

HOMILY

DATE:	May 19, 2024
SEASON:	Pentecost Sunday
READINGS:	Psalm 104:24-34; Acts 2:1-11; 1 Cor. 12:1-13; Jn. 7:37-39
THEME:	The Works of the Holy Spirit

Introduction:

The last time that I preached on Pentecost somewhere other than my home parish was in Burundi, Africa in 2009. And while I was in the middle of preaching about the fire of Pentecost, suddenly I heard and saw a commotion going on in the back of their building, and - I'm not joking - their building had literally caught on fire! Talk about the Lord confirming your preaching with signs and wonders! And today the Gospel reading compares the Holy Spirit to a mighty river of water, so you better watch out, - as I'm preaching today your building might begin flooding!

Seriously, the main thing that I want to remind us about today is that Pentecost is the living experience of Christ and all that He has accomplished for us. Without Pentecost, without the Holy Spirit, everything that the Son of God accomplished in the flesh – His conception in Mary, His suffering, His crucifixion, His burial, His resurrection, His ascension – all of it remains, at best, past events in history. Apart from the Holy Spirit, all that Christ accomplished is just a nice story that we can sit around and talk about. But the Lord's purpose wasn't just to give us something nice to talk about; it was to give us something dynamic to live, and that is what the Holy Spirit makes possible on Pentecost and on every day since then. John 16:15 says that the Holy Spirit takes what is Christ's and shares it with us; He brings it to bear upon our hearts and makes it a present, living reality within us. Let's pray and then we'll look at that a little more closely. (Prayer)

Body:

The story is told of a young boy in India whose mother was sick, so she told him that he was going to need to take a bucket and go down to the well and fetch some water, something that he had never done before. She explained to him how to tie the bucket to the rope and how to lower it down into the well and how to pull it back up and carry it back to the house. So, he did everything that she said and then carried the bucket home. However, when he arrived back at the house, there was nothing in the bucket.

Needless to say, his mother wasn't very happy with him and scolded him, and with tears in his eyes he said, "But mama, I'd did everything just like you told me to." So, his mother took the bucket and looked it over and discovered that the bottom had rotted out and there was a big hole in it.

Brothers and sisters, sometimes our spiritual lives feel that way, don't they? We think, like the little boy, that we are doing everything that we have been told, but instead of experiencing the Holy Spirit and His gifts like a bucket overflowing with living water we keep coming up empty. I would suggest to you that the best way to *close* the hole in the bucket is to *open* our mouths. I would suggest to you this morning that all of the great gifts that the Holy Spirit has given are ignited in our hearts when we speak of them with our mouths. St. Paul said that if we confess with our mouths that Jesus is Lord and believe in our hearts that God raised Him from the dead, we will be saved. Heart belief gives us something to confess, and confessing it in turn ignites and strengthens what we believe in our hearts. We are called to be witnesses of the living presence of the Lord in our lives, and when we speak about it with our mouths it solidifies it and energizes it in our hearts.

When Jesus told the disciples to wait for power from on high, He said that the primary thing the Spirit would empower them to be was witnesses. Before Pentecost the disciples were hiding in fear. After receiving the Holy Spirit, they were in the streets boldly proclaiming the risen Christ and bearing witness to what the Holy Spirit had brought to bear on their hearts. And we are called to do the same. As we talk about these things with each other in the church and with those who aren't in the church, it activates them and seals them even more in our own hearts; it keeps the bucket of our life from developing a hole, and it allows us to overflow with the living water of the Spirit.

CONCLUSION:

And in that regard, I want to encourage and challenge you: this is a great time to be the Evangelical Orthodox Church. Do not be scandalized by our smallness or by whatever limitations we may have. Be lovingly bold in the Holy Spirit. Proclaim the good news of Christ, and call people into this beautiful expression of His Body. You have a tremendous treasure here, even if the earthen vessels that hold it are worn and cracked. That's true of all of us, but those cracks are how the light gets in. Of course, we must strive to give ourselves wholly to the Lord, but don't be scandalized by the cracks that occasionally show up. God is bigger than the imperfections and will use even those for His good and for His glory.

The Holy Spirit is still able to confirm the proclamation of Christ with signs and wonders and to convince people of their need for Him. Be courageous. Get the word out through social media, through word of mouth, or through whatever avenues are available to you. There are people out there whom God is preparing for the EOC, either to join you here or to be the seeds of new church plants in other places. It is time for a renewal of the EOC vision, time for a renewal of being both Evangelical and Orthodox, holding together in balance all the treasures that the Holy Spirit has given to the Church through the ages. We have an unfathomable inheritance in Christ and in the Blessed Trinity, and we have a precious jewel in this EOC expression of His Kingdom that He has been pleased to raise up.

May the Holy Spirit renew in us the living and dynamic experience of Christ and of all that Christ has gained for us, and may He empower us to bear witness to the Lord and to His incredible goodness and glory, and as we do may His mighty river of living water flow ever more abundantly from our lives!