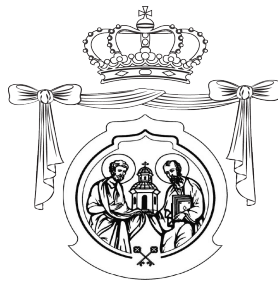


His Eminence
The Most Reverend
Metropolitan JOSEPH

The Right Reverend
Bishop THOMAS



Archbishop of New York and
Metropolitan of
All North America

Diocese of Oakland, Charleston,
and the Mid-Atlantic

ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA

Feast of Holy Pentecost - 2022

Beloved brother Hierarchs, Reverend Clergy, God-fearing Monastics, and all my Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ our True God:

*Blessed art Thou, O Christ our God, Who hast revealed the fishermen as most wise,
having sent upon them the Holy Spirit, and through them Thou hast fished the universe,
O Lover of mankind, glory to Thee.*

Having celebrated the Holy Ascension of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ to his throne in heaven, we turn our attention to the coming of the promised Holy Spirit – the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth. It was through the inspiration and power of the Third Person of the Holy Trinity that the disciples who were once covering in the locked upper room became the fearless ambassadors of the risen and ascended Christ across the known world.

St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite reminds us that the Holy Spirit brought about a change of mind, a change of heart, and a change of tongue in the apostles. He writes that this *change of mind* is seen in that “their previous ideas concerning the things of this world were altered so that they began to understand clearly the lowliness and vanity of present good things, and on the other hand to understand the greatness and eternalness of the future good things.” Their *change of heart* can be seen through their transformation from “frightened hares” to “fearless lions,” writes St. Nikodemos. “Then they went outside like fearless lions and preached the crucified Jesus before all the multitudes of people with open faces, with brave chests, and with courage and boldness without flinching before either threats, or lashings, or torments and tortures, or death itself.” Finally, we see that the Holy Spirit brought about a *change of tongue* in the apostles who once spoke of “earthly and base things” such as position and honor, now declare the wonderful mysteries of God. “These very same Apostles, I say, after the coming of the Holy Spirit, did not speak about anything else but the wonderful things of God, about lofty and great things, the kingdom of the heavens, the theology of the Holy Trinity, the incomprehensible mystery of the Incarnate Economy, that Christ is true God. They spoke with sublime rhetoric, surpassing frankness, and in various tongues: “We do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God” (Acts 2:11).” (*Meditation on Pentecost*)

Each of us are invited to consider our own lives on this glorious Feast of Pentecost, to see whether we too have a mind, heart, and tongue aflame with the Holy Spirit, or if the attention, affection, and action of our lives is merely focused on the things of earth. As St. Paul writes, “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.” (Colossians 3:1-4)

“The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch” (Acts 11: 26)

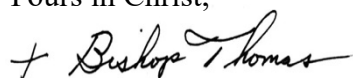
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St. Nikodemos concludes his Meditation on Pentecost with this exhortation:

“Lastly, entreat the Holy Spirit to strengthen that which He has begun to work in you: "Strengthen, O God, this which Thou hast wrought in us" (Ps. 67:29), and demonstrate a complete change in your tongue by His grace so that you never again err with your tongue by any improper word: "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man" (Jam. 3:2). But rather that the Holy Spirit use your tongue like a pen and direct it with His right hand so that you speak only those things He wants. Then you will say: "My tongue is the pen of a swiftly writing Scribe" (Ps. 44:1). And those who see and hear you will say: "This change hath been wrought by the right hand of the Most High" (Ps. 76:10).”

May our celebration of the Feast of Holy Pentecost fill us with the joy of the Holy Spirit and empower us to go forth into all the world and make disciples! Blessed Feast!

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bishop Thomas".

Rt. Rev. Bishop THOMAS (Joseph)

Auxiliary Bishop, Diocese of Oakland, Charleston, and the Mid-Atlantic

“The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch” (Acts 11: 26)

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