

PENTECOST 2023

Who is the Holy Spirit? How we answer that question affects how we respond to Him. If you meet a famous person on the street, you are likely to respond differently than if you meet a stranger. Likewise, if you understand that the Holy Spirit is God, equal to the Father and the Son, then you will likely respond to Him differently than if you think of Him as no more than the impersonal force in Star Wars, something to be controlled and used for your own purposes. But the Holy Spirit is God and worthy of our adoration and obedience, the same as to the Father and to the Son. He is not our pet, as some seem to think. We are called to yield to Him, to listen to Him, not to grieve or quench Him. But then why would we not want to yield to Him? He comes bearing great and wonderful things!

Many years ago, I went through the Scriptures and noted every action that I could find related to the Holy Spirit. I discovered that He:

Involved in creation, brings renewal, is life-giving, draws us to Christ, gives ability to prophesy, enables us to bear others burdens, gives wise discernment and counsel, grants victory over enemies, stirs up righteous anger, exhorts, instructs, leads us into truth, gives understanding and revelation concerning the mysteries of God, is everywhere/can't be escaped, leads us on a level path, causes us to be in awe of God, makes even a wilderness fruitful, gathers and unifies people together, bears witness within us that we are Abba Father's children, anoints us to bind up the broken, proclaim liberty to the bound, proclaim God's favor, bring comfort to those who mourn, gives praise to the heavy, makes us like solid oak trees that glorify God, makes us priests and ministers, bestows riches and honor, gives strength for leadership, softens hearts with contrition, causes us to walk in God's statutes and be people set apart unto Him, convicts us of sin, speaks for us when we are called to give an account, makes us able to profess Christ as Lord, gives victory over demons, is like rivers of living water, His coming means the coming of the Father and Son as well, bears witness of union of Father and Son and of Son with us, sent by Father to bear witness to Christ as God in the flesh, takes what is Christ's and gives it to us, makes us holy, pours God's love into our hearts, intercedes for us, enables us to work signs and wonders, is a pledge of the Kingdom to come, is called the Lord who sets us free and transforms us, enables us to be fruitful in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, through Him we have access to the Father, strengthens our inner man, brings to us the grace of God.

Any questions as to why we should yield to Him? Besides the fact that He is God, which is the most important reason for our adoration of Him, He is also a treasury of good gifts.

Antiochian Orthodox Patriarch Ignatius IV once gave a talk to the World Council of Churches. I love what he captures. We should all remember this in everything that we do. He said:

"Without the Holy Spirit, God is far away, Christ stays in the past, the Gospel is a dead letter, the Church is simply an organization, authority is a matter of domination, mission a matter of propaganda, the Liturgy is no more than a sentimental summons to the past, Christian living, a slave morality. But in the Holy Spirit: the whole of creation is resurrected and groans with the birth pangs of the Kingdom, the Risen Christ is made present, the Gospel is the power of God, the Church manifests the divine life of the Trinity, authority is a liberating service, mission is a Pentecost, the Liturgy is both participation and anticipation of the life of God, and human action is deified."

May you and yours be blessed with all the treasures of the Holy Spirit, whom we worship with the Father and the Son, one God, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen!

In Christ,
Bp. Joshua