

## 6-16-19 Sharing the Bread of Pentecost

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

Happy Birthday.

Happy birthday. Many more.

Pentecost is the birthday of the church, the birth day. All along we have been with the apostles remembering Christ's ministry, his death on the cross, his resurrection, his ascension into heaven. And now the fulfillment of the promise has come. The Holy Spirit has been given to all people, all people who call upon the name of Christ and open their hearts to that presence of the Holy Spirit.

Today at Pentecost, the disciples become apostles. The disciples, those who are following Christ become apostles, meaning those who are sent. At first they are sent to minister to each other in the upper room. Then they are sent to minister to the thousands who will hear them preaching the truth of Jesus Christ in the native tongue of those people. This gift that we call in the church Glossolalia. That the apostles themselves were speaking their own language and yet it was heard by the people by the power of the Holy Spirit in their native tongue. This is something that we experience still in the church. Elder Porphyrias, the new saint Porphyrias, had this experience himself, witnessed by his disciples where he was able to speak in his own Greek language and the listeners were able to hear him in their language. Still a gift of the Holy Spirit.

But this is the day when the church itself is born. The fullness of the revelation of the Holy Trinity has been given to the people. They know Christ and through Christ they know the father and have heard his voice, this is my beloved son. And now as Christ promised, the Holy Spirit has come, the comforter, the spirit of truth, the one that will energize the people. And last night in [Vasperus 00:02:23], we heard this wonderful story of the Holy Spirit once again appearing to some of the prophets in the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit speaking to them as individual persons, unique persons. That is why we call them the prophets. But we heard this story last night of the Holy Spirit inspiring not only Moses, but also those he had chosen to be with him. And this large group of 70 people begin prophesying and speaking in the power of the Holy Spirit. That grace even spills outside of the designated leadership and people in the camp start prophesying as well.

Joshua, who is jealous in a good way, for Moses' leadership wants these people to be reviewed, because Moses is the prophet. Moses is who the Holy Spirit talks to. Moses has given the blessing to the 70 around him to speak in the power of the Holy Spirit as well. And how though it's spilling out in this spontaneous and superfluous seemingly manner that God loves, he never ever gives us, as I like to say, what is sufficient. He always gives us abundance. He always gives us more than we need.

And Moses replies to Joshua's righteous jealousy in saying oh, that all of the people of God would receive the Holy Spirit. And on this birthday of the church, that desire of Moses the prophet is fulfilled and the Holy Spirit in a way, never, ever able before is at the disposal, so to speak, of the people. Those who call upon the name of Christ can experience personally, individually the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. We celebrate that obviously and profoundly with

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our baptisms and Chrismations today. People coming to the church, being rescued out of the confusion of the world where they can't remember what it means to be a human being, where everything that is normal is actually abnormal and everything that is told that is going to fulfill you leaves you emptier than before. And when we Chrismated each of them we are asking for God to work a personal Pentecost in each of them, empowering each of them with the Holy Spirit in a way that they never had before, in a fullness that they'd never had before. That is our hope today.

I think it's important also to reflect on some inspiration we were given last week by our beloved and we reminded about how in Lent we were what? We were kneaded. Remember? K-N-E-A-D-E-D. We were kneaded like dough. We were worked over in Lent. Then in that metaphor from [Paska 00:05:51] until Pentecost, we have been baking. I was inspired last week when hearing those words that we have been kneaded into the dough that Christ wants us to be. And then we are baking in the heat, the light, the inspiration of Paska all the way until Pentecost.

Then he said, and at Pentecost we share, we share. At Pentecost, we see the Holy Spirit overflowing and creating the church. The assembly of the people. We see the church as the body of Christ coming together as members united together in one in the image of the Holy Trinity, persons in communion with persons in one unity. When we are inspired to think of ourselves of that loaf that was kneaded, that dough that was kneaded and the loaf that was made and the loaf that was baked. Today is the day to realize that we are all so called to share what we have become.

I went and just out of curiosity, I looked through scripture for different references to bread. It's amazing how you can take a memorable metaphor like we are a loaf that has been kneaded and baked and realize that profound reality that is behind it. In John 6:35 Christ says I am the bread. I am the bread. Are we not to be like Christ? Are we not striving to be like him? Therefore should we not actually be trying to be as well the bread? In Matthew 26:26 and Jesus took bread and said this bread is my body. I am bread and here it is offered to you, that it would be broken and consumed by you, that you would partake in it personally.

In John 4:34 he says, my food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work. We feed on the bread of Christ. We feed on his body in the Holy Eucharist. We feed on his body spiritually in being like him and keeping his commandments and following him. That is our food. In the Lord's prayer we say give us this day, or sometimes it is translated each day, but really it means today. In the present moment, not tomorrow maybe, not I should have done it in the past. Today Lord, today, give me my daily bread.

And when we look at that idea of God giving us the bread, that is himself. He says I am the bread. He offers himself to us. Take, this is my body. Then we pray to him as he taught us to pray to the father, give us today our bread. That bread there, that daily bread, is a very difficult phrase to translate into English. It has to do with not just food, sustenance, but also with being. Feed me and nourish me so that I can become the thing that I am meant to be. Feed me the bread that makes me the being that I am supposed to be.

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The Reverend Dr. Deacon Stephen Muse in his book *Being Bread*, we find that when we partake of the Eucharist, when we partake in the body of Christ, when we recognize him as the bread that has become and that we are to be emulating as well, that it is this mystical bread, this being bread, that we not only are to be the bread, but it is a bread that fulfills our own being, our own creation, our own created creature that we are. And that bread, specifically today we want to focus on is meant to be shared. It's meant to be shared.

I don't become like Christ by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit that I can go home and hide myself somewhere. I am hopefully becoming a tiny bit like Christ so that like that bread of life that he is, I can share with the others around me. We must entask the Orthodox Church be satisfied with coming into the Apostolic Church and being here, having the fullness of everything revealed to us. Having come from these places in our past where we had shadows of the truth. We had parts of the truth, but we didn't have the fullness that we are given here. We cannot arrive at the treasure house of the gift of the Holy Spirit and not share that with other people. We cannot find that treasure and hoard it for ourselves. It must be shared.

Bread has to be given to other people that they might live, the bread of Christ. And all around us in the world, everywhere we go, every day, every store, our job, the people that we play sports with, the people that we associate with all of the time, they are longing many of them to know what the fullness of Jesus Christ and his church are. There are so many people out there that even know Christ to some degree, who believe in him, who say their prayers at home, who diligently read the scripture and still they do not have access to the fullness of the faith, some of them because we have not done our job. We're not sharing the bread that we have been given.

All of my coworkers, all of my friends, even my friends all the way back to high school or earlier, all of the people that I run into regularly at the gas station, at the store, at the place that I like to shop, the gym that I go to, they have not heard about Christ. Or if they have not heard about Christ and the fullness of his body, the church, here in the Orthodox Church that's on me. I am the apostle that has been served to them.

We don't have to be fantastic evangelists. We don't have to be dramatic, we certainly don't want to repulse anybody with our evangelistic work. That's already been done in America. That's why America is rejecting Christianity. Father Thomas Hopkos said there are people who have rejected the faith and it's a credit to them. Think about that for a minute. We are going to stand in judgment before God and there are going to be some people there at that last judgment who rejected Jesus Christ and he will say you made the right decision. Enter into my heavenly kingdom. Because the presentation was so twisted, so in the true sense of the word perverted, that in their soul created to commune with God they knew that wasn't the real God that was being presented to them. They were presented with an angry God or they were presented with a God that had to be appeased. They were presented with a God that would not accept them as they are. They would not redeem them from the sin that they were in. They were presented with a God that was confused about who he was himself. They were presented with thousands of different Jesus Christs, all made in the image of the man or the woman that created that God.

We were created in the image of God and we struggle for the rest of our lives to not make him in our image, to want a Jesus that is as weak in all the areas that we are weak, that is prideful in

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all the areas that we are prideful. I want to be comfortable with my Jesus Christ and the most comfortable I'm never going to be is if he's just like me, has all the same personal preferences, has all the same strengths and weaknesses, makes important everything that I'm already good at, doesn't think is important the things that I'm not good at. That is God created in my image. And if I present that false God to someone else, it doesn't matter if I call him the Holy Trinity, if I call him Jesus Christ, it doesn't matter if I quote scripture. If I am presenting those people with a false God and they reject it, it is a credit to them. They are more sensitive in their soul than I am. But despite that dilemma, we have to go out there and try.

At the ascension, the great commission was given to the apostles, go out and make disciples of every nation on the face of the earth. This is one of the prerequisites for the second coming. God is not going to come again. Christ is not going to come in glory until the Orthodox fullness of his church and his scripture and him as the savior is preached to all of the world. People will say father, don't you think we're in the end times? And I'll say no, not really because Australia, Asia, South America, North America, we haven't even heard of the Orthodox God yet. We have not been given the true God. We have been given shadows of him.

So the burden is on us to fulfill that great commission given at the ascension, enabled to be accomplished at Pentecost by the power of the Holy Spirit. Go out from here even today, this week, and find someone to gently, appropriately, in a timely way, invite them to church. Share them the spiritual burdens that you have been struggling with, that you have found relief from and healing from here in his holy body. Don't be shy. All they can say is no. That's all. That's all. It's usually just our pride, just our fear, just our wanting to be cool, accepted by all of our peers that keeps us from sharing the love of God with other people. You don't have to be strange about it. You can be very natural.

My father one time was working with a young man who was having trouble in his marriage and he was a professional bodybuilder. My dad said well, I'll make you a deal. If you let me teach you how to exercise your soul, I'll let you teach me how to exercise my body. My dad started going to the gym for the first time in his life. He was probably 55. He would exercise with this guy and then they would go and study the scriptures together.

Everyone has the need on the inside to be loved unconditionally, to be accepted with the wounds that they have that they might be healed. We want to be that person in everybody's life that we come in contact with who's not surprised that they're wounded. We're not ashamed that they fallen into problems or have sins. We're like the physician's assistant at the hospital. When you come in and you're ill and you give them the symptoms, they're not shocked or disappointed at all, are they? You're sick. That's disgusting. They expect for you to tell them that they're ill. You're at the hospital. And that has to be our attitude as well.

We don't want anybody to be ashamed when they meet us and they find out we're a Christian. If they feel judged or they feel ashamed or they feel unaccepted, we are presenting them with a false God. So look in the inspiration of Pentecost, in the inspiration of seeing these wonderful people here baptized and Chrismated, about to receive communion for the first time ever. They are here because God wants them here and they are here because people in this church had the

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boldness to reach out to them, to love them as they were. This week in the power of the Holy Spirit make one effort, one little bold effort, to help another person learn who the real God is.

We have been given the great commission and everywhere out there are people longing to know the Christ whose image they were created in. It may be up to you to preach unto the nation of their heart, a little apostle being sent to them. In the name of the father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.