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Sunday Sermon by His Eminence Seraphim Archbishop of Zimbabwe and Angola (June 7, 2020)



This Sunday our Church celebrates her Birthday, in the sense that on the day of Pentecost, fifty days after the life-saving event of Christ's resurrection, the Holy Spirit "is seen as tongues of fire" and enlightens Christ's disciples so that they might publicly begin the Apostolic work of the Evangelism of Humanity.

The sacred work of preparation of the holy apostles begins with their contact with the holy prophetic figure of John the Baptist who prepared the Lord's path and continued for three years discipleship close to Christ, that is, the duration of his redemtptive work in history, in the form that it is given to us in the New Testament.

Christ's teaching, his miracles, his Crucifixion and his Resurrection, were important stages of the disciples' preparation so that they could be established as Apostles of the Church. The completion however of their preparation, is realised on the day of Pentecost with the divine inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Besides, we are familiar, from many accounts in the New Testament, with the human weaknesses and short-comings of Christ's disciples before the day of Pentecost. In the miracle of the healing of the demon-possessed young man, it was impossible for Christ's disciples to do anything to help the distressed father. In Christ's dialogue with the mother of John and James, the children of Zebedee, at their own instigation, they ask for a place of honour in the Kingdom of Heaven.

We see the same thing in Peter's lack of faith, so that it is impossible for him to walk on the water like his teacher; furthermore his threefold denial of Christ "before the cock had crowed three times." Thomas' lack of faith and many more accounts in the New Testament indicate that Christ's disciples, in order to reach the stage of being Apostles of Christ, still needed something very important and unique in their life. This was the Holy Spirit which according to Christ's promise on the day of Ascension, forty days after his Resurrection, would come on the fiftieth day after his Resurrection in order to enlighten them and guide them towards "every truth".

In the first stage, the Holy Trinity makes itself known in man's life due to the Father through the Creation; the Testament of Covenant with the first created people, Noah, Abraham and the Israelite nation, either with his personal contact and communication, or through his Angels and his Prophets. The first historic stage of God's Revelation to the world is preserved in the books of the Old Testament.

The first stage of God's Revelation is aimed at the preparation of humanity so that they might fully understand and accept Jesus Christ as our True God and Saviour.

The second stage of Revelation of the Holy Trinity in the world is fulfilled through the incarnation of the Son and Word of God, through His redemptive work, through His Crucifixion, Resurrection and Ascension. The second stage is described and preserved in the books of the New Testament.

The third stage of God's Revelation to the world is inaugurated on the day of Pentecost with the divine inspiration of the Holy Spirit, which is considered the Birthday of our church. This stage lasts until the Second Coming of Christ for our final judgment.

So, Saint Seraphim of Sarov emphasises that man's purpose is the acquisition of the Holy Spirit which we can achieve through our faith in the uniqueness of Christ's Divinity and our obedience to the Divine Commandments. Also through our repentance and worthy participation in the mystical and religious life of our church, supporting in every way her catechistic, philanthropic and missionary work.

The third stage of God's Revelation is preserved in the tradition of our Church, as it is testified to in the books of the New Testament and particularly in the Acts of the Apostles, in the decisio ns of the local and Ecumenical Councils and in the writings of our Church Fathers.

Guarantor, interpreter and protector of our Church's teachings is our Church herself through her relevant office-bearers, her Holy Synod and her representatives as is the Patriarch, our Bishops and all who serve our church with the spiritual and pastoral guidance of our local Bishop.

Holy Scripture is also used by heretics and schismatics. This is why Holy Scripture is understood always as it is interpreted by our Church through the Apostles, their successors like our Patriarch, through the Synods like the Synod of our Patriarchate, through our Church Fathers like out Saints, through our Bishops like our Metropolitan and through our clergy and lay people who have the spiritual and pastoral guidance and spiritual permission of our local Bishop.

Furthermore the understanding of the New Testament, as Saint John Chrysostom says, presupposes the excellent understanding of the Old Testament. Some people ignoring the observations of our Church Fathers begin to read Holy Scripture from the book of Revelation, which is the last, without first studying and analysing the former books. So, they do not understand anything beyond the confused ideas that they create for themselves and their companions, resulting in their remaining indifferent to God's Word and having problematic behaviour towards the traditions of the Church.

In order for these unnecessary hardships of the faithful to be surpassed, we should all attend the Bible Studies which are organized by our Metropolis through our clergy in our parishes. Bible Study is for all of us; not only for elderly women.

Naturally for our children the Sunday schools operate every Sunday.

Today therefore when we celebrate the Birthday of our Church, the feast day of Pentecost, let us become fully conscious of God's gift to man and let us prepare ourselves with humility and obedience to God's will by doing the best we can for

our children and ourselves. Let us allow love to flood our hearts so that justice and peace can rule everywhere. Let us allow gifts of the Holy Spirit which we accepted by our baptism and from our participation in the rest of the sacraments of our church, to rule in our lives so that we can live in a better world with less pain and more joy. Let us allow therefore, the light of Pentecost to guide us in the daily struggle of life. Then we can also imitate the Holy Apostles who traveled the road to salvation through Christ.

As we are in front of the threat of the Pandemic of corona virus , let’s carry on praying together our Lord Jesus Christ to protect all of us. Let’s follow the way of lives of the Christians of the first Christian community sharing and supporting each other and God will be with us to protect us. 44 “All who believed were together, and had all things in common” (Acts 2, 44). 32 The multitude of those who believed were of one heart and soul. Not one of them claimed that anything of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common” (Acts 4,32). When we give one thing, then God gives us everything.

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