

WHAT SHOULD I BE DOING TO GET READY

FOR PENTECOST?

BY FR. ANTHONY MESSEH

For those of you who are keeping track at home, we're nearing the end of the Holy 50 season. While that may not mean much to you, it certainly means a lot to me. Why? Because that means that we are in one of my favorite seasons of the entire Church year - the period after the Ascension of the Lord Jesus into heaven (40th day after Resurrection), but before the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (50th day after Resurrection).

One of the best things about the Orthodox church is the balance that it gives to our spiritual lives through the various seasons of the year.

There's a season for fasting and a season for feasting! A season for focusing on repentance and a season for focusing on rejoicing! A season for solitude and a season for mission!

Every season has a clear purpose and a specific focus and when you put them altogether, it keeps us balanced.

So what is the purpose of the 10 days between the Ascension and Pentecost?

What should we be focusing on now? Let's look at the very first time this question was asked. The following passage takes place exactly 40 days after Jesus rose from the dead:

"And being assembled together with them, He [Jesus] commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

ACTS 1:4-5

So after spending 40 days with His disciples after His Resurrection, Jesus tells them that it's time for Him to go. He says "I'm leaving, but you guys should WAIT here because something good is about to happen."

So what did they do? They waited!

“Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up...”

ACTS 1:9-10A

Jesus told them to WAIT and so they did. They stood there... looking up...

“steadfastly toward heaven”... just like He told them to do. But apparently, that isn't exactly what He meant. “...behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.”

ACTS 1:10B

Whoops! Looks like they waited a bit too long! Now an angel is telling them to STOP “gazing up into heaven.” Stop staring up at the sky and get moving. And apparently they understood what the angel meant.

“Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey. And when they had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying... **These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication...**”

ACTS 1:12-14

Let's review. Jesus tells them “I am leaving, you guys WAIT here, something good is about to happen.” They stand there and do nothing - “gazing up into heaven” - thinking they are being obedient to His command to “wait.”

Then an angel comes and says “stop doing nothing. You guys need to get ready for the promise that Jesus spoke about.” And then immediately they go to a room together, close the door and start praying fervently. And most likely, they spent the majority of those next 10 days there because we read in Acts 2:1

“When the Day of Pentecost had fully come [that's 10 days later], they were all with one accord in one place.”

ACTS 2:1

So back to my original question: **what should we be doing/focusing on during these 10 days? WAITING/PRAYING!**

Jesus commanded us to “WAIT for the promise of the Father.” But as I’ve said before, “waiting” doesn’t mean doing nothing. In fact, I believe that waiting is a very active, time-consuming, laborious task. If you aren’t sweating a little, you probably aren’t doing a very good job of waiting.

Think of someone who “waits” for a living. Maybe we can call that person “wait-ER.” What does a waiter do? Does he just sit back and make you call him over when you want to order? Or does he take initiative and come by and ask “are you ready to order yet sir?”

Does he sit in the kitchen until you go in there and say “I’d like a refill on my drink please” or is he constantly surveying his tables and trying to see who needs what?

Waiting isn’t passive; it is active. VERY ACTIVE!

That’s the lesson that the apostles learned here and that’s the lesson that we need to apply as we WAIT for the Day of Pentecost on Sunday. And that means that we need to do more than just sit back and wait for the Holy Spirit to bite us on the nose. We need to be active in our waiting... active in our praying. We need to sweat a little this week. We need to get ourselves ready because something great is supposed to happen on Sunday.

What is it? What are we waiting for? What is this Promise of the Father? IT’S THE HOLY SPIRIT! Yes, we may have received the Spirit before, but “receiving the Spirit” and being “filled with the Spirit” are not the same thing.

Pentecost is approaching this weekend and we need to get ready. Pentecost is the fulfillment of all Christ’s work on earth. It is the day that “all truth” was revealed to mankind. It is sometimes known as the “second Incarnation” in that the Church became the Body of Christ on Pentecost.

Bottom line: it’s a powerful day. But you can’t just show up and have Pentecost. To have the power of Pentecost, you must WAIT for it over these next few days.

Application

Pray and consider

What one thing can/will you do this week to “wait” for the Promise of the Father on Pentecost?

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