

My Beloved Ones,

This coming Sunday we shall celebrate another momentous feast; so momentous in fact, that, of the Great Feasts, it is considered second only to the feast of Pascha.

While many explain the concept of Pentecost as the birthday of the Church, this is only somewhat correct. In the Orthodox Christian understanding, the Church has always existed—but Pentecost does represent the moment when that which has been established in heaven since time began, was given to mankind.

Consider the astonishment of all those in Jerusalem, when these illiterate fishermen from Galilee began to preach in languages as foreign to them as Ethiopian. The Book of *Acts* tells us that, of course, those unwilling to accept this miracle derided the Apostles as drunkards. However, imagine just how startling the reality was: they were face-to-face with God's Holy Spirit.



In defense of their evangelizing the Apostle Peter offered to the skeptics a quote from *Joel*, “*In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.*” (*Joel 2:28*) This piece of scripture, apart from being a beautiful evocation of the coming Holy Spirit, is not simply limited to a historical event which took place nearly two thousand years ago. While not all are given the gift of prophecy at their Chrismation, I believe that when we are given the gift of the seal of the Holy Spirit, we are entrusted with the “dream” our Creator has for His Church and all people.

The Holy Spirit was promised by Christ to His disciples, as the Helper who would be with them after our Lord's Ascension. This Helper is what granted Peter the ability to preach so eloquently, that three thousand souls became Christians on the day of Pentecost; this Helper is what brought the Apostle Paul—formerly the greatest persecutor of the Church, to the land of our ancestors, and granted salvation to the Greeks; and it is this Helper that can grant us the courage to speak out in defense of our faith: to shelter the sick and suffering, and to show God's great mercy to all our neighbors.

Just as Christ's command to preach the Gospel to all nations did not end with the Apostolic missions, neither does the gift of the third person of the Holy Trinity merely end with the historical day of Pentecost. This gift that has been granted to us is a precious one. We did not meet it as “a mighty wind”, but, this Sunday, we should be grateful that our God has seen fit to ask us to become part of His Church on earth.

This Sunday, let us therefore, prepare to venture out from the Upper Room, and realize the dream; our hearts inflamed by the Holy Spirit.

+ALEXIOS

Metropolitan of Atlanta