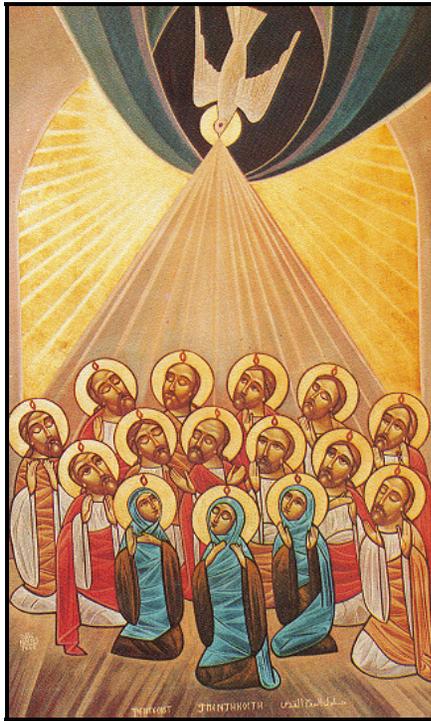


# Contemplations on The Feast of Pentecost



## *The Holy Spirit and His Work in Us*

**Saint George Coptic Orthodox Church**  
San Jose, CA  
[www.stgeorgechurch.org](http://www.stgeorgechurch.org)

### *Is the Holy Spirit Relevant?*

Many years ago, a man took a civil service exam in order to become a postman. One of the questions read, “How far is the sun from the earth?” The man answered, with good sense, “The sun is so far away that it will not affect my delivering mail on Main Street.”

Unfortunately, there are many people who feel the same way about the Holy Spirit – that He is so far away from their needs and interests that He doesn’t make any difference.

But they are wrong; just as wrong as the answer about the sun. For if the sun were any closer to the earth than it actually is, it would be so hot that no one could live on this planet, let alone deliver the mail. And if the sun were any further, the earth would be so cold, it would be uninhabitable.

The Holy Spirit, like the sun, is not unrelated to life. In fact, as we shall see, He is the very “breath” of our soul’s life.

### *The Feast of Pentecost*

The Feast of Pentecost is one of the Seven Major Feasts of the Lord, commemorating the descent of the Holy Spirit on the holy disciples and honored apostles in the third hour; ten days after our Lord’s ascension into heaven and fifty days after His resurrection. This day marks the birth of the Christian Church and the beginning of her work on earth.

Pentecost for the Jews commemorated the reception of the Ten Commandments. On this spring feast, they would present the first fruits of their harvest and offer thanks to God for the many blessings He poured out upon His people.

### *Who is the Holy Spirit?*

The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Holy Trinity, of the same essence and equal rank as the Father and the Son (1 John 5:7-8). The Holy Spirit as God is also revealed in many verses in the Holy Bible (Acts 5:3-6; 1 Corinthians 12:5; Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:13). He has all the attributes of God. He is Truth, present in all places and fills all things, and the Giver of life.

The Holy Spirit is given the name, *Paraclete*, in Greek. The Holy Spirit is the Comforter, the Advocate, and the One Who makes intercession for us with unutterable groanings (Romans 8:26). While on earth, our Lord Jesus Christ told His disciples that He would go away, but that He would send them the Holy Spirit to comfort, help, teach, and bring to their remembrance all that He had taught them.

The Holy Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father, just as the Son is eternally begotten. God is one, since there is one Father, Who is the source of the Trinity. The Church has not sought to explain the exact difference between “begotten” and “proceeding” other than that they distinguish between the person of the Son and the person of the Holy Spirit and their respective works (John 15:26).

The Church confesses her faith about the Holy Spirit’s divinity, when she proclaims in the Creed, “Yes, we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life, Who proceeds from the Father, Who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified...”

### *The Forms of the Holy Spirit*

In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit appeared in three forms: in the form of a

dove at the baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ, and as wind and fire on the Day of Pentecost. In contemplating on these forms, we can understand the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives and in the life of the Church today.

**Dove.** The dove has always been known as a guide for sailors. Whenever mariners wanted to know the direction or distance of land, they would release one or two doves. The bird would hang in the air for a moment and then, like an arrow, fly to the nearest land. The sailors would then point their ship in that direction. In the same way, the Holy Spirit has always guided the Church and her people in times of uncertainty. He is the Spirit of Truth Who teaches us and reveals to us God's will.

**Wind.** The Greek word for 'spirit' is '*pneuma*', which means 'wind' or 'breath'. When the apostles and the believers were gathered and united in prayer on the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit took the form of a mighty rushing wind and it filled the whole place (Acts 2:1).

What does wind do when it is strong? It uproots trees that were planted in the earth for years. When the Holy Spirit comes to a person like a strong wind, it uproots evils and passions that are like wild trees rooted in the person's heart. And in their place, it plants other trees of the virtues of Christ. God breathes His life into us through the Holy Spirit.

**Fire.** On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit also descended as tongues of fire and the apostles begin to speak in different languages. The Holy Spirit taught them what to say and inspired them. The disciples, who were hiding in fear after the

Lord's death, now spoke boldly and preached to the nations.

What does fire do? Fire illuminates, warms, and burns. In the same way, the Holy Spirit enlightens the mind, warms the heart, and burns the thorns of evils and passions. As fire, He fills us with vigor, zest, and life. He refines away sin and purifies from evil.

### ***The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Church***

The rapid growth of the Church was seen in a vision by the prophet Ezekiel. In his vision, He saw a small spring gushing from one side of the Temple. It ran quietly, turning into a small stream whose water reached up to a man's ankles. The water later rose to the man's knees, waist, and then so much and with such force that it was impossible for someone to walk in the river (Ezekiel 47).

The Church also started as a small stream on the Day of Pentecost, but grew by the grace of the Holy Spirit into a mighty, rushing river. The Holy Spirit continues working in the Church today, through the sacramental life of the Church. The grace of the Holy Spirit, for instance, transforms ordinary bread and wine into the Body and Blood of the Eucharist. He transforms, sanctifies, and enlivens the members of the Body of Christ.

### ***Do you have the Fiery Spirit?***

The Feast of Pentecost is an ever-present part of our lives. It was not just a historical event in the life of the Church. The sending of the Holy Spirit was the fulfillment of our Lord's mission on earth. His mission was to save us, wash us, and purify us by His blood, that we may become fit to receive the

Spirit. His purpose is accomplished, for He fills the Church with His presence and abides in us always.

If Christmas is God *with* us, and Good Friday is God *for* us, then Pentecost is God *in* us. God went beyond sending His Son to grant us eternal life, for He made us temples of the Holy Spirit. Baptism is our death, burial, and resurrection in Christ. The sacrament of holy chrism is our personal Pentecost. We have already received the gift of the Holy Spirit. We only need to let Him work within us.

The Holy Spirit gives us newness in life. On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit transformed poor, uneducated fishermen into men who had new power, enthusiasm, knowledge of God, and a new life. He can do the same for us.

As body, soul, and spirit, man needs the Holy Spirit to make him complete. Otherwise, another spirit (evil) will be in him and make him less man. God breathes life into us through the Holy Spirit. He is not "out there", but dwells in each of us.

May the Holy Spirit work within us, giving us the fire to preach to and serve others, guiding us always to live according to God's will.

#### *References:*

1. Coniaris, Anthony M. Orthodoxy: A Creed for Today. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Light & Life Publishing Company, 1972 (196 – 217).
2. Kantiotes, Augoustinos N. Sparks from the Apostles: Orthodox Homilies on the Sunday Apostolic Readings. Belmont, Massachusetts: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 1992.
3. -- Drops from the Living Water: Orthodox Homilies on the Sunday Gospel Readings. Belmont, Massachusetts: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 1992.