

The Kneeling Service

Epistle: Acts 2:1-11: *"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God."*

Our Holy Church has arranged that the Vespereal Service of Pentecost Sunday would consist of the service of the Kneeling Prayers. Pentecost was a Jewish feast held to remember many events in Jewish history. During the time of Christ, the Jews celebrated Pentecost to commemorate the reception of the tablets of the Ten Commandments by Moses on Mount Sinai.

A simple comparison between what happened on Mount Sinai (Ex 20:18-19) and at the Upper Room (Acts 2:1-11) reveals the similarity between the two events. The God who descended on Mount Sinai is the same God, in the form of the Holy Spirit, who descended today upon the disciples. The common signs during these two events reveal the presence of the same God. Sinai is a Mountain, and the place of today's event is an Upper Room. There, a thunder was heard, and here, the same sound. There, thunder, lightning, and smoke, and here, a rushing mighty wind. On the mountain, God descended with fire in the burning bush, and in the Upper Room the Holy Spirit rested upon the disciples in the form of tongues of fire. There, Moses brought out all the people together to the bottom of the mountain to meet God, and here all the disciples meet in the Upper Room "with one accord."

St. Paul thought of this comparison and explained it in the following passage from his letter to the Hebrews (12:18-29):

For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words... But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem...Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire.

When thunder was heard and when the Lord descended with fire, the people did not approach Mount Sinai but stayed at its base. When the Holy Spirit descends, we bow down. As the disciples worshipped the

Lord Jesus, seeing him ascending, we also worship and kneel to the Spirit descending. Christ ascended so that the Spirit would descend, and as we left Him, we welcome the Spirit in kneeling.

Kneeling here has a deep significance with regards to the descent of the Holy Spirit on the disciples as tongues of fire. The old Law demanded from the people the heeding of the commandments. The people received tablets of the Ten Commandments written by the finger of God. But the new Law is not the reception of commandments, but the descent of the Spirit on us. The Spirit did not come down on some in the Old Testament because "they were but flesh," that is to say, living for the body. The Spirit does not descend except on those who are kneeling. What we offer when we bow down to the new Law of the Spirit are our weaknesses, repentance, and piety. His strength will perfect our weaknesses. This is how we welcome the new law. This is how we welcome the Spirit descending on us. Kneeling means opening our hearts for the work of the Spirit in us.

"Who is so great as our God. Thou alone are the Lord of wonders."

Amen.