



ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA
DIOCESE OF NEW YORK & NEW JERSEY

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**ARCHPASTORAL LETTER
FOR THE FEAST OF HOLY PENTECOST, 2022**

Protocol No. 01-003/2022
Sunday, June 12, 2022

Dearly Beloved Members of our Diocesan Family:
Christ is in our midst! – He is and ever shall be!

On this great feast of Pentecost, we Orthodox Christians celebrate both the coming down of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles and the Birth of our Holy Church. Today, once again, we are challenged to be as faithful to the Holy Spirit and to Christ's Holy Church as the apostles and disciples were nearly 2,000 years ago.

What does this mean? It means being faithful to our Church's Holy Tradition. For many, Tradition means customs or practices of years ago – things that are almost relics of ages past. But on the contrary, Tradition is a living on of the Truth that is Jesus Christ, believed and lived by His first followers and generations after them. In the words of the eminent theologian Vladimir Lossky, Tradition is "the life of the Holy Spirit in the Church." This means our faith is unchanging in teaching, yet dynamic in its application; the same in essence, but growing in its expression.

Why should we be faithful to Tradition? Because we know from Saint Paul that the "*pillar and ground of truth*" is not solely the Scripture itself, but the Church (1 Timothy 3:15). Upon the rock of the apostles' faith, Jesus built His Church ... and we believe that the Holy Orthodox Church is that one Church to this very day.

How can we say that? Because the Orthodox Church alone has kept the deposit of faith given by Our Lord, "*delivered once for all to the Saints*" (Jude 3), passed on from one generation to the next without addition, alteration, or subtraction. Ours remains the faith of the early Church unchanged; ours remains the Tradition of undivided Christianity unaltered.

Such bold statements stand apart from what is viewed as politically correct in an era of religious indifference, in a world where each person is encouraged to "live your truth." Nevertheless, like the first Christians, "*we must obey God rather than men*" (Acts 5:29).

The Scripture clearly tells us that the faithful followers of Our Lord in the early Church, guided by the Holy Spirit from the day of Pentecost, “*continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine ...*” (Acts 2:42). That remains our challenge in the 21st century – to be faithful to the True Church that Jesus Christ established, to be true to the Tradition handed down to us by the holy apostles.

As we celebrate the Birthday of the Holy Orthodox Church, let us recommit ourselves to the One True God in Three Persons – the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit – and the one true Church, born on Pentecost Sunday so long ago. In the year ahead, let us pledge to study our faith ever more seriously, love our faith ever more deeply, live our faith ever more openly, and share our faith ever more boldly. As we do this, we will indeed be true to the great gift God has given us.

On this feast, let us proclaim with all our minds, all our hearts, all our souls, and all our voices: “We have seen the true light, we have received the heavenly Spirit, we have found the true faith, worshiping the undivided Trinity, Who has saved us.” To the God Who loves us more than we love ourselves, be all glory, honor, and worship unto the ages of ages! Amen.

With my humble prayers, my archpastoral blessing, and my sincere love,

+ Archbishop Michael

Archbishop of New York and the Diocese of New York and New Jersey