

The Jordan

Ascension/Pentecost 2025

What is this Pentecost? The time when the sickle was to be put to the harvest, and the ingathering was made. See now the reality, when the time had come to put in the sickle of the word: for here, as the sickle, keen-edged, came the Spirit down. For hear the words of Christ: Lift up your eyes, He said, and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest.

**St. John Chrysostom
Homily 4, On the Acts of the Apostles**

I guess that it may be natural for a Priest of the Orthodox Church to study many of the works of St. John Chrysostom, to get motivated (or excited) by these, and to desire to share these with those around him. Recently, I have become enthusiastic about some writings of the *golden-mouthed*, as we have come to name St. John the Archbishop of Constantinople (397-407). His preaching has been noted as so *eloquent*, that we have deemed his surname as **Chrysostom**, meaning *golden-mouthed*.

His ***Homily for the Feast of Pentecost*** is so profound that I am seriously considering using it in place of *My Own Sermon for the Sunday of Pentecost*. We, Traditionally, recite his ***Paschal Sermon*** at the conclusion of *Resurrection Matins at Pascha*! The above listed passage doesn't come from that offering, but it does give us an introduction to some of my thoughts.

What is this harvest, mentioned in relation to this **Feast of Pentecost**? Well, simply, it is the *People of God gathered together to be the Church*. The Holy Spirit is working around us...calling many peoples into Christianity, into the Orthodox Church. And, yes, this is happening, too, with *Our Beloved St. John the Baptist Church*.

Today, there is a great movement of people, around us, *who are in search for Faith...for Truth*. The answers provided by the World aren't working for them. So, many people have gone on the search for understanding and for *substantial answers to many important questions*: Who is God? Who am I? Why am I here? How should I live my life? And many more important questions! These aren't just simple questions, and the answers, when found, have consequences for these individuals on their search!

The Churches must be open and welcoming to visitors...and more than just having the Doors unlocked. Interestingly enough, it is the *people in the pews who are the first seen and the first to interact with newcomers to our Churches*. Visitors witness our people praying and worshiping; they see us at **our devotional practices**: *bowing to and kissing icons, lighting candles, making responses to blessings and prayers and singing many familiar liturgical hymns*. It is someone who says *Hello*. It is a *Helpful Parishioner* who points-out or gives the Visitor a *Worship Bulletin* and a *Divine Liturgy Booklet*.

Although the *Priest and Church Servitors* may see a guest, we only may give a *smile or nod* to a Visitor...we may be *among the last Parishioners to say Welcome*. And as much as we put some effort into **Evangelization**, *it is always the efforts of the People in the Pews who do this important work of the Church!*

In the story of **Pentecost** in Acts 2:1-47, we learn ***that day about three thousand souls were added***

(Acts 2:41). Of course, everyone heard **St. Peter's Sermon**, but they responded to *what they witnessed in the Believers*. The people... **continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house....** (Acts 2:46). A vital Church continued to grow, seeing a continued witness from the People of God... **And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved** (Acts 2:47).

This is happening among the Orthodox Churches, all over! *And, this is also beginning to happen at St. John's—Spring Valley*. We have individuals who have come to us and trying to grow in the Orthodox Faith. Ok, this isn't the Three Thousand of the *Apostolic Pentecost*, but it starts with someone asking: **How do I become a Catechumen?**

Another movement is also present; Inquirers *Witnessing the Lives of Orthodox Christians*. Many Inquirers start by seeing us *Praying a Blessing over our Lunchtime Meal (at work or with the family out and about)* or *religiously* traveling on a sleepy Sunday Morning to Church. Maybe, a guest to our homes seeing a Family Icon Corner in our Living Room asks about Our Faith.

Our Priests and Deacons don't stand on Street Corners challenging people: **Are You Saved?** Yet, I've had many people approach me, seeing my Cassock and Cross...**Are You a Priest?** And, many an important conversation begins. Not every Orthodox Witness results *in an addition* to St. John's; but I know of some of our contacts have resulted in progress elsewhere.

There's also **Another New Pentecost** happening in the Churches: *When Longtime Orthodox Christians return to their Church*. The Holy Spirit *moves many hearts* among the People of God who *distanced themselves from their Church*...those who have the Gift of the Holy Spirit and are Called to Renew their Faith and return to their Orthodox Homes. **This is a Unique Grace! Isn't it?**

FATHERS' DAY COMMEMORATIONS

With this mailing, we've included envelopes for listing your **Fathers' Day Commemorations and Remembrances, Living and Deceased**. Please return these quickly, with or without a Donation, so that these we can include these at the Liturgy on Fathers' Day and the following Sunday.

ARCHBISHOP'S ANNUAL VISITATION

Tuesday, 24 June 2025, the **Archbishop's Annual Visitation** will be held on **Our Parish Feastday, the Nativity of St. John the Baptist**. *The Archbishop will be Received at 9:00 AM. The Hierarchical Liturgy will start at 9:30 AM.* The **Post-Liturgy Reception** will be at the **Aqua Terra Grille, Pearl River, NY**. This date is during the **Apostles' Fast**, so *Two Fish/Seafood Entrees will be available*, as well as a *Vegetarian Paella*. There is **No Charge** for this Luncheon; but **Donations will be gratefully received**. Please **RSVP for this Luncheon** with Father John or Subdeacon John. **Make every effort to participate at this Special Feastday Event!**

YOU ARE VERY WELCOME HERE: Our Doors are OPEN FOR YOU. This is YOUR PARISH CHURCH! Try to make us a part of **YOUR LIFE**. If you cannot come to **Pray and Worship with us**, then **Pray For Us! We are Praying For You!**

WE ARE HERE EVERY WEEK!

As the Lord, Himself, says: **COME AND SEE!**

+Blessings, Love, and Peace!

Father John Holoduek

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