14/06/2022

THE FEAST OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AT THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY OF THE RUSSIAN MISSIA



On Monday, May 31/ June 13 2022, the feast of the Holy Spirit was celebrated at the Church of the Holy Trinity of the Russian MISSIA of the Moscow Patriarchate, which is located in the New City of Jerusalem not far away from New Gate.

In this marvellous Church, the Divine Liturgy was officiated by H.H.B. our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos, along with their Eminences, the Archbishop of Constantina Aristarchos, the Metropolitan Joachim of Helenoupolis, the Head of the Russian MISSIA Archimandrite Alexander, the Elder Kamarasis Archimandrite Nectarios, and Archdeacon Mark. The chanting was delivered by the Church choir of the Nuns who serve at this Church, in the presence of a noble congregation of Russian and Arab-speaking faithful Christians.

His Beatitude delivered the following sermon to this congregation:

“And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high” (Luke 24:49) the Lord said

to His Disciples.

Your Grace, Archimandrite Alexander, Representative in Jerusalem of H.H. Beatitude to the Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia Cyril,

Beloved Brethren in Christ,

Noble Christians

The Grace of the Comforter Spirit has gathered us all in the Holy Church in Jerusalem of the Ecclesiastical MISSIA of the brotherly Church of Russia, to co-celebrate in Eucharist the All-holy and life-giving and Almighty Spirit, the One Person of the Triune God, Who is of one essence and glory with the Father and the Son.

According to Saint Gregory the Theologian, today “we celebrate Pentecost and the coming of the Spirit, and the time appointed for the promise and the fulfilment of hope. How great is the mystery! It is both exceeding great and most venerable” (Vespers, Sticheron 1).

Indeed, the fulfilment of the disciples by the Holy Spirit when they were gathered in the Upper Room is a great and most respected mystery (Acts 2:1-2). And this, on the one hand, because the Disciples “were all filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:4), and on the other, because this Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Son and Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, Who holds together the whole institution of the Church. According to the Lord’s word, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). And this “Holy Spirit hath ever been and is and shall be, neither beginning nor ending; but He is ever ranked and numbered together with the Father and the Son” Saint Gregory theologises (Sunday of Pentecost, Matins, Praises, Troparion 2).

According to Saint Paul, “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law” (Gal. 5:22-23). Referring to the various spiritual gifts, the wise Paul says: “All these [gifts] worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.

For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:11-13).

This one body in which we have been baptized, my dear brethren, is no other than the body of the Church, namely the body of Christ, in which we have been grafted through the gift and the communion of the Holy Spirit and we have put on the new man (ref. Col. 3:10). That is why Saint Cyril of Alexandria says regarding the Lord's word "it is better for you that I may go" (ref. John): "it is necessary for us to become communicants and partakers of the divine nature of the Word, or rather, to leave our own life and be transformed into another in newness of life which will be pleasing to God. However, this was impossible for us in any other way, but with the communion and participation in the Holy Spirit. And the most appropriate time for the sending down of the Holy Spirit to us was the time after the departure of our Saviour Christ".

The power of the Holy Spirit is the one which holds together the whole institution of the Church as the hymnographer says: "The Holy Spirit provideth all things; He gushed forth prophesy; He perfecteth the priesthood; he hath taught wisdom to the illiterate. He hath shown forth the fishermen as theologians. He holdeth together the whole institution of the Church" (Vespers, Sticheron 3).

Indeed, the Holy Spirit went down on the Apostles and made their hearts pure and installed in their deepest soul "a right spirit" which is the Holy Spirit, as Isychios interprets it. According to Origen, "at first the heart is made pure and immediately afterwards the Spirit is installed in the depths". As the psalmist says, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10).

This right spirit is no other than the Spirit in unity and peace in Christ. This is the Spirit that sustains the unity among the faithful and the body of the Church according to Saint Paul's advice: "I, therefore, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called…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). Likewise, Saint Ignatios the God-bearer urges the Christians of Philadelphia; "love unity, abstain from divisions; become imitators of Christ, as He became an imitator of His Father".

It is noteworthy also, that by the power of the Holy Spirit the Apostles spoke of the marvels of God in tongues, the languages of all the nations that lived in Jerusalem on the great day of Pentecost (ref. Acts 2:1-11).

The local Churches are called to project these wonders of God, namely “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3), as we live in a world of confusion and lawlessness and apostasy, paying heed to the hymnographer’s voice: “of old the tongues were confounded because of the audacity in the building of the tower, but now the tongues are made wise for the sake of the glory of Divine knowledge. There, God condemned the impious because of their offence; and here, Christ hath enlightened the fishermen by the Spirit. At that time the confusion of tongues was wrought for punishment, but now the concord of tongues hath been inaugurated for the salvation of our souls” (Pentecost Vespers, Aposticha, Glory).

Let us, my dear brethren, as “children of the Church, full of light”, entreat the Theotokos “who lent flesh to the Word”, that by her intercessions the Spirit of Truth may dwell in us. And let us say along with the hymnographer: “Draw nigh unto us, draw nigh, Thou Who art everywhere present, and even as Thou art ever with Thine Apostles, so do Thou also unite to Thyself us who long for Thee, O Compassionate One, that being united with Thee, we may praise and glorify Thine All-holy Spirit” (Oikos). Amen. Many happy returns”.

The Divine Liturgy was followed by a meal at the hotel Sergei near the MISSIA. His Beatitude delivered the following address there:

“Dear Father Alexander,

Mr Ambassador,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Beloved Monastics,

Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Today we have been blessed to celebrate once again the Divine Liturgy on the Monday of the Holy Spirit in this great church dedicated to the Holy Trinity.

As we have sung joyfully today:

When the Most High came down and confounded tongues of men,

He divined the nations.

When he dispensed the tongues of fire, he called all to unity,

And with one voice we glorify the Most Holy Spirit.

(Kontakion of the Feast)

So we rejoice in the unity to which we have been called in our beloved Orthodox Church.

We come to this feast today with the words of the Psalmist in our hearts:

Create in me a clean heart O God,

And put a new and right spirit within me.

(Ps. 50[51]:10)

We are commanded to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, precisely because there is one body and one Spirit (Eph. 4:30.

As we gather here, we do so in the full realization of the challenges that we face in our world and in our Church. These challenges should come as no surprise to us because even in the scriptures we are given warnings.

In the Gospel of Saint Luke, we read that there will be on the earth distress among nations, violence, fear and distress of every kind (cf. Luke 20:20-28). Nor is the Church safe from such dangers, as Saint Paul warns that there should be no divisions (the Greek word is “schisms”) within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another (1 Cor. 12:25).

We know full well that the truth is also of what Saint Paul goes on to say: If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together (1 Cor. 12:26).

But on this joyous celebration of the Holy Spirit, we are reminded of the freedom that is the gift of the Holy Spirit in the Church: Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom (2 Cor. 3:17). This is the freedom that is the guarantee of our peace and our unity, a freedom that is not just for the Church,

but for all mankind. As the hymnographer reminds us at Pentecost the Most High called all into unity.

In our world today, people of religious faith, and especially Christians, are in many places under pressure. Globalization threatens the uniqueness of cultures, societies, and religious traditions. The Church of Jerusalem, as the Mother of all the Churches, gives her life for the unity of the Church, and down the ages, the Patriarchate has been the guardian and the guarantee of the Christian values of the Scriptures and the Holy Tradition. Just as our Lord Jesus Christ longed to gather the children of Jerusalem together as a mother hen gathers her chicks under her wings, so the Church of Jerusalem has gathered her children for protection and succour (cf. Matt. 23:37).

At the first Pentecost, the people heard the disciples speak to them of the great deeds of God (Acts 2:11). This is the role of the mission of the Church of Jerusalem, to be a witness of the great deeds of God, and to embody in our life the freedom and the unity that are God's gifts to the Church and to the human family.

May God grant us all the Heavenly Comforter, the Spirit of truth, the treasury blessings which fill all things, so that we may reflect more clearly the freedom and unity to which we are called.

Thank you".

From Secretariat-General






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