

June 14, 2019

Greetings to all the Faithful of St. Andrew's,

Glory to Jesus Christ!

I offer the following thoughts for the Feast of Pentecost.

On the fiftieth day after Holy Pascha we celebrate the Feast of Pentecost. In Great Lent we count the weeks leading to Pascha and then after Pascha we count down the weeks leading to Pentecost. From this Great Feast we count down the Sundays of Pentecost as we make our way once again to the doors of Great Lent through the Passion and the Resurrection.

This Feast allows us a chance to reflect on the New Covenant given to us through God's Son Jesus Christ, to recommit ourselves to him with the desire rekindled to follow and live his teaching throughout the rest of the year until we once again start our Journey through Great Lent bringing the light of his Gospel to the world.

In the Gospel reading for this Feast the theme of water and light appear. The reading is John 7:37-52; 8:12. In verses 37–38 we read that Jesus stood up and proclaimed, "If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.'" In verse 39, John, the Gospel writer, makes clear that Jesus was referring to the Spirit: "Now this he said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive; for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." The very last verse in this reading we have these words: "Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'" (John 8:12).

The theme of Christ's relationship to the Spirit is highlighted in this reading. Indeed his relationship is emphasized in other places in John's Gospel.

In Chapter one of John's Gospel we read about the testimony of John the baptizer:

And John bore witness, "I saw the Spirit descend as a dove from heaven, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him; but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God." (John 1:29-34

Later in John, speaking of the time after his glorification, Jesus says "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you" (John 16:13-14).

During a post-resurrection appearance to his disciples, John tells us: "Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you.' ²² And when he had said

this, he breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'" John 20:21-23

John tells us that the Holy Spirit *descended* on Jesus, *remained* on him, and that Jesus would *baptize* with the Spirit. The Spirit would *guide* the Disciple into all the truth. This same Holy Spirit was imparted to them by Jesus *breathing* on them so they too could receive the same Spirit Jesus had.

The Holy Spirit is likened unto water that empowers the Disciples to continue the work of ministry which the Lord himself started. The book of Acts is a record of the continuation of Christ's ministry. At the beginning of Luke we find the words:

"In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus *began* to do and teach, until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commandment through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. To them he presented himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days, and speaking of the kingdom of God. And while staying with them he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, 'you heard from me, for John baptized with water, but before many days you shall be *baptized with the Holy Spirit.*'" (Acts 1:1)

The Holy Spirit descended on Pentecost to remain with the Church, guide her into the truth, and breathe into her and fill her with that life-giving water so that she could continue what Christ had begun and to bring the light of the Gospel message to the world.

During this Feast let us reflect on the New Covenant given to us through God's Son Jesus Christ, recommit ourselves to him with a rekindled desire to follow him and live out his teaching in the days which follow, bringing the light of his Gospel to the world until once again we start our Journey through Great Lent.

Yours in Christ!
Father Herman