

**ARCHPASTORAL LETTER OF HIS BEATITUDE
METROPOLITAN JONAH
GREAT FEAST OF PENTECOST**

**To the Very Reverend and Reverend Clergy, Monastics, and Faithful of the
Orthodox Church in America:**



Address

P.O. Box 675
Syosset, NY 11791

Office: 516-922-0550

Fax: 516-922-0954

Email: metropolitan@oca.org

Dearly Beloved in the Lord:

The Great Feast of Pentecost is a celebration of humility. It is the humble acceptance of a gift - the gift of life - which we receive by bending our knees before the One Who is Life Itself.

On the Great and Holy Day of Pentecost, we truly marvel at God's divine reversal of Babel. In days of old, He scattered the people of the earth by confusing their tongues, since they wanted only to make a name for themselves. But on the day of Pentecost, He sends the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles, so that the whole world would hear and understand the Good News of the risen Christ. Having emptied Himself by taking on our human nature, Christ reunites the world with Himself -- in His Name -- through the proclamation of the Gospel in all the languages of the world. Is this not why, with inexpressible joy, we shouted, "Christ is Risen!" in many languages during the 40 days of Pascha? Is this not why with boldness we announced in many tongues the Prologue of the Gospel according to Saint John—"In the beginning was the Word...?"

We are blessed in the Orthodox Church in America to continue the inspired practice of reaching those to whom we are sent in their own languages -- from Alutiq in Alaska to new translations into Otomi, a regional, ancient (but living) language of native Mexicans; to English, Spanish, French, Romanian, and Russian. We seek in our services and our educational materials, our prayers and our preaching, to make disciples by teaching the unchangeable words of the Unchangeable Word by means of intelligible words.

As much a feast of tongues, Holy Pentecost is a feast of humility. It is a return to what the late Father Alexander Schmemmann called "the routine drudgery of everyday existence." Having enjoyed the presence of the Bridegroom for 40 days, having awaited the promised Comforter with those gathered in the Upper Room for ten days, we now bend the knees of our hearts, asking God to strengthen us for "usual" life -- and recalling that the strength to do so comes from Him.

But we still always have a choice. For us, the great Hymn to the Holy Spirit -- "O Heavenly King...come and abide in us..." -- can become rote petition, when it should be a daily call to live as the Apostles lived after they received the fiery tongues. Let it always bring to mind that the Holy Spirit is ever present with us, every active and filling us with His Grace, and bringing us to awareness of God.

The life experienced by the apostles is offered to us as well. Will we stick with "rote religion," or accept the powerful life God gives us through His Most Holy Spirit? Will we accept the Holy Spirit into our lives mindlessly, or will we boldly reclaim and delight in the life the Spirit rightfully and generously gives us, the life

in which the Name of the Lord is proclaimed and souls are converted to New Life?

Pope Shenouda, the recently-departed head of the Coptic Orthodox Church, once urged Christians not to seek the "powerful" gifts of the Spirit -- tongues, healings, etc. "These" he said, "can lead one to pride. Rather, seek the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, and self-control. These," he added, "lead to holiness." Against these, says Saint Paul by contrast to the works of the flesh, there is no law.

And so, having seen the True Light, having received the Heavenly Spirit, having found the true faith, and emboldened with humility, may God grant us the ability to 'transform the smallest, seemingly most insignificant detail of the routine drudgery of every day life in this fallen world into paradise by means of His great gift of grace. And may He continue to send us into the world to share His saving Gospel with all who would receive it in anticipation of the life of the world to come, yet to be fully revealed, but already fully present in the life of the Church.

With love in our Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, featuring a cross symbol above the letter 'J' and the name 'Jonah' written in a cursive style.

†JONAH
Archbishop of Washington
Metropolitan of All America and Canada