prophet also foretells the salvation of all God's people who believe in Jesus Christ and "call upon the name of the Lord" in repentance and the adopting of His ways.

As important as these two readings of the feast are, it is the third prophecy that I wish to focus on today. In the third reading, from Ezekiel (36:24-28), the prophet tells of the "new heart" and the "new spirit" that will be given to the People of God. The "new spirit" prophesied by Ezekiel for all of God's people *is the Holy Spirit*, Who descended on the day of Pentecost. The "new heart" is the humble heart, inclined toward God, that is made possible through the grace of the Holy Spirit. These words of Ezekiel echo the prayer of the repentant King David: *"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me"* (Psalm 50:10 LXX).

Ezekiel also foretells that the man with a new heart will walk in the Lord's statutes and be one of God's People. This incredible honor and blessing – to be one of the people of God – will be made possible by the new Spirit, the Holy Spirit Who enables people to walk in the way of the Lord's commandments and keep His judgments.

How does this 6th century B.C. prophecy apply to you and me on this Pentecost 2023?

Let us examine for a moment *our heart*. Does our heart still enthrone the Lord Jesus Christ, as was promised at our Baptism: “I believe in Him as my King and my God ... and unite myself to Him” – or have I allowed my heart to be hardened by any one or more of the disfigured passions – “pride, greed, lust, envy, gluttony, anger, and sloth” (as listed by St. Gregory Dialogos) – the distorted passions which separate me from the love of God in Christ Jesus?

If this is the case, then I must root out these sinful inclinations through sincere confession and repentance under the guidance of my spiritual father. I must cleanse my heart and soul of all taints of temptation in order to become again a purified “*temple of the Holy Spirit Who is within you*” (I Cor. 6:19). I must not only root out the passions, but I must also replace them with the corresponding virtues of the Christian life: transforming pride to humility, greed to charity, lust to chastity, envy to gratitude, gluttony to temperance, anger to patience, and sloth to diligence (again from St. Gregory Dialogos).

Only then can the Holy Spirit come and abide within me – a *renewed* spirit within me. Only then will I have the grace from Him to re-enthroned in my heart the Lord Jesus as my King and my God. Only then will I have the power from Him to overcome the temptations and passions that confront me by the efforts of the evil one. Only then will I have the grace to do the works of mercy expected of me from the Just Judge at the Final Judgment: to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, shelter the stranger, clothe the naked, visit the sick and imprisoned (Matthew 25:35-36). And only then will I be blessed with the fruits of the Holy Spirit: “*love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control*” (Galatians 5:22-23), that will satisfy the needs of my spiritual life and draw me towards salvation.

And if I have been blessed with “a new heart” and “a new spirit,” such that I am a living “temple of the Holy Spirit” with Christ enthroned in my heart as “my King” and “my God,” then I will be able to be *even more committed to the Church* – with my time, my talents, and my treasure. I will find the time to be *even more involved* in the work of the parish and the diocese. And I will be, like the Apostles after the first Feast of Pentecost, an *even bolder witness* to the Crucified and Risen Lord, Who has done for me such wonders. I will be even bolder to invite former parishioners, those who have left their church because its teachings have changed, and those who have no church at all ... to consider finding a new relationship with the Savior in the Orthodox Church and in my parish. In the past I may have thought, “I can’t do these things,” but now I know that “the Holy Spirit can do these things through me.” Those who have strayed, those who have wandered, those who have never even known the safe harbor of the Holy Church ... with boldness and joy, I can invite them all *home*.

As we celebrate the Great Feast of Pentecost this year, let us all seek to bring to fulfillment the prophecy of Ezekiel in our own lives. Let us root out of our hearts all sinful inclinations, transform the distorted passions into Spirit-filled virtues, and become a purified temple for the Holy Spirit. Let us receive Him into our very souls, and by His grace re-enthroned in our hearts the Lord Jesus as our King and God. By the Holy Spirit’s power, let us do the good works for which we were created for the benefit of those in need, and as such be truly blessed with the fruits of the Holy Spirit all the days of our lives.

To the One True God Who loves us more than we love ourselves, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, be all glory, honor, and worship, now and ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

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



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