

THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

As we celebrate the Feast of PENTECOST today, it is important that we note that this day is a fulfillment of a promise that Christ gave to His Apostles at the Last Supper. As they gathered for one final Passover meal, our Lord explained to them that although He would be leaving them, He would not be abandoning them – He would send them the Holy Spirit, Who would guide them in all things. When Jesus was about to return to His Heavenly Home, He instructed the Apostles to go back to Jerusalem and wait.

Obediently, they did what they were told. With the rushing of a mighty wind and the appearance of tongues of fire, the Holy Spirit entered the Upper Room where the Apostles were patiently waiting and came into their hearts. The Holy Spirit changed them instantly from timid, fearful men into fearless witnesses for Christ. They went out into the streets of Jerusalem and shared their first-hand knowledge of the Risen Lord, and 3,000 people became Christians that very day because of what they heard.

When we think of Pentecost, there is a great danger of simply viewing it as an event that happened in the life of the Apostles. The Holy Spirit did NOT come solely to these 12 men. The Spirit comes to ALL OF US, and we are all capable of receiving the same power, enthusiasm, joy and excitement for spreading the Word of God that the Apostles were given. The Holy Spirit came to us on the day of our baptism. When we pray fervently, the Holy Spirit comes to us. Every time we come to confession, the Holy Spirit comes to us. Every time we receive the Eucharist, the Holy Spirit comes to us.

We must remember that we are given a great responsibility that goes along with the gift of the Holy Spirit. We are charged to do what the Apostles were asked to do: *“Go and teach all nations!”* We know what the Apostles were able to accomplish for Christ and His Church through the Grace of the Holy Spirit. How about us? What are we doing?

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ABOUT COMMUNION

We are happy that you have joined us today. Indeed, we pray for the “unity of the Faith” for the day when all of Christianity are united as ONE and can share a common Chalice. However, this is not the case as yet. Please note that Holy Communion, the actual Body & Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, is only for Members of the Orthodox Church who have prepared themselves through prayer, fasting, and confession, & arrived before the Gospel reading. However, everyone is welcome to partake of the blessed bread and receive a blessing from the pastor at the dismissal. If you are interested, you may inquire with the pastor how you can become a member.

If you are a guest or otherwise not a regular communicant, please give your baptismal name when receiving.



St. Anthony The Great Antiochian Orthodox Church

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WELCOME TO ST. ANTHONY'S

Where people from around the world come together to serve God and our community. We are glad you are worshiping with us today! This Church is one community of many in the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. The Church of Antioch belongs to two thousand years of evangelization, teaching, history, and tradition which expresses the continued commitment of its members to the Orthodox Christian faith in the Lord Jesus Christ!

St. Anthony Church is a Pan-Orthodox community, under the omophorion of His Eminence Metropolitan SABA within Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America.

If you are a first time visitor, please fill out the guest form located on the literature table.
We want you to feel at home in prayer and worship. Please submit your names to the ushers and introduce yourself to Fr. Elia at the end of the service so he may welcome you personally.

Following services, please join us for sharing of fellowship, coffee, and food.

DIVINE LITURGY VARIABLES ON THE FIFTIETH DAY AFTER PASCHA THE GREAT FEAST OF PENTECOST

THE FIRST ANTIPHON

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament proclaimeth the work of His hands. Day unto day poureth forth speech, and night unto night proclaimeth knowledge.

Refrain: Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us.

There are neither tongues nor words in which their voices are not heard. Their sound hath gone forth into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. **(Refrain)**

Glory... Both now... **(Refrain)**

THE SECOND ANTIPHON

The Lord hear thee in the day of affliction; the Name of the God of Jacob defend thee. Let Him send forth unto thee help from His sanctuary, and out of Zion let Him help thee.

Refrain: Save us, O Son of God, who sing to Thee. Alleluia.

Let Him remember every sacrifice of thine, and thy whole-burnt offering let Him fatten. **(Refrain)**

The Lord grant thee according to thy heart, and fulfill all thy purposes. **(Refrain)**

Glory... Both now... O, only begotten Son and Word of God...

THE THIRD ANTIPHON

O Lord, in Thy strength the king shall be glad, and in Thy salvation shall he rejoice exceedingly. The desire of his heart hast Thou granted unto him, and hast not denied him the request of his lips. Thou wentest before him with blessings of goodness, Thou hast set upon his head a crown of precious stones. He asked life of Thee, and Thou gavest him length of days unto ages of ages.

~ During the Little Entrance, after the Third Antiphon verses, chant the Apolytikion of Pentecost.

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Since Christ was alive and sat in his presence as he described, he could establish with absolute certainty that the Gospel’s account of the crucifixion of the prophet from Galilee was true, and that the Roman centurion was not mistaken when he cried out, “Truly, this was the Son of God” (Matthew 27:54).

Thus, he became certain that Christ is alive and there was no doubt of His existence. He trusted that in his journey of seeking to understand life more deeply, he would eventually be given the answers to his many questions. This quest pushed him to keep asking, keep exploring, and keep moving forward in his search for meaning.

After practicing medicine for some time, he took monastic vows, taking the name of Saint Anthony. However, due to the war and the shortage of priests at the time, he lived his monastic life in secret. After his monastic tonsure, he told his spiritual father: “You tonsured me as a monk, but you never gave me a rule of prayer!” To which his spiritual father replied: “What rule of prayer do you need? You are a monk now; pray at all times.” His monastic commitment became publicly known only when he was ordained a priest in 1948.

He went on to live the rest of his life as a priest, a bishop, and a true monk. In response to a journalist who once asked him how he could be a monk while living such a public life as priest and bishop, he said:

“It is all the same to me, whether I live among people or in the desert. In some ways, it is easier to be materially poor than to be poor in one’s inner life. I am indebted to the vow of poverty, for it has allowed me to truly evaluate everything. But for that to be possible, one must first be free within.”

Absolute Truth by Abbot Tryphon

In an age when many people think truth is relative, the knowledge that there is such a thing as absolute truth, is comforting. The freedom that comes with the knowledge that we are able to embrace teachings that are a continuation of an unbroken line dating back to Apostolic times, is liberating. As Orthodox Christians, we are not faced with the troubling task of interpreting the scriptures anew, or deciding moral and dogmatic teachings for ourselves, or trying to make our faith relevant for this age. Rather, we can immerse ourselves in the knowledge that we have embraced the Mind of the Ancient Universal Church. We haven’t had to reinvent the Faith, because we have aligned ourselves with the Church that is both ancient, and relevant for the modern seeker. We know the Church’s teachings are not based on the finite mind, or the imagination of our own fallen nature, but the eternal truths that have endured from ancient times. It is comforting to know the Church has remained true to her inheritance for some two thousand years. It is liberating to know ancient Christian dogmas, ways of worship, and moral teachings, are guiding our lives, just as they have for two thousand years. Truth is not relative, but is absolute. There is no greater freedom than to be able to receive, as our own, the transcending truth that has made saints, from ancient times. There is no greater freedom than being able to embrace the absolute truth that has transcended time, space, culture, and race. No greater joy than to be counted as belonging to Christ, and having joined ourselves to the very Church He founded.

The Very. Rev. Abbot Tryphon is Igumen of All-Merciful Saviour Monastery on Vashon Island, Washington. This and other articles may be found on his website abbottryphon.com

THE EISODIKON (ENTRANCE HYMN) OF THE FEAST

Be Thou exalted, O Lord, in Thy strength; we shall praise and sing of Thy mighty acts. Save us, O Good Comforter, who sing to Thee. Alleluia.

~ Now sing these hymns in the following order.

APOLYTIKION OF PENTECOST IN TONE EIGHT

Blessed art Thou, O Christ our God, Who hast revealed the fishermen as most wise, having sent upon them the Holy Spirit, and through them Thou hast fished the universe, O Lover of mankind, glory to Thee.

~Do NOT sing the apolytikion of the patron saint or feast of the temple.

KONTAKION OF PENTECOST IN TONE EIGHT

When the High One descended, confusing tongues, He divided the nations. And when He distributed the fiery tongues He called all to one unity. Wherefore, in unison we glorify the most Holy Spirit.

THE ANTI-TRISAGION HYMN

As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Alleluia. (*thrice*)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; both now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen. Have put on Christ. Alleluia.

Dynamis!

As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Alleluia.

THE EPISTLE

Their voice has gone out into all the earth. The heavens declare the glory of God.

The Reading from the Acts of the Apostles. (2:1 - 11)

When the day of Pentecost had come, the Disciples 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 and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. And they were amazed and wondered, saying, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians, we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.”



THE GOSPEL

The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. John. (7:37-52; 8:12)

On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and proclaimed, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.’” 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. When they heard these words, many of the people said, “This is really the prophet.” Others said, “This is the Christ.” But some said, “Is the Christ to come from Galilee? Has not the Scripture said that the Christ is descended from David, and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?” So there was a division among the people over Him. Some of them wanted to arrest Him, but no one laid hands on Him. The officers then went back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, “Why did you not bring Him?” The officers answered, “No man ever spoke like this man!” The Pharisees answered them, “Are you led astray, you also? Have any of the authorities or the Pharisees believed in Him? But this crowd, who do not know the Law, are accursed.” Nicodemus, who had gone to Him before, and who was one of them, said to them, “Does our Law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does?” They replied, “Are you from Galilee too? Search and you will see that no prophet is to rise from Galilee.” 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.”

MEGALYNARION FOR THE FEAST IN TONE SEVEN

O thou who without experience of corruption wast found to be with child, and didst lend flesh unto the Word Who devised all things, O thou Mother who hast not known wedlock, O Virgin Theotokos, vessel of the Uncontainable One, dwelling place of thy boundless Fashioner, thee do we magnify.

KOINONIKON (COMMUNION HYMN) FOR PENTECOST IN TONE EIGHT

Thy good Spirit shall lead me in the land of uprightness. Alleluia.
~ Instead of singing “We have seen the true light,” sing the Apolytikion of Pentecost.

ABOUT THE DIVINE LITURGY

The Divine Liturgy expresses the entire Christian faith in a continuous song of praise and prayer addressed to God. It is focused on God, not on us. There is nothing just for amusement or entertainment. Since much of the service is the same every week, worshippers know it and can participate personally, either by singing along or just by prayerful attention. Worshippers are surrounded by icons (pictures of Christ and the saints), which remind us that we are participating, while on earth, in the worship of all the angels and saints in heaven. The entire service (except for the sermon) is sung. The words are all from Scripture or ancient Christian texts. Please follow the service in the books available in the pews. Weekly changes will appear below and marked with a corresponding letter in the service book.

COME BACK

We hope to see you next week. Each Sunday we celebrate the Resurrection of Christ with our morning Matins service at 8:45am followed by the main Sunday service, Divine Liturgy at 10am. Sunday School for the Children follows Communion. Fr. Elia would love to speak with you and answer any questions you may have. Please fill out our Guest Form. There’s also a place where you can let us know any specific needs or concerns and we will lift them up in prayer. We welcome everyone who would like to learn more about the Orthodox Christian Faith. Please contact Fr. Elia either by E-Mail (elia_shalhoub@yahoo.com) or on his cell phone (305) 812-4940.

His father had to give up his diplomatic career and took up jobs in various places, which plunged the family into financial hardship. Yet, his distinctive personality left a lasting impact on Andrei. His father once told him: "Never forget that it doesn't matter whether one lives or dies. What matters is what we live for and for which we are prepared to die." These words indicated the spirit that prevailed in their home and the deep sense of life’s meaning that profoundly shaped Metropolitan Anthony from an early age.

His sharp intellect enabled him to continue giving private tutoring in mathematics and in any subject his students struggled, and that he had mastered. This covered his living expenses and allowed him to continue his studies, though not without hardship and struggle. Tutoring consumed all his evenings, leaving only the weekends for his own studies, which took a toll on his health. Nevertheless, he managed to complete his education. Reflecting on that period, he said: “My life was very different from that of today’s student; at times, I was harsh, hungry, and rough, and I was incapable of preaching a gentle and warm sermon.”

He pursued studies in physics, chemistry, and biology at the Sorbonne, and later enrolled in medical school, earning his doctorate at the outbreak of World War II in 1939. By then, he had acquired French citizenship and served as a military surgeon in the French army at both the beginning and end of the war.

Until the age of fifteen, he did not believe in God. In fact, he hated and harbored a strong sense of hostility toward the Church. The idea of God stirred no interest in him; he even despised everything associated with it, whether directly or indirectly.

However, he experienced two spiritual events that deeply affected him. The first occurred when he was around eleven years old, during a summer camp, where he met a priest in his thirties whose gentle and unconditional love for the children stirred Andrei’s (Anthony’s) curiosity, prompting him to wonder about the source and secret of such love.

The second experience occurred after he returned home from boarding school and was reunited with his family under one roof for the first time in years. This brought him immense happiness, so much so that he realized that if happiness is aimless, it is unbearable. He decided to give himself one year to discover whether life had any meaning. If he found none, he resolved that he would no longer continue living.

Months passed without any sign of meaning on the horizon, until one day, the leader of a Russian youth group invited him to attend a lecture by a priest hosted by the youth organization. Anthony vehemently refused, saying: "I don’t care about the Church, and I don’t believe in God." But the leader persuaded him to attend out of respect for the organization: "Just show up physically; you’re not required to actually listen." Thus, he went but soon discovered that the priest was a remarkable man.

When he got home, he asked his mother for a Bible so he could verify the priest’s words for himself. He began reading the Gospel of Mark, as it was the shortest. He described his experience as follows: “*I do not know how to tell you what happened. I will simply describe it, and those who have had a similar experience will understand. While I was reading the beginning of the Gospel of St. Mark, before reaching the third chapter, I became aware of a Presence but saw nothing. It was not a hallucination but rather a quiet certainty that the Lord was standing there, and I was in His presence. This, even though I had begun reading His life story out of an impulsive reaction and with a bad will.*”

From that moment on, he read the Gospel in the light of the Resurrection, which for him became a firm conviction and a reality beyond any doubt.

(Acts 1:5), the Apostles were also appointed and raised to the high priestly rank, according to Saint John Chrysostom (PG 60, 21). On this day commenced the celebration of the Holy Eucharist by which we become "partakers of the Divine Nature" (II Peter 1:4). For before Pentecost, it is said of the Apostles and disciples only that they abode in "prayer and supplication" (Acts 1:14); it is only after the coming of the Holy Spirit that they persevered in the "breaking of bread,"that is, the communion of the Holy Mysteries-"and in prayer" (Acts 2:42).

The feast of holy Pentecost, therefore, determined the beginning of the priesthood of grace, not the beginning of the Church. Henceforth, the Apostles proclaimed the good tidings "in country and town," preaching and baptizing and appointing shepherds, imparting the priesthood to them whom they judged were worthy to minister, as Saint Clement writes in his first Epistle to the Corinthians (I Cor. 42).

REMOVAL OF THE RELICS OF THEODORE THE COMMANDER

The holy Martyr Theodore was from Euchaïta of Galatia and dwelt in Heraclea of Pontus. He was a renowned commander in the military, and the report came to the Emperor Licinius that he was a Christian and abominated the idols. Licinius therefore sent certain men to him from Nicomedia, to honor him and ask him to appear before him. Through them, however, Saint Theodore sent back a message that it was necessary for various reasons, that Licinius come to Heraclea. Licinius, seeing in this a hope of turning Saint Theodore away from Christ did as was asked of him. When the Emperor came to Heraclea, Saint Theodore met him with honor, and the Emperor in turn gave Theodore his hand, believing that through him he would be able to draw the Christians to the worship of his idols. Seated upon his throne in the midst of the people, he publicly bade Theodore offer sacrifice to the gods. But Theodore asked that the emperor entrust him with the most venerable of his gods, those of gold and silver, that he might take them home and himself attend upon them that evening, promising that the following day he would honor them in public. The Emperor, filled with joy at these tidings, gave command that Theodore's request be fulfilled. When the Saint had taken the idols home, he broke them in pieces and distributed the gold and silver to the poor by night. The next day a centurion named Maxentius told Licinius that he had seen a pauper pass by carrying the head of Artemis. Saint Theodore, far from repenting of this, confessed Christ boldly. Licinius, in an uncontainable fury, had the Saint put to many torments, then crucified. While upon the cross, the holy Martyr was further tormented -- his privy parts were cut off, he was shot with arrows, his eyes were put out, and he was left on the cross to die. The next day Licinius sent men to take his corpse and cast it into the sea; but they found the Saint alive and perfectly whole. Through this, many believed in Christ. Seeing his own men turning to Christ, and the city in an uproar, Licinius had Theodore beheaded, about the year 320. The Saint's holy relics were returned to his ancestral home on June 8.



Contemporary Luminous Faces: Metropolitan Anthony Bloom, Part One

His Eminence Metropolitan Saba (Isper)

“Consciously and at every hour I wish to take part in the redemption of the world, remaining a light amongst the storms, to be one of Thy beacons.

I go, O Lord, into the world to do Thy will. My only desire is to stand firm as a faithful servant at the post to which Thou didst appoint me, in order to meet Thee worthily.” – Metropolitan Anthony Bloom (1914-2003)

A brilliant contemporary witness to the work of Christ in the hearts of His devoted followers, Metropolitan Anthony Bloom was a man of prayer and spiritual insight of the highest caliber. He embodied unwavering faith in Christ, a profound insight into humanity, especially the modern individual, refined theological scholarship and language, and a steadfast, boundless compassion. A master of dialogue and conversation, he was renowned for his sharp insight, analytical clarity, and ability to grasp reality before expressing any judgment or opinion. No one crossed his path without being deeply and positively moved by him.

The son of a Russian diplomat, he was born in Switzerland and named Andrei. His family later relocated to Iran for his father's post and eventually settled in France following the Communist Revolution.

Upcoming Events

<u>This Week</u>	
Sunday, 6/8	8:45 am: Matins Service 10:00 am: Divine Liturgy <i>Followed by coffee hour, all are welcome</i>
Wednesday, 6/11	5:30pm: Vespers
Saturday, 6/14	4:00 pm: Catechism class 5:30 pm: Great Vespers , <i>followed by confessions</i>
Sunday, 6/15	All Saints Sunday Father's Day 8:45 am: Matins Service 10:00 am: Divine Liturgy <i>Followed by coffee hour, all are welcome</i>



**June 11-14 is the
Diocese of Miami & the Southeast
Parish Life Conference
in Jacksonville**

*Please pray for safe travels and
a blessed trip to all attending*

Announcements

THANK YOU TO TODAY’S COFFEE HOUR SPONSORS
PLEASE SIGN UP ON THE CALENDAR IN THE NARTHEX TO PREPARE
AND SERVE FOOD FOR OUR COFFEE HOUR .



June 8
June 15
June 22
June 29

Epistle Reader
Tristan Riter
Susan Perers
Samuel Armstrong
Corbin Dick

Fasting Calendar

Fast-Free for Great Feast of Pentecost (June 8-15)
Apostles Fast:
Abstain from meat, dairy, eggs, June 16-28, with strict
fast on Wednesdays and Fridays
[View calendar at https://tinyurl.com/AOCfast2025](https://tinyurl.com/AOCfast2025)

June Birthdays & Anniversaries

09: Stephanie Enstice
10: DeWayne Hopper
12: Alina Matos
13: Fr. Stephen and Kh. Amani Adili Anniversary
14: Max Jacobs
17: Alexander Bollig
23: John and Debbie Thieme Wed. Anniversary
25: Mikey Holland
27: Michael and Alyssa Lieberman Anniversary
29: Callie Karas



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Sunday of Pentecost

Beloved in Christ,

This Pentecost Sunday is the Great Feast of Descent of the Holy Spirit. St. Nikolai of Zicha (Homilies volume ,1 page 313-314) explains why the Holy Spirit, who is everywhere present, can dwell more fully and be more effective in particular times, places, and people.

"For a better understanding, this comparison may help you: the sun shines in winter and in spring, but its light and warmth cannot make anything grow through the snow in winter. In spring, though, the same sun, that has the same warmth and light, makes all the sown seeds sprout and grow. Scientists tell us that the part of the earth where there is winter moves away from the sun, that the snowy regions are standing farther from the sun, and that they receive the sun's light at an angle, not as direct rays. In spring, that part of the earth turns toward the sun, the snowy regions come closer to the sun, and the sun's light and warmth come as direct rays. From Adam to Christ, men's souls were like the earth in winter. The Holy Spirit gave light and warmth but, because of the sinful twistedness of man's soul, and its separateness from God, it remained frozen, and not sort of fruit was able to sprout and grow from it. The Lord Jesus re-directed the soul of man, and brought it close to God, cleaned the ice and snow off it, ploughed it and sower divine seed in it. And the Holy Spirit began then, like the sun in springtime, to bring forth and show, by His power, sweet and wonderful fruits in the field of the human soul. - St. Nikolai of South Canaan

In Christ,

Fr. Elia Shalhoub

Very Rev. Fr. Elia Shalhoub, Pastor



Please pray for the healing of Marcia Fuentes, Laney Ricketts, Michealle Carey, Debbie Thieme, Adriana Theodoropoulos, Beverly Delida, Alix Hall, Nina and Diogo Penas, Beth Manzini, John Archambeau, Alex & Soula, Susan Moran, Susan Perers, William Snell, Vasilika Yardines, Faouzi Najjar, Marie Williams, and His Grace Bishop Nicholas

TODAY'S FEAST: PENTECOST SUNDAY

After the Saviour's Ascension into the Heavens, the eleven Apostles and the rest of His disciples, the God-loving women who followed after Him from the beginning, His Mother, the most holy Virgin Mary, and His brethren-all together about 120 souls returned from the Mount of Olives to Jerusalem. Entering into the house where they gathered, they went into the upper room, and there they persevered in prayer and supplication, awaiting the coming of the Holy Spirit, as their Divine Teacher had promised them. In the meanwhile, they chose Matthias, who was elected to take the place of Judas among the Apostles.

Thus, on this day, the seventh Sunday of Pascha, the tenth day after the Ascension and the fiftieth day after Pascha, at the third hour of the day from the rising of the sun, there suddenly came a sound from Heaven, as when a mighty wind blows, and it filled the whole house where the Apostles and the rest with them were gathered. Immediately after the sound, there appeared tongues of fire that divided and rested upon the head of each one. Filled with the Spirit, all those present began speaking not in their native tongue, but in other tongues and dialects, as the Holy Spirit instructed them.

The multitudes that had come together from various places for the feast, most of whom were Jews by race and religion, were called Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and so forth, according to the places where they dwelt. Though they spoke many different tongues, they were present in Jerusalem by divine dispensation. When they heard that sound that came down from Heaven to the place where the disciples of Christ were gathered, all ran together to learn what had taken place. But they were confounded when they came and heard the Apostles speaking in their own tongues. Marvelling at this, they said one to another, "Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?" But others, because of their foolishness and excess of evil, mocked the wonder and said that the Apostles were drunken.

Then Peter stood up with the eleven, and raising his voice, spoke to all the people, proving that that which had taken place was not drunkenness, but the fulfilment of God's promise that had been spoken by the Prophet Joel: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that I shall pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and daughters shall prophesy" (Joel 2:28), and he preached Jesus of Nazareth unto them, proving in many ways that He is Christ the Lord, Whom the Jews crucified but God raised from the dead. On hearing Peter's teaching, many were smitten with compunction and received the word. Thus, they were baptized, and on that day about three thousand souls were added to the Faith of Christ.

Such, therefore, are the reasons for today's feast: the coming of the All-holy Spirit into the world, the completion of the Lord Jesus Christ's promise, and the fulfilment of the hope of the sacred disciples, which we celebrate today. This is the final feast of the great mystery and dispensation of God's incarnation. On this last, and great, and saving day of Pentecost, the Apostles of the Saviour, who were unlearned fishermen, made wise now of a sudden by the Holy Spirit, clearly and with divine authority spoke the heavenly doctrines. They became heralds of the truth and teachers of the whole world. On this day they were ordained and began their apostleship, of which the salvation of those three thousand souls in one day was the comely and marvellous first fruit.

Some erroneously hold that Pentecost is the "birthday of the Church." But this is not true, for the teaching of the holy Fathers is that the Church existed before all other things. In the second vision of The Shepherd of Hermas we read: "Now brethren, a revelation was made unto me in my sleep by a youth of exceeding fair form, who said to me, 'Whom thinkest thou the aged woman, from whom thou receivedst the book, to be?' I say, 'The Sibyl.' 'Thou art wrong,' saith he, 'she is not.' 'Who then is she?' I say, 'The Church,' saith he. I said unto him, 'Wherefore then is she aged?' 'Because,' saith he, 'she was created before all things; therefore is she aged, and for her sake the world was framed.'" Saint Gregory the Theologian also speaks of "the Church of Christ ... both before Christ and after Christ" (PG 35:1108-9). Saint Epiphanius of Cyprus writes, "The Catholic Church, which exists from the ages, is revealed most clearly in the incarnate advent of Christ" (PG 42:640). Saint John Damascene observes, "The Holy Catholic Church of God, therefore, is the assembly of the holy Fathers, Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Evangelists, and Martyrs who have been from the very beginning, to whom were added all the nations who believed with one accord" (PG 96, 1357c). According to Saint Gregory the Theologian, "The Prophets established the Church, the Apostles conjoined it, and the Evangelists set it in order" (PG 35, 589 A). The Church existed from the creation of the Angels, for the Angels came into existence before the creation of the world, and they have always been members of the Church. Saint Clement, Bishop of Rome, says in his second epistle to the Corinthians, the Church "was created before the sun and moon"; and a little further on, "The Church existeth not now for the first time, but hath been from the beginning" (II Cor. 14).

That which came to pass at Pentecost, then, was the ordination of the Apostles, the commencement of the apostolic preaching to the nations, and the inauguration of the priesthood of the new Israel. Saint Cyril of Alexandria says that "Our Lord Jesus Christ herein ordained the instructors and teachers of the world and the stewards of His divine Mysteries ... showing together with the dignity of Apostleship, the incomparable glory of the authority given them ... Revealing them to be splendid with the great dignity of the Apostleship and showing them forth as both stewards and priests of the divine altars . . . they became fit to initiate others through the enlightening guidance of the Holy Spirit" (PG 74, 708-712). Saint Gregory Palamas says, "Now, therefore ... the Holy Spirit descended ... showing the Disciples to be supernal luminaries ... and the distributed grace of the Divine Spirit came through the ordination of the Apostles upon their successors" (Homily 24, 10). And Saint Sophronius, Bishop of Jerusalem, writes, "After the visitation of the Comforter, the Apostles became high priests" (PG 87, 3981B). Therefore, together with the baptism of the Holy Spirit which came upon them who were present in the upper chamber, which the Lord had foretold as recorded in the Acts, "ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence