

His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros Homily at the Divine Liturgy of Pentecost



June 7, 2020

Greek Orthodox Church of the Assumption

Windham, New York

Beloved Faithful,

Fifty days ago, on the evening of the Holy Pascha, while the Disciples were hiding in the Upper Room, the Lord appeared to them. The Gospel says:

Even though the doors were sealed shut, Jesus came and stood in their midst. Jesus said to them, "Peace be with you." After he said this He showed them His hands and His side. When they saw the Lord, the disciples rejoiced. "Peace be with you," Jesus addressed them again. "Just as the Father sent Me, even so I send you." After saying this, Jesus breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit..." [\[*\]](#)

On this Holy Pentecost, when the tongues of fire divided over the Apostles, we behold the manifestation of the gift that was received on that evening of the Resurrection. The evening of Pascha was the conceiving of the Church within the Body of the Disciples. And the day of Pentecost was the birth of the Body of the

Church from those same Disciples.

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit is the fulfillment of the promise of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who comforted His Disciples on the night He gave Himself up for the life of the world:

"It is to your good that I leave. I am telling you the truth. If I do not go, the Paraclete will not come to you. But if I cross over, I will send the Paraclete to you. ... And the Spirit of truth will come and guide you into all truth."[\[†\]](#)

You see, God's love for us is so great, that in the plan for salvation of every human being – that was conceived from the "foundation of the world"[\[‡\]](#) – He found the way to be "πανταχοῦ παρὼν καὶ τὰ πάντα πληρῶν," "everywhere present and filling all things," even as we chant and pray today for the first time in fifty days.

The miracle of Pentecost cannot be contained in only the tongues of fire and the miraculous hearing of the Gospel in all the languages that were present, as so beautifully enumerated in the Epistle Reading today. The miracle of Pentecost is that God fills the universe with His presence in ways that can now be experienced, felt, known, understood, and most importantly shared by those who seek Him.

And it is in this filling of the world, and the fulfillment of God's promise, that the tongues of fire symbolize *how* the Church is empowered and united by the Spirit. As we chant in the *Kontakion* of the Feast:

ὅτε τοῦ πυρός τὰς γλῶσσας διένειμεν, εἰς ἐνότητα πάντας ἑκάλεσε....

"When He divided the tongues of fire, He called all to unity...."

Truly, the event of Pentecost today is the reversal of the Tower of Babel, which is the symbol of how humanity became divided against itself – divided into races, languages, cultures, ethnicities, and ultimately, by every measure of difference that we can ascertain.[\[§\]](#)

Today, all across our country and indeed around the world, we see the consequences of such division. While we can never, ever condone violence –because it only destroys and never edifies, we can try to "walk an extra mile" in the experience of the another human being.[\[**\]](#)

We can try to understand how communities feel marginalized, disregarded, and even abused by the greater society.

We can try to understand another's history from their point of view, and not from our position, which may be, by no fault of our own, a position of privilege.

My beloved Christians, we have been blessed with so much: grace, forgiveness, hope, faith, and above all the capacity to love. We may not see them, but there are still tongues of fire alighting above our heads and ready to burst into flames of love and compassion!

On this Day of Pentecost, when we ask the Lord Almighty to fill us and fill His world with His Holy Spirit, let us ask for a special blessing upon us all:

That we may experience a true sense of unity and solidarity with our fellow human beings – even if, and especially if, we seem to have absolutely nothing in common with them. For the truth of our Orthodox Faith is that Christ died for *everyone* without exception.

For those that love us and for those that hate us.

For those that value us and for those that degrade us.

For those who cherish us and for those that persecute us.

Without exception! He died for all that He might raise all. He breathed on a few disciples that He might fill the billions of this world. He divided the tongues of fire that He might unify our hearts and minds in the knowledge of our shared humanity.

On this Pentecost, let us truly become *“true worshippers, who worship the Father in Spirit and in truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship Him.”*[\[††\]](#)

Amen.

[\[*\]](#) John 20:19-23.

[\[†\]](#) John 16:7,13.

[\[‡\]](#) Cf. Revelation 13:8.

[\[§\]](#) Cf. Genesis 11:1-9.

[\[**\]](#) Cf. Mathew 5:41.

[\[††\]](#) John 4:23.

[Source](#)