

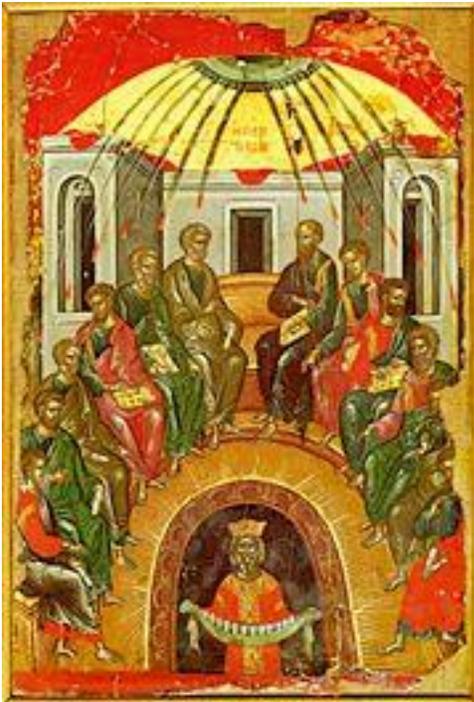


Catechist Connection

Glory to Jesus Christ!

"Heavenly King, Advocate, Spirit of Truth, Who are everywhere present and fill all things, Treasury of Blessings, Bestower of Life, come and dwell within us; cleanse us of all that defiles us, and, O Good One, save our souls."

Dear Catechists:



The Feast of the Descent of the Holy Spirit is upon us. The feast of Pentecost is celebrated 50 days after the Resurrection of Jesus. The Feast comes from the Hebrew Scriptures. It was celebrated to commemorate the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai to Moses. The Feast recalls God making a solemn Covenant with the Chosen People. The Descent of the Holy Spirit in the Christian Scriptures signals the making of the New Covenant by God with the Church.

In the Book of Genesis, the whole world spoke one language. The people became proud and wanted to build a tower to make a name for themselves. God saw that their motives were pride and arrogance, so God confused their tongues and people began to speak many different languages. This is why the tower was called Babel.

In the Acts of the Apostles, the Holy Spirit comes down upon the Apostles while they were assembled in one place. A rush of wind came into the house and the Holy Spirit fills each of the apostles, giving them the power to speak in all languages and to be understood by all. (Acts 2: 1-11)

It is a tradition not to kneel from Resurrection Sunday until Pentecost to celebrate Christ's triumph over death. On Pentecost Sunday, the faithful kneel for the kneeling prayers. These prayers are usually prayed during Vespers on Pentecost Sunday. During the week following Pentecost, the prayer "Heavenly King" is recited while kneeling at the beginning of every Divine Liturgy.

Traditionally, in the Byzantine Rite, Green is the colour associated with Pentecost. The emphasis is always on the life-giving, life-renewing aspect of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit comes to bring new life to all. Churches and homes are often decorated with green boughs and branches to herald the life-giving Spirit.

The Icon of Pentecost shows the apostles in a state of complete unity. The theme of the image is the unity, which is impossible without the Holy Spirit. The apostles are shown in inverse perspective; those who are farther away are slightly bigger than those in the foreground. No figure is identical with any other. Through the variety of gestures and the range of colours, we are reminded that unity does not erase diversity.

At the top of the icon is a partially revealed circle, symbolic of heaven, from which extend rays or flames. In this particular icon, a star in the centre of the circle has an image of a dove in the middle, symbolic of the Holy Spirit.

The twelve apostles we see on the icon form the Apostolic College. The Apostolic College is the foundation of the Church, the twelve columns on which the building rests, built over the cornerstone, which is Christ. The icon of Pentecost is not the illustration of a historical event, but the symbol of the Church.

The twelve apostles sit in a semi-circle facing each other. Mary, the Mother of God, sits in the top space, in her role as Mother of the Church. In some icons, Mary is not present because the fullness of the Holy Spirit descended upon her at the Annunciation.

Each of the Apostles and Mary have a ray of fire in their nimbus or halo. These represent the baptism of each person by the Holy Spirit.

The icon makes no effort to suggest the sound of a roaring wind but rather the deep inner silence of the apostles as they waited fulfillment of Christ's promise. Perhaps more than any other, this is an icon showing the condition of prayer—attentive waiting on the Lord.

In some icons, there appears a mysterious figure in an arched black space beneath the Apostles. This is Cosmos, symbol of all people in darkness, awaiting illumination. Though crowned with power and wealth, he is imprisoned in a cave of night awaiting conversion. In the white cloth in his hands, he holds twelve identical scrolls, representing the life-giving teaching of the Apostles.

WHAT CAN I DO IN MY HOME OR CLASSROOM?

Learn the Tropar and Kondak of the Feast.

Begin the class with "Heavenly King"

Decorate your home or classroom with greenery.

Make doves, tongues of fire, or leaves and write the gifts of the Holy Spirit on them and give them to each other.

Wear Green on Pentecost Sunday.

Display the Icon in your icon corner.

Read the story of Pentecost from the Acts of the Apostles.

Learn the Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit

GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Wisdom
Understanding
Counsel
Courage
Knowledge
Piety
Fear of the Lord

FRUITS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Love
Joy
Peace
Patience
Kindness
Goodness
Faithfulness
Gentleness
Self-Control

May you be continued to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Blessings,

Sr. Bonnie