

THE FEAST OF THE MONDAY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AT THE RUSSIAN MISSIA

On Monday, May 26/ June 8, 2020, the Patriarchate celebrated the feast of the Monday of the Holy Spirit as it is ordained by the book of Pentecostarion, a day especially dedicated in honour of the Holy Spirit, Who came from the Father through the Son and enlightened the illiterate Disciples at the Upper Room and made them luminaries and teachers of the whole world.

This feast is celebrated at the Holy Church of the Russian MISSIA of the Moscow Patriarchate in New Jerusalem, which is dedicated to the Holy Trinity.

The Festal Divine Liturgy was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, with co-celebrants their Eminences; Metropolitan Isychios of Kapitolias, the Arhcbishops; Aristarchos of Constantina and Theodosios of Sebastia, His Eminence Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, Hagiotaphite Hieromonks among whom the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, the Head of the Russian MISSIA Archimandrite Alexander and other Priests of the Russian Church, Archdeacon Mark and Hierodeacons of the Russian MISSIA, as the chanting was delivered by the Nuns of the MISSIA and the service was attended by Russian faithful Christians.

After the Holy Communion, H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos delivered the following Sermon;

“Reverend Archimandrite Alexander,

Representative of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia in the Holy City of Jerusalem

“Once when He descended and confounded the tongues, the Most High divided the nations; and when He divided the tongues of fire, He called all men into unity; and with one accord we glorify the All-holy Spirit” (Kontakion of the Feast). The hymn writer of the Church proclaims.

The All-holy Trinity has gathered us all in this Holy Church, in the joyful day of Holy Pentecost, in order to celebrate in Eucharist the All-holy, life-giving and almighty Spirit, the One God of the Holy Trinity, Who is equally honoured, glorified and is of one essence with the Father and the Son.

“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth”(John 4:24). “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you”(John 14:26). “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you”(John 16:13-14), our Lord Jesus Christ says.

Behold therefore, why the hymnographer also says: “The Holy Spirit provideth all things; He gusheth forth prophecy; He perfecteth the priesthood; He hath taught wisdom to the illiterate. He hath shown forth the firshermen as theologians. He holdeth together the whole institution of the Church. Wherefore, O Comforter, one is essence and throne with the Father and the Son, glory to Thee” (Great Vespers of Pentecost, 3rd sticheron).

The Holy Spirit, Who holds together the whole constitution of the Church, was foretold by the Prophets; “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy...And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and

fire, and pillars of smoke" (Joel 2:28, 30), Joel says, and Ezekiel adds; "Thus says the Lord: Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them" (Ezekiel 36-25-27).

This "new spirit", the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, did God the Father send down and gave to His Holy Disciples and Apostles, after the request of the gloriously ascended into heaven Son and Word, our Lord Jesus Christ. To these Disciples and Apostles, – according to St. Paul – , "whom Christ set first in the Church (1 Cor. 12:28) and "is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone" (Eph. 2:20), did the Lord "pour out His Spirit upon all flesh" (Joel 2:28), and consequently to their descendants, namely the Shepherds and great initiators to the mysteries of the Church, as St. Cyril of Alexandria teaches by saying: "The initiators to the mysteries of the Church and those who are teaching under the sun, before all other things, should enrich their knowledge with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and those who from the beginning are called through faith into sanctification, should become adorned like gold by the divine and heavenly grace".

Moreover, the hymnographer says: "the All-holy Spirit, Who in truth divideth the gifts to all hath descended upon the earth, not as He had formerly, shining in the Prophets through Law's dark shadow, but now is given in all truth to us through Christ's mediation for our sakes. Thus let us purify our hearts with virtues and so receive His true visitation and blest descent, being mystically lit in mind" (Thursday after Pentecost, Vespers, troparion 1).

And St. Paul advices the people in Ephesus thus: "Take heed

therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood"(Acts 20:28). It is made clear that this advice is directly referred to the initiators to the mysteries and Bishops of the whole Church of our time, a piece of advice distinguished by the Holy Spirit dwelling in them. "Christ Who has the Spirit has been given to the Church, acting according to the Spirit as God" St. Maximus says. And according to St. Chrysostom, "the fulness of Christ is the Church, and the fulness of the head is the body, and the fulness of the body is the head". "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace" St. John the Evangelist says (John 1:16).

The "grace for grace" (John 1:16) which we have received, as well as the way it is manifested, is clearly described by the hymnographer of the Church by saying: "Thou didst wholly take me upon Thee past all telling, and with Thine divine nature full wast blended with me, though suff'ring no confusion, no division, no change, O Christ,. Glory to Thy terrible Descent, and Passion, and holy Resurrection, and Ascent on high, whereby our nature, cast to earth, is raised to the heights again"(Thursday of the 7th week, Matins, praises, troparion 1).

In other words, taking upon Himself the whole man, Christ "was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world"(John 1:9). Interpreting this verse, the established God-bearing Fathers say: St. Cyril of Alexandria; "[Christ] is light in essence, He does not partake of it". St. Gregory the Theologian says: "He was the true light..."the Father. "He was the true light..."the Son. "He was the true light..."the Comforter; He was and He was and He was; but they were one. Light and light and light, but one light, one God.

This very light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world (John 1:9) is being evangelized and preached by the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of the Orthodox

Christians, hearkening to the Lord's words: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you"(Matthew 28:19-20).

This enlightening and redeeming teaching of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ we owe to keep, and that is why St. Paul urges us all in agony, to prove worthy of our vocation wherewith we are called, "With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling"(Eph. 4:1-4).

This very unity of faith and the communion of the Holy Spirit do we the Brotherly Churches of the Orthodox Christians declare, through our participation in the Eucharistic gathering of the body and blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; where there is His glory and might unto the ages of ages. Amen."

After the Dismissal of the Divine Liturgy the Head of the MISSIA Archimandrite Alexander offered a monastic meal. At the meal His Beatitude read the following address, at the presence of the Ambassador of Russia and the Ambassador of Bella Russe:

"Dear Archimandrite Alexander,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Beloved Monastics,

Sisters and Brothers in Christ

"If we walk in the light as He Himself is the light,

we have fellowship with one another,

and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 6).

Our Eucharistic celebration this morning is a manifestation that we walk together in the light, and so we share in this koinonia – this fellowship – that demonstrates our unity and oneness in the Name of the Holy Trinity.

In this time of crisis and confusion for the world, our shared Orthodox martyria, which flows from our union in Christ, is of the utmost importance not just to the Orthodox world, but to the whole of Christianity, and indeed to all the nations. From this martyria countless people are sustained in hope, and draw strength to live their lives in the face of many dangers and temptation. We cannot ever underestimate the power of our unity in a divided and conflicted world.

It is not for nothing that the great Church Fathers regarded schism as the most serious of sins. For schism, by fracturing the visible unity of the Church, weakens the Church's martyria, and diminishes the Church's mission to be the true light and leaven. At this holy season of Pentecost we celebrate that, in the words of the Gospel of Saint John, "from His fulness we have received grace upon grace" (John 1:16), and this grace is divinely-appointed to us to share with all who come to us seeking the truth of the Gospel.

The unity of the Church has been under threat from the very beginning, as we read in the Second Epistle of Saint John, "many deceivers have gone out into the world" (2 John 7). And yet, the Orthodox Church has maintained the apostolic unity that was the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. This unity we must strive to maintain at all costs, for if schism is the greatest sin against the Church, the guarding and deepening of her unity is the greatest good.

The Orthodox Churches are those on whom Divine Providence has placed the mantle of our Lord Jesus Christ, His seamless

tunic, the tunic that He bore on His passion (cf. John 19:23). We must, in the words of the Epistle to Jude, "build ourselves up on our most holy faith; praying in the Holy Spirit"(cf. Jude 20), lest we trade the seamless tunic of our Lord Jesus Christ for the defiled tunic of those who are causing divisions (cf. Jude 23:19).

We pray and humbly ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten our hearts and minds, that we MAY remain firm with joy in our blessed unity in Christ, despite our human frailty, and labour without ceasing to restore the damage to the mantle of our Lord.

Please allow us now to propose a toast, first to our brother and co-celebrant in Christ, His Holiness Patriarch Cyril of Moscow and All Russia, and also to His Excellency Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, the President of the Russian Republic.

Chronia polla.

Thank you."

From Secretariat-General