

# Family Gospel Lesson

John 7:37—52, 8:12

Today we celebrate the Feast of Pentecost, which happened and is always celebrated 50 days after the Resurrection of our Lord. At Pentecost, the disciples received the Holy Spirit as tongues of fire, fulfilling the promise that Christ had given them while He was still with them. This spirit was the Comforter who would lead them into the fullness of the Truth concerning God and would be for them their final preparatory gift from God for their ministry. As Orthodox Christians we each receive the seal of the Holy Spirit when we are chrismated into the Faith. This is our personal Pentecost. This feast reminds us of our apostolic calling as baptized and chrismated members of the Church—to spread the Gospel in word and deed wherever we happen to find ourselves in the world.

Because the main passage from the New Testament for this feast is from the Acts of the Apostles and is read as the Epistle during the Divine Liturgy, the Gospel reading quoted above, spoken during Jesus' public ministry while the Jews were celebrating the feast of the Tabernacles, serves as a commentary on the Epistle. After summoning those who would follow Him and promising them the coming of the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ's divinity is in question as several voices debate the issue. It is probably safe to assume that the majorities in the crowd that day were seeking the Messiah and a prophet to lead them out of Roman oppression. However, Jesus Christ's role was not one of political freedom fighter. He is God incarnate and brings freedom to liberate humanity from sin, the devil, and death. We are called to witness our faith in Christ as Lord in the midst of a world that may strongly disagree and persecute us for our convictions. Yet those who choose to know the Light will be brought to Him through our living the light of the Gospel and will find in our heartfelt words the living water of the Spirit.



## For Consideration

- What is happening in this Gospel lesson?
- Why is there division among those present concerning Jesus Christ? Why did the chief priests and Pharisees want Him apprehended?
- What does this Gospel passage mean for our lives?

# TO DO TOGETHER

## Pentecost Mural

Create a mural illustrating the scene from the Acts of the Apostles 1:1—11. Imagine the scene and draw the vivid images—the strong wind and the tongues of fire that ignited the apostles in undertaking the evangelization of the world.

## Fishers of Men

Look at the apolytikion of Pentecost below and discuss how you can be “fishers of men” working as contemporary apostles: *Blessed are You, O Christ our God, who made fishermen all-wise, sending down upon them the Holy Spirit, and through them drawing all the world into Your net. O Loving One, glory to You.*

## Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Gather as a family, especially during the eight days that we celebrate this feast, and offer the following prayer to the Holy Spirit: *O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, Who art present everywhere and fills all things; Treasury of blessings and Giver of life; come and abide in us and cleanse us from every stain, and save our souls, O Gracious One.*

## Closing Prayer

*When the Most High came down and confused the tongues of men, He divided the Nations. When He dispersed the Tongues of Fire, He called all to unity, and with one voice we glorify the Most Holy Spirit.*

—Kontakion of Pentecost

## Final Thought

When Orthodox Christians confess, “I believe in one—APOSTOLIC church,” apostolic does not refer only to apostolic succession. More importantly, it implies having an apostolic fire and zeal to preach the gospel, ‘to every creature’ (MK 16:15), because it nurtures its members so that they may become ‘witness in Jerusalem and in Judea and Samaria, to the end of the earth’ (Acts 1:8).

—Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana, Durrës, and all Albania



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