

SOBORNOST

St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church

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American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

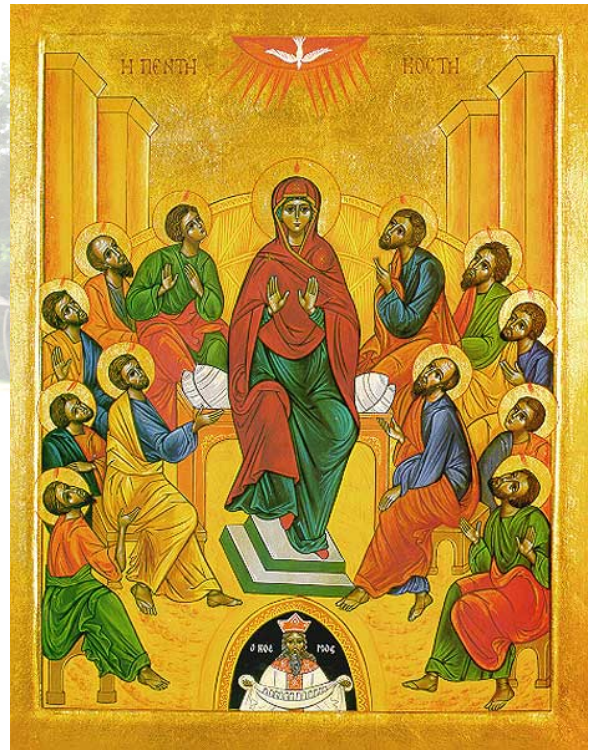
*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

SERVICES

**Fridays: Moleben to the Theotokos
6:00 AM**

**Saturdays: Confession 5:00 PM,
Great Vespers 5:30 PM**

**Sundays: Matins (Orthros) 8:45 AM
Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM.**



June 19, 2016 – Holy Pentecost

On this feast according to the custom, temples and homes of the faithful relating to the characteristics of this feast are decorated with trees, grass and flowers. This is how the Old Testament Church celebrated Pentecost, offering on this day a beginning of the harvest (Lev.23:10-22; Num. 28:26). In accordance with these customs of the Old Testament Church, probably, the room on Zion in which the Apostles received the Holy Spirit on this feast was also decorated. From here this custom was also spread throughout all the Church. The thought of the appearance of God as three strangers to Abraham at the Oaks of Mamre, where the tent of the patriarch stood, could also have influenced this custom. Celebrating the Holy Trinity, before Whom Abraham once bowed down in the Oaks of Mamre, ancient Christians on the day of the Holy Trinity spread tree branches and flowers in the temples to see that in this way the decorated temple of God more obviously represents the Oaks of Mamre and the tent of Abraham where once the Triune God had the good will to appear.

Now branches and flowers are offered to God as the beginning of the renewing Spring. But at the same time they serve together as a symbol of the Church of Christ, which with the appearance of the grace of the Holy of Spirit flourished in it,

according to the expression in the church hymns, like a white lily. It also points out the renewal of the people by the power of the descent of the Holy Spirit, (serving as a symbol of His very grace which we ask for on this day and which, being recognized by true believing souls, smells sweet to them through a great variety of spiritual gifts and pious deeds), and for the future resurrection of our dead brethren for which we especially pray on this day.

The beginning of the feast of Pentecost is coincident with the beginning of the Christian Church. The Apostles, vested on the day of Pentecost with power from above, could not, of course, forget this great day and discerned its special celebration. For them this day reminded them of their introduction into world service for the new believers in Christ, their calling into the Kingdom of Christ, for all in general into the unutterable great mercy of God, revealed to the race of man. The Blessed Augustine clearly testifies that the feast of the Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles existed in the Church since apostolic times. One should notice that in antiquity the name Pentecost was also understood as a time interval of fifty days, separating the feast of Pascha from the feast of Pentecost, and the feast commemorating the Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles, or Pentecost in the true sense.

Already the ancient Church distinguished the fifty days after Pascha with some characteristics. So, on these days, even as now, one reads the Book of Acts of the Apostles. Besides the ancient Church, dedicating these fifty days to the rejoicing about the Resurrection of the Savior, found that kneeling, as a reminder of the fall of man, does not correspond to these days, and consequently prohibited kneeling on them. The Church from the earliest times solemnly celebrated the feast of Pentecost under the name of the day of the Holy Spirit. Its special solemnity was due to the custom of the ancient Church to baptize catechumens on this day. In the Fourth Century were the works of St. Basil the Great, whose prayers are read even now by the Church in Vespers, and the spoken conversations of well-known preachers. The works of Sts. Gregory the Theologian (IV Century), Roman the Sweet-singer (VI Century), Cosmas of Maium and John of Damascus (VIII Century), Theophanes, Metropolitan of Nicaea (IX Century) and the Emperor Leo (X Century) include prayers composed in honor of the feast with many unforgettable images describing the very deep truths of Orthodox Theology and unusually exalted hymns, which even now the Holy Church sings. The moral aim of the establishment of this festival in commemoration of the Descent of the Holy Spirit by the Holy Church first of all serves the fulfillment of the first debt before God, the Giver of all blessings, the debt of gratitude.

The sending down of the Holy Spirit to earth is so great a gift that it includes everything within it for the Christian. Without the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit

we would not even receive the clear knowledge of the actions of the Son of God Himself on earth. Without the co-activity of the Holy Spirit the preaching of the Gospel would not have spread so quickly in the world, due to the many obstacles, insurmountable for the ordinary power of man. Without the life-creating Holy Spirit even the faithful in the name of Jesus Christ would be dead spiritually. We have the word of God because the Holy Spirit spoke through the prophets and the apostles. The appearance of the Deity, through the Church, is openly accessible to all the cursed on the earth. Because the Holy Spirit humbled with the consecration by Himself, He was acquired by the sinful race of man, with the merits of our Lord and Redeemer. Everyone entering into this holy society receives the rebirth into the new spiritual life, because the Holy Spirit, once having been poured out, permanently remains in the Church of Christ.

And the Holy Church, in the present day Divine services with prominent features describing the event itself of the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles in all detail, and opening all its magnificent and saving fruits for us, induces us to thank God the Father, who had the good will to grant us the Comforter, and to thank the Redeemer our God the Son who begged His Father to send down the Holy Spirit upon the earth, and to thank the Consecrator our God the Holy Spirit, who came down upon the Apostles, and through them also upon all believers who have disdained again to condescend to our impiety. Raising in us this high feeling of gratitude "to God the Benefactor", the Holy Church in its hymns with special power inspires us "to glorify" and "to sing" "the Father without beginning, together with the Coeternal Son, and together with the Coeternal and Most Holy Spirit", and to worship "the Undivided Trinity": "For that has saved us."

Remembering the past and leading us to glorify "the Thrice Illumined Essence", and at the same time that its commemoration of the celebrated event would be quite beneficial and saving for Christians of all times, just as the great event of Pentecost was beneficial for the Apostles of Christ, the Holy Church, through its hymns, prayers and sacred actions, has laid out, prepared and purified its children beforehand for the recognition that the good grace of the Holy Spirit is necessary for their spiritual life. The faithful standing in the temple of God, as though on Mount Zion itself, the Holy Church instills pious thoughts, feelings and desires in them, as the disciples of the Lord were inspired before the descent of the Holy Spirit on them, and helps its children to receive the spiritual gifts necessary for salvation. Focusing on this purpose, of all being fulfilled on the present feast, the hymns, the prayers, and all active church services, the Holy Church in the Divine Services of Pentecost, in its general structure and individual details, has laid out and leads Orthodox Christians to the pious imitation of the disciples and apostles of Christ for one holy purpose. All sacred hymns and prayers and all actions,

accomplished by her in this case, penetrates the truly Christian spirit with living faith in the goodness and mercy of God, the Giver of all blessings, undoubtedly and together with deeply humble hope for the reception of the highest gifts, the fervent and universal love for God and neighbor. The same with faith, hope and thankful love must inspire the heart and every Christian wishing to worthily participate in the sacred prayer of the Church, and everyone, agreeing with the appeal of the Holy Church, kindling in itself an ardent desire to be honored with the heavenly grace of the All Holy Spirit, for its spiritual comfort and salvation, should with reverent audacity be moved to appeal: "Save, O Comforter, those who faithfully hymn Your God-pleasing coming, and cleanse us from every impurity for You are compassionate, and show us to be worthy of your radiance, and with your God-seeing light create the reflection I was undefiled."

All this, finally, inspires in the Christian the care that the sacred celebration of the present day was not contradicted by a sinful life. That each of us, asking for ourselves the renewal and multiplication of the grace of the Spirit of God and being made worthy of His graceful visitation in prayer and in the mysteries, continued to observe ourselves as temples of the Holy Spirit, not offending His holy magnificence. "The present celebration," says Philaret, Metropolitan of Moscow, "is not a simple commemoration of the past, but the continuation of the apostolic preparation for the reception of this "Spirit," without ceasing "by those who wish, breathing it in." The Apostles, after continual prayers with one accord, "were filled with the Holy Spirit." And not only the Apostles, according to the explanation St. Chrysostom, but also the disciples staying with them, "altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty (Acts 1:15), filling them all." And for us now the Church, as in the Jerusalem "upper room" (Acts 1:13), gathered together in this temple to call the Comforter Spirit of truth to come and be installed in us." "The soul of every feast is the presence of the one whom we celebrate. And for those who celebrate the day of the Holy Spirit what can be more desired than to have this Heavenly Comforter infused with grace visit His feast? If He would, not with fiery tongues to sit on our heads, but at least mystically with a spark of fire touch our hearts and inflame their sensitivity to the presence of God."

According to the position of St. John Chrysostom, "our celebration should be in accordance with the worthiness of the gifts of blessings granted to us and to consist not in the crowning of the doors, but in the improvement of souls, not in the adornment of festal curtains, but in the adornment of the soul with the vestments of virtues so that, during such a celebration, we may be worthy of the grace of Spirit and to receive Its fruits." "Whoever wishes to become a dweller in Christ and be filled with the Holy Spirit, for the offering of spiritual fruits," as St. Macarius the

Egyptian teaches, "he should first of all firmly believe in the Lord, entirely converted to the requirements of His commandments and renounce the world so that his mind would not be engaged in anything visible. He should also remain in continual prayer and with faith in the good will of the Lord always to await His visitation and help, and then to force himself to every good deed and to every commandment of the Lord." (*adapted from Manual for Church Servers by S. Bulgakov, trans. Archpriest Eugene D. Tarris*)

Today's Epistle Lesson – The Acts of the Apostles 2:1-11

When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and *one* sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? And how *is it that* we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God."

Today's Gospel Lesson – Saint John 7:37-52, 8:12

On the last day, that great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified. Therefore many from the crowd, when they heard this saying, said, "Truly this is the Prophet." Others said, "This is the Christ." But some said, "Will the Christ come out of Galilee? Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the seed of David and from the town of Bethlehem, where David was?" So there was a division among the people because of Him. Now some of them wanted to take Him, but no one laid hands on Him. Then the officers came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, "Why have you not brought Him?" The officers answered, "No man ever spoke like this Man!" Then the Pharisees answered them, "Are you also deceived? Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed in Him? But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed." Nicodemus (he who came to Jesus

by night, being one of them) said to them, “Does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing?” They answered and said to him, “Are you also from Galilee? Search and look, for no prophet has arisen out of Galilee.” Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.”

A Word From the Holy Fathers

Through the Holy Spirit comes our restoration to paradise, our ascent into the kingdom of heaven, our return to the adoption of sons, our liberty to call God our Father, our being made partakers of the grace of Christ, our being called children of light, our participation in eternal glory, and, in a word, our being brought into a state of all ‘fullness of blessing’ both in this world and in the world to come. . . .

– St. Basil the Great

On Stewardship and the Orthodox Life –

Part 75: Treasures, Rust, & Thieves



“...lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal.” (Mat. 5:21 RSV)

So many of God’s people have come under the complete control of the spirit of this world. Thereby have these same people of God denied their identification as people of God, and could easily be called people of *this* world, not of the next. People of this world develop a love for money and what it can

buy: houses, land, trinkets, electronics, gourmet food and up-to-date fashions. Love of money becomes so well-developed that such love is absorbed into one’s whole mind and being. Such a love of money shuts out love for the One who created and owns all money. It further drives out love for people and often turns others into competitors for the same money.

The god of this world, money, has blinded so many eyes. Eternal and everlasting concerns are made secondary. For example, electronic media (including television, internet and social media) are all about money: commercials on TV are there simply to entice one to buy; internet ads are everywhere and abound with this or that great “deal”; social media would not exist if it did not make money for those who are founders of it and are invested in it.

In what place in one’s life are those eternal and everlasting concerns? The words of our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount are eternal and everlasting: *“Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where*

thieves do not break in and steal.” He says “for yourselves.” These eternal and everlasting concerns are what are to motivate us, to fill us up – for they are eternal, they will not pass away, they will not be subject to the ups and downs of this life. God’s promises do not fluctuate like the stock market, or lose their value like the dollar. They do not rust away. No one can steal them.

If someone wants to work for his or her own interest, to build up something that will never pass away, to invest in something that will not lose value, but only gain value – this is not stock, bonds or that “unbeatable” investment opportunity. No; if someone wants to work for his or her own interest, to build up something that will never pass away, look only to Christ and His Church. He is eternal. The Church is everlasting. The value for any person continues not only in this world, but forever in the world to come. (*from acrod.org*)

HIS EMINENCE METROPOLITAN ALEXIOS` MESSAGE FOR FATHER`S DAY

My beloved ones, this Sunday we have the opportunity to celebrate Father’s Day, to recognize and honor the fathers in our lives. Based on our faith and our family experiences, we don’t need studies to tell us that a father’s involvement with his child’s upbringing can have a significant impact on his or her academic achievements and behavior. However we know and there is statistical proof that the closer the father-child relationship, the better the child does in life. Studies show that a father’s example is the most powerful influence to help children learn about work, cooperation and responsibility. There is more to being a parent than simply providing food, shelter, and clothing for your children. Christ challenges us to love one another, and that challenge becomes even more difficult but also more important and compelling within our own families. Even in the best of families, there are hard times, problems and difficulties. That is why fathers are so important.

When a father takes responsibility for his own life and spirituality by being active and involved in the ecclesiastical and liturgical life of our Church, using the tools of prayer, worship, fasting and the study of Holy Scripture, he receives the respect of his family. As he grows in his own spiritual life, he is able to be an example of Christian leadership, compassion and love as a father. Although this may seem impossible for anyone accomplish by themselves, we know that with God’s help, we can do all things.

The most important gift that a father can give his children is a loving spiritual and moral foundation. If he fails to pass on this precious gift to his children, they will almost certainly suffer and lose their way in our challenging and difficult world. This is why it is so important to make every effort to lay a spiritual foundation for our children. The spiritual practices of fasting, prayer, Lenten disciplines,

Confession and attending services should not only be discussed, but should be practiced as a family. If we are not sharing the love of God with our children, if we are not growing in our own spiritual lives, if we are not bringing them to the Divine Liturgy, then we are failing as fathers and also as disciples of Christ, because encouraging our children to have contact with God's spiritual grace in prayer and worship, in the Divine Liturgy, is the greatest blessing that they can receive.

Also Commemorated Today: Apostle Jude, Brother of the Lord

The Holy Apostle Jude, one of the twelve apostles of Christ, is descended from King David and Solomon, and was the son of Righteous Joseph the Betrothed (Sunday after the Nativity of the Lord) by his first wife. The Holy Apostle John the Theologian writes in his Gospel, "... neither did his brethren believe in Him" (John. 7:5). St Theophylact, Archbishop of Bulgaria, explains this passage. He says that at the beginning of the Lord Jesus Christ's earthly ministry, Joseph's sons, Jude among them, did not believe in His divine nature. Tradition says that when St Joseph returned from Egypt, he began to divide his possessions among his sons. He wanted to allot a share to Christ the Savior, born miraculously and incorruptibly from the All-Pure Virgin Mary. The brothers were opposed to this because Jesus was born of another mother. Only James, later called "The Brother of God," offered to share his portion with Him.

Jude came to believe in Christ the Savior as the awaited Messiah, and he followed Him and was chosen as one of the twelve Apostles. Mindful of his sin, the Apostle Jude considered himself unworthy to be called the Lord's brother, and in his Epistle he calls himself merely the brother of James. The Holy Apostle Jude also had other names: the Evangelist Matthew terms him "Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddeus" (Mt. 10:3). The Holy Evangelist Mark also calls him Thaddeus (Mark 3:18), and in the Acts of the Holy Apostles he is called Barsabas (Acts 15:22). This was customary at that time.

After the Ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, St Jude traveled about preaching the Gospel. He propagated the faith in Christ at first in Judea, Galilee, Samaria and Idumaia, and later in the lands of Arabia, Syria and Mesopotamia. Finally, he went to the city of Edessa. Here he finished the work that was not completed by his predecessor, St Thaddeus, Apostle of the Seventy (August 21). There is a tradition that St Jude went to Persia, where he wrote his catholic Epistle in Greek. In the Epistle much profound truth was expressed in a few words. St Jude's Epistle speaks about the Holy Trinity, about the Incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, about the good and bad angels, and about the dread Last Judgment. The Apostle urges believers to guard themselves against fleshly impurity, to be diligent in prayer, faith and love, to convert the lost to the path of salvation, and to guard themselves

from the teachings of heretics. He also says that it is not enough just to be converted to Christianity, but faith must be demonstrated by good works. He cites the rebellious angels and men punished by God (verse 6) to support this. The Holy Apostle Jude died as a martyr around the year 80 near Mt. Ararat in Armenia, where he was crucified and pierced by arrows. (*from oca.org*)

All in the Family

On June 4, Drayce Sanchez (Alexander) was baptized while his great grandparents (Bill & Ann Samouris, from Arizona and Jerry Von Ronne from Leonardtown) watched! Drayce is the first born child of Kaden and Katherine (Samouris) Sanchez. Katherine grew up and was married at St. Thomas, and her husband Kaden was also baptized here. They now live in Jacksonville, North Carolina where Kaden is in the Marine Corps and Katherine is working on base with Imagine One. Many years, Alexander!





“THEOLOGY OF CREATION”

BY
METROPOLITAN
KALLISTOS OF DIOKLEIA



A PLENARY LECTURE OF THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY
ORIENTALE LUMEN CONFERENCE
“CREATION: OUR SHARED INHERITANCE”

THURSDAY, JUNE 23, 2016

ST. MARK ORTHODOX CHURCH
7124 RIVER ROAD, BETHESDA, MD 20817

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

6:30 pm Vespers for the Nativity of St. John the Baptist

7:15 pm Lecture (by video)

8:00 pm Reception

*Due to the last-minute invitation to participate in the Great and Holy
Council on Crete, His Grace had to cancel his trip to the US,
and a video was made at his residence of his prepared lecture.*

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Holy & Great Council: <http://www.orthodoxcouncil.org>

In Your Prayers – Please Remember... His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW, His Grace Bishop GREGORY, Fr. Joseph & Family, Greek Orthodox Archbishop Paul Yazigi of Aleppo, Syriac Orthodox Archbishop Yohanna Ibrahim of Aleppo, His Grace Bishop Neofitos of Nyeri and Mt. Kenya, Fr. John & Pani Betty Jean Baranik, Fr. Vincent Saverino, Presbyteria Katie Baker and family, Alicia Barosio and family, Millie Borys, Jeffrey Carey, Xenia Chilkowich, Jon Church, Ramius Connour, Curtis Cooper, Tina Crull, Ron Dominiecki, Linda A. Georgiev, Heather Himler, Alex Holthus, John Homick, Cameron Houk, Helen Janowiak, John M. Janowiak, Deanna Jarrett, Tucker Karl and family, Robert Karpin, Andrew Kinn, Kopan family, Brian, Helen, and Luke Mahony, Alex & Valentina Makowelski, Susan Matula, Anna Meinhold, Dn. Henry Middleton, David & Kathryn Newman, Bobby Nutter & Family, Henry & Lisa Osborne, Westin Perry & Parents, Mary Reed, Chris & Kaitlin Rixey, Jerry Von Ronne, Anne Rosario, James, Theodore and Christina Ristas, Samson Family, Sharon Sheptak, Dawn & Faith Ulmschneider, Daria Virvan, Lydia Vita, Christine, Marshall, Nathaniel, Rdr. Nectarios and Ia, the Syrian Christians displaced by war, Mother Virginia Marie and the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, for the newly departed servant of God Peter Tatsis, and all those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)