

## 5-26-19 Quenching Our Thirst with Christ © T. Hardenbrook

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Christ is Risen. Indeed, He is risen.

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This Wednesday, we celebrated the feast, the beautiful, little, simple feast of mid-Pentecost. Hence, the font of holy water in the middle of the church. This is the fruit of the service of the Lesser Blessing of the Holy Waters. This holy water is purified and sanctified for every kind of use for the orthodox and the non-orthodox can be received without being in a fasting state, unlike the waters of Theophany. We use it to bless our cars, our families, our homes, our pets, our friends. We drink it when we need some spiritual inspiration or help, when we feel like we're beginning to get sick. So like the waters of Theophany but with a much more general use. The waters of the lesser blessing service are offered to you.

And it's important that we note two things at this time of the year. One of them is that we're actually only halfway through the celebration of Pascha. You tired yet? We're only halfway through celebrating 7 X 7, being 49, + 1 with the feast of Pentecost itself, the perfect number, the fullness of celebration. In the history of this church, the celebration between Pascha and Pentecost was fast-free the entire time and it was such a great celebration period in the church, that many of the saints ... the one I can think of off-hand is Saint Maximus of Turin in his homilies. He complains to the people that they're being so strict and demanding of the feast of the great 50 days of celebrating and eating together, being fast-free the whole time, that he's worried that it's eclipsing their intensity in lent itself. That's a good problem.

We are a church as we always remind ourselves that that fasts and feasts. And so we're only halfway through the celebration of Pascha. Find in yourselves some time to be still and to reflect on that fact, to recommit to saying "Christ is risen" to one another when we greet each other, when we part ways, remembering that in our prayers right now, we are not praying the prayer to the Holy Spirit, "Oh Heavenly King, oh Comforter." We are singing "Christ is Risen" instead. We are not making prostrations, although that we still can make bows. We don't get on our knees until Kneeling Vespers Pentecost. This is a time of resurrection and celebration.

And the other thing that we want to notice, particularly with the font of holy water in the midst here of our assembly and also with the gospel reading of Christ meeting Saint Photini, the woman at the well, the Sarmatian woman because suddenly, after the light of the resurrection, we are emphasizing a new theme at Pentecost that's going to become fire. But right now, the theme is water. The theme is water for Christ has said to the Samaritan woman that he could give her living water and if she partook of it, she would never thirst again.

We also know and have heard at the feast of Pentecost ... I mean, of mid-Pentecost, the reference to the scriptures that, in the middle of the feast, and we seeing that even now in matins and during the liturgy, in the middle of the feast "Oh save your fill, our thirsty souls with the waters of piety." We have this theme of thirst. And we remember Christ in the middle of the

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Feast of Tabernacles, going to the temple and teaching that if anyone were to come to Him, out of his belly will flow rivers of living water.

Why water? Why water all of a sudden? We have life and light. We're headed toward fire of the Holy Spirit. Why water at this time? We know, as Christians, that throughout the whole Old Testament and God preparing his people, he uses the theme of water over and over again. Moses striking the rock in the middle of the wilderness and water coming forth, crossing the Red Sea of water, baptism occurring before the time of Christ, even before the time of Saint John the Baptist, but Saint John calling the people to a greater and a higher baptism of not just purity through washing but purity through repentance. We know that our bodies are composed mainly of water. We know that water was on the face of earth when God was creating in Genesis. So why water now? What is the emphasis now?

And we find that just as in the relationship between Christ and the church, the analogy, the metaphor, the image that we have been given is the marriage, the marriage feast, the bride and the bridegroom, Christ, the bridegroom, the church, the bride. I remember Father Thomas Hopko saying on the that point, "I'm sorry fellows but you're all the brides of Christ." We are in the church. And the relationship between God and man is so intimate, so interpersonal, so relational that it is the analogy of marriage that is given to us.

When we find ourselves, at this point, in between Pascha and Pentecost, focusing on water and thirst, I can give you water that will cause you to never thirst again. Samaritan woman is, at first, extremely happy because she's not going to have to make the journey to the well to get her bucket of water every day or multiple times a day for the rest of her life. It's a lot of labor, a lot of work, a lot of care. We die the easiest by not consuming water. But Christ also teaches her that he is talking about a different water and that when we combine the story of the Samaritan woman with Christ saying "Anyone who comes to me, anyone who comes to me, out of them will flow rivers ... rivers ... rivers of living water."

There's something going on here. When we encounter Christ, something can happen to us that not only quenches our thirst but causes us to be a source of the quenching of thirst for others around us as well. And we realize that the church over time has given us, like the analogy of marriage, the metaphor of marriage for Christ and the church, we are given the analogy of thirst to understand what spiritually happens to us, the experience, literally the sensation that we are called to experience through Christ and to help others with when we encounter the Holy Spirit ourselves.

Think about being really thirsty, that urge on the inside to quench the thirst, your brain telling your body that something is wrong, we're actually heading towards death, that we really need a drink. In the state of Arizona, it is illegal to not give somebody a glass of water if they knock on your door and ask for it. To this day. You'll die. You'll die if you don't get the water.

If you haven't been thirsty recently, experience it. Don't drink for a while. See how you feel. And when we are very, very, very thirsty, when we get that glass of water ... and it's amazing, if you pay attention, when we're super thirsty, we don't want Gatorade even though it does have electrolytes, we don't want a Coke, we don't want a milkshake, we don't want milk, we don't

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want coconut water. We want water. We want water. Nothing, ultimately, although we have created all these different drinks to entertain us and make us think that our salvation will be found there, it is water. When the body craves and thirsts truly, it is water that we desire. Christ knew that. He made us.

And when we take that glass of water and we drink it, there's almost nothing better in life in that moment. We've literally sustained our lives. We've found a momentary physical salvation in that glass of water. It quenches in a way that nothing else will. For a moment, on a physical level, we are satisfied. We don't need friends. We don't need food. We don't need fame. We don't need money. All we needed was that glass of water and we got it. And in that experience, we are supposed to be figuring out what it's like to actually experience the presence of the Holy Spirit in our life.

Think of all the spiritual thirsts that we are constantly trying to quench with things other than Christ Himself. When we look at obvious things like addictions, alcohol and drugs, there is a crisis in the person suggesting to them that whatever is going on on the inside is going to be cured through escaping through these things that numb them or make them forget or numb their feelings or the pain or hide the wounds for a little while. When we look at the passions themselves, every single passion is a suggestion that that thirst on the inside of you will go away if you just fill, you try and quench that thirst with a little bit of lust, with a little bit of greed, with a little bit of anger, with a little bit of vanity, little bit of gluttony. And yet, nothing can quench that thirst ultimately, the existential thirst, other than Christ and the presence of the Holy Spirit in our life.

We have to thirst for Christ. More importantly, we have to recognize that the thirst that is driving almost every sin in our life, every distraction, every type of ultimately, we find out is idolatry, is our thirsting for God. Father Dumitru Staniloae, the great Romanian theologian who suffered under the communists for years, quoting Maximus the Confessor, says that "It is not a surprise to us when preachers, us, created with the capacity to commune with the infinite God, finite creatures created to commune with the infinite, who are separated from Him, the water that we're dying for, the water that we are created to be drinking of daily with God, walking with Him in the garden daily, being in His presence, it is not a surprise that that infinite thirst is not quenched by finite things."

And we try, all the time, to quench that thirst with finite things and that is the root of not only addictions but also the root of our idolatry, of the passions, thinking that if we just get that little bit more money, we're finally going to feel good on the inside. If we just get a little bit more of that fame, we'll feel good on the inside finally. We're confused all the time as to what is really going on on the inside.

And Christ says to us openly to come to Him and drink and he will give us a water that will make us never to thirst ever again. Our longing is for Him, whether we know it or not. We have to be a thirsty people in order to pursue God but we also have to be a wise people to realize that our thirst is for Him exclusively, not for all the things the world offers us as a distraction.

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So as we continue on in our celebration between Pascha and Pentecost, thirst for God and give thanks to God that He has revealed Himself as the risen Lord who will quench our thirst. When you feel like you just need that new clothing or you just need that extra thing or you're going to try once again to see if ... what's it called? ... impulse shopping will make you happy. It didn't all those other times; it's not going to do it again. Remember that every one of those experiences is our confusing our thirst for God with something else. So experiment with that reality.

And may God give us a wonderful celebration still, between now and holy Pentecost. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen. Christ is risen.

Indeed, he is risen.