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Archbishop Elpidophoros of America On the Feast of Pentecost

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Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Today, my friends, we address the Holy Spirit most directly in our hymns and spiritual songs:

Σῶσον ἡμᾶς, Παράκλητε ἀγαθέ, ψάλλοντάς σοι· Ἀλληλούϊα.

Save us, O Good Paraclete, who chant to You, Alleluia!

When we call the Holy Spirit, “Paraclete,” we call the Spirit by the same name that our Lord Jesus Christ used, when He told His disciples that we would ask His Father to send “another Παράκλητος” to be with them forever.[1]

“Paraclete” is not an ordinary word in English. It means one who advocates on your behalf, or gives you counsel. And in calling the Holy Spirit “another Advocate,” the Lord shows to us that the relationship we have with the Holy Spirit is the same intimate and comforting relationship that the Disciples had with their Master. The limitation of time and space that our Lord Jesus Christ had in virtue of His incarnation is utterly overcome by the One Who is everywhere present and filling all things – ὁ πανταχοῦ παρών, καὶ τὰ πάντα πληρῶν.

The Holy Spirit dwells in every Christian in virtue of our Baptism and Chrismation. The word itself – πνεῦμα – can mean “wind” or “breath.” Listen to how the Lord describes the Spirit in this verse from the Gospel of John:

τὸ πνεῦμα ὅπου θέλει πνεῖ, καὶ τὴν φωνὴν αὐτοῦ ἀκούεις, ἀλλ᾽ οὐκ οἶδας πόθεν ἔρχεται καὶ ποῦ ὑπάγει….

The spirit – or the wind – blows wherever it wishes; and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it is going….[2]

There is a freedom in this verse, which concludes by saying that all those who are born of the Holy Spirit live in this liberty – something that speaks to the very heart of a person, seeking to live with integrity and authenticity.

The Holy Spirit is the Divine Breath of God that infuses us with life. It is why at every recitation of the Creed we say:

Καὶ εἰς τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ Ἅγιον, τὸ κύριον, τὸ ζωοποιόν….

And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Creator of life….

Think of it for a moment, my dear Christians! If we stopped breathing the natural atmosphere for just a few minutes, our physical life would come to an end. Travel just a few miles above the earth's surface, and there is nothing to breathe. Think of the vastness of outer space. Nothing to breathe; nothing by which to live.

But what of our spiritual life – the life that is destined for eternity?

If we are not breathing in, and breathing with the Spirit of God, how shall we inherit everlasting life? We do not have to think about our physical inhalations and exhalations – they occur naturally. But the spiritual breathing that manifests the Holy Breath of God – this is intentional. This is purposeful. And this comes from a practice that cultivates those things that, as the Revelation of John says, "the Spirit speaks to the Churches."[3]

So, then, what counsel does the Spirit offer us? What does He advocate for us to do? Saint Paul speaks of nine fruits of the Spirit in his Epistle to the Galatians:

"… love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, self-control." [4]

All of these virtues have one thing in common: they are attributes that others can experience. They are activities of the inner person that are manifest in the world. They are all spiritual exhalations that invigorate others, that nurture others, that give life to others.

Therefore, my beloved brothers and sisters,

Let us allow the Spirit of God to fill us with all these virtues, so that we may offer them to others. Let us breathe in the goodness of God with our every breath, so that we may fill the world in return with life-giving fruits –fruits that can feed and

nourish this world.

This is the counsel of our Heavenly Advocate – the Paraclete, Who is forever with us in order to lead us to life everlasting. The Spirit blows and gives life in all manner of ways, but always to bring life, to foster love, and to imbue us with the joy and peace that we can share with others.

May it ever be so! Amen.

Photos: GOA/D.Panagos
[1] John 14:16.

[2] John 14:16.

[3] Revelation 2:11.

[4] Galatians 5:22.

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