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# ORTHODOX EVANGELIST



“Do the work of an evangelist” - 2 Tim 4:5

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## Waiting upon the Lord

by the Rev. Archimandrite Fr. Eusebius Stephanou, Th.D.

**If God's will for His Old Testament people was perfect obedience, how much more is it for His New Covenant people? His covenant with New Israel was established in the Blood of His Son, Jesus Christ.**

Like the children of the Israel of old, we, also, in the Orthodox Church have gone our own way. Disobedience and rebellion are rampant.

God is declaring again: *“For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns that can hold no water”* (Jer. 2:13). In the past God spoke through His prophets. In these latter days He has spoken through His Son, Jesus Christ, Who calls all sinners to repentance and freedom from spiritual captivity. **“Repent!” Jesus cries to us in His mercy and love, “for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.”**

The Lord is giving us the final chance to repent and receive His forgiving grace. But we have hardened our hearts. The Lord asks: *“To whom shall I speak and give warning that they may hear? Behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot harken; behold, the word of the Lord is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it”* (Jer. 6:10).

Our Church leaders tell us everything is fine. They give us a rosy picture of the Church. They want to keep the peace at all costs. But there is something higher than submission to Church authority, and that is union with Christ. Our shepherds are not excited about renewal. The very word itself unsettles them.

St. Paul instructs that the elders “that rule well” are deserving of

“double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine.” Let us honor those shepherds who honor Christ and desire to exalt His name and expand His Kingdom.

### The Urgent Need for Evangelism

Orthodoxy without the Cross is impotent. It deteriorates into barren formalism. We do not hear about how much Christ loved the Church and gave His life for her. Is not the message of the Cross the message of Divine love for man?

When we silence the Gospel, we are in effect silencing the reality of God's love for the world. The Cross is proof of Christ's sacrificial love for sinners. But we are not telling our Orthodox people about God's love for them. They need to hear this and they want to hear it.

Routine sermons won't meet the need. They only mesmerize our people, rather than inspire and challenge them to repent and to come to the foot of the Cross in renewed faith and self-surrender. It's not giving sermons that will make the difference. Rather, it is proclaiming the Gospel *“in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power.”*

The disciples had their authority from Christ before He ascended into heaven. The power to make that authority effective came on the day of

Pentecost. Too many in the Church today mistake authority for power. Nothing can be more tragic in the case of an ordained priest. My own personal experience confirms this fact. I had the mistaken notion that I had no spiritual endowment to expect beyond ordination.

This is the case with any Christian believer. When we lean on the arm of flesh, we have little, if any, impact on the world around us. We can do very little for God without the power of the Holy Spirit. The reason is obvious. We can't function only in the natural. Our witness and ministry lack a supernatural quality. We can't change people or circumstances when we count heavily on human effort and religious training.

We may have the best of intentions, but, unless heaven itself is operating through us in real experience, our programs for Church Renewal prove self-defeating. All our talk about Renewal is sheer pious rhetoric.

God desires to renew His Church. He is giving His people a new vision for a church which will stand in power and glory *“without spot or wrinkle.”* He does not want us to think that His church can remain holy, in spite of our backsliding and sins of disobedience. Any static conception of church holiness only mesmerizes us and serves to perpetuate complacency.

Just as Jesus told the 120 in the upper room, He also instructs us to “wait for the promise of the Father.” This is not to imply that, since Pentecost, the Holy Spirit at some point in history was withdrawn. I simply intend here to emphasize that our dependence should be on the Father. Our eyes should always be directed heavenward. It is necessary to recognize that the source of renewal is heaven, not earth, God, not man, that is supernatural, not natural. We are not to move or make the slightest effort without first tarrying and waiting on the Lord in expectation for the *“power from on high.”*

## Diligently Seeking the Lord

The reason why so many Renewal endeavors end up in failure is the excessive reliance on human planning and deliberation. It is caused by rushing into renewal programs without first tarrying in the city of Jerusalem for that endowment with power from above.

The Lord has spoken to me about the need for more prayer. He is kindling a new desire in His people for prayer, but not only prayer as they know it in familiar form handed down by their fathers. He seeks worshipers who will worship Him "in Spirit and in Truth." The Lord seeks to renew within His people with the Holy Spirit that they might raise their sights and focus on heaven and believe that only the Lord can supply the power and the resources required for church renewal.

I don't want to leave the impression with the reader that I am knocking traditional prayers. This is not my intention. But what I want to point out is the fact that it is not so much familiar prayer out of the prayer books that will touch God's heart, stir heaven and cause it to pour down that shekinah glory, as it is prayer that spontaneously out of a soul that knows and admits its own emptiness and desperation. Groaning in the Spirit ascends up out of the innermost being of the believer who sincerely confesses His need for more of God. It is vocalizing the conviction that the renewal of the church will come when the proper attitude of expectation is there and the claiming of the Lord's promises.

God is already working in a mighty way in other churches. He is now waiting for His Orthodox people to humble themselves before Him. He desires to do a work of restoration in their midst in response to their repentance. He wishes to bless them with that heavenly provision.

As children of God we need to learn what it means to wait upon the Lord in fervent supplication. It is this

type of earnest prayer, flowing up from within the heart that is well pleasing to the Father and that elicits answers. He is a "rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6). It is not simply the duration of the prayer that counts. It is also the genuineness of the quest that touches His heart and evokes His response of love.

## Praying until Heaven responds

It is important to stay on our knees until God's shekinah glory descends and hovers over the prayer gathering, until we actually see the divine light and power falling upon us, enveloping and anointing us. We need to stay prostrate on the ground until God begins to move in His Spirit. Marvelous things start happening when we wait on the Lord with an attentive heart. What hinders the Holy Spirit is when we start telling the Lord: "Hurry, Lord, if you are going to do anything tonight, because it is running late.

I can recall several times when unusual, supernatural signs became manifested in the course of prayer meetings I have led, as I minister in various cities throughout the country. On one occasion toward the end of the prayer session a gentle wind began blowing across the room. I suddenly looked around and could not find neither window nor door open.

The present-day outpouring of the Holy Spirit is the last opportunity God is offering to the world to accept salvation to His people and to repent of their backsliding. It is their stubbornness that has caused God to withdraw His Spirit from much of the people who are called by His name.

Saul lost his right to be king because of his disobedience. Many in the Orthodox Church have lost their privileges to be "kings and priests unto God," because of their falling away. The words of the prophet Samuel to Saul are applicable to Orthodox today.

"Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft and stubbornness is as

iniquity and idolatry. "Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, He hath also rejected thee from being king" (1 Sam. 15:23).

Nothing could be more terrible than to have God withdraw His Spirit from a believer. It is simply the beginning of the experience of Hell. He is surrendered to Satan's authority. Remember that this occurred in the case of Saul: "The Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him" (16:14).

The only way the obstinate sinner can regain the Holy Spirit is by repentance. God is giving His people a last chance before the return of Jesus. This is a significant aspect of the whole charismatic renewal: the acknowledgment of our sins and a turning to heaven in repentance. It is the decision for commitment to a life of holiness and separation from sin.

## The Last Great Harvest

**God seeks to do a work of restoration in His Church. But this will require repentance.** It happened before Jesus appeared for His public ministry. St. John the Baptist did a work similar to that of the prophet Elijah when He called His people to repentance: "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!" In like manner before the second appearing of Jesus, there will be a stage of prophetic preparation and repentance. This is what Jesus meant when He said: "Elijah truly shall first come and restore all things" (Matt, 17:11).

The Lord in the closing days of this age will draw to Himself a people which He will re-equip in the Holy Spirit power and with fire, and will grow in love and loyalty for Jesus. A defeated and discouraged people will gain new vision and a fresh hope. One of God's major objectives is to prepare the Church as a Bride whom Jesus as Bridegroom is to come and receive at the close of this age. **It is part of the "restoration of all things" (Acts 3:21).**

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It will be by an act of God's sovereign will that the Church, as we know it today, will rise out of its present state of desolation to a glorious level of restoration. He will not wait for our decision or the decision of a church council. The last outpouring of the Holy Spirit is God's apocalyptic intervention into the world for its salvation and into the Church for its restoration.

This is not just another revival. It is the latter rain that is falling for the last great harvest of souls. It will make the fulfillment of the one Jewish feast day that remains unfulfilled. The Passover was the type of the resurrection of Jesus. The feast of Pentecost was an expression of gratitude for the harvest. Two loaves were made with newly-ripe

wheat. It was fulfilled by the descent of the Holy Spirit in the upper room. Then there is the feast of Tabernacles or of Ingathering. It was celebrated by the Jews as an Autumn Thanksgiving for the completion of the Ingathering of the fruits and vintage. This feast will be fulfilled in that last great harvest of souls just prior to the return of Jesus in glory and power.

## **PERSONAL PENTECOST: DO THE ORTHODOX STILL NEED SPIRITUAL RENEWAL?**

By V. Rev. Timothy Cremeens, PhD – Spiritual Advisor

Almost 50 years ago, the founder of the Brotherhood of St. Symeon the New Theologian, testified in the page of *The Logos*, that he had received the "Baptism of the Holy Spirit". From that moment on the Logos Ministry, as it was originally named, took a different direction.

Fr. Eusebius's original vision for *The Logos* was to address some of the critical issues of the time (late 1960s) facing primarily the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese in North America. Issues pertaining to ecumenism and the future direction of the Church in America. However, after Fr. Eusebius's personal encounter with the Holy Spirit, the magazine became a tool of spreading this message of Spiritual Renewal in the Holy Spirit (a personal Pentecost) to all Orthodox people, not only in North America but around the world. Fr. Eusebius was keenly aware of the need of Spiritual Renewal among all Orthodox people, both clergy and laity. He had served as a parish priest, a seminary dean and professor and served on other committees in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese. For years he taught and trained hundreds of young men who passed through Holy Cross in Brookline, preparing for the priesthood. He was in regular communication with the Hierarchs and he knew the inner workings of the Archdiocese.

Fr. Eusebius knew what it was like to go "through the motions" of being an Orthodox priest. He also knew that something was missing in his life. In

parallel to St. Paul he could claim that he was "Greek among the Greeks". He had a Doctorate in Theology and had taught Orthodox Theology, but his heart needed to be enflamed with the Holy Spirit, he needed Pentecost to become real and personal, and when that happened it changed his life!

Much has changed since those days when Fr. Eusebius labored tirelessly for the cause of Spiritual Renewal among the Orthodox people, yet, in other ways things are very much the same. The Orthodox people here in North America, whether clergy or laity, are still in need of Spiritual Renewal or a personal Pentecost. They are in need of a personal, existential encounter with the Holy Spirit. Reflecting the words of St. Symeon the New Theologian, thousands of Orthodox say, "I have been Chrismated, I have been anointed" and yet there is no evidence of the working of the Holy Spirit in their lives. There is no spiritual empowerment. They are more in love with the world than with Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom and or His Kingdom. They may attend Divine Liturgy on a weekly basis, but they have no passion for the Gospel, no desire to grow in the Faith. Many do not even pray on a daily basis, or read and study the Holy Scriptures. Their lives are no different than those of the unbelievers who live around them. So, in that way the people who are identified by the name "Orthodox" are still in great need of Spiritual Renewal.

So, the question is WHAT is Spiritual Renewal and how does it happen? At the most basic level Spiritual Renewal is nothing more than living the Orthodox Christian Faith in an authentic, intentional and Spirit-empowered way, the Day of Pentecost becomes personal for us. Actually, living and doing, on a daily basis, what Christ has taught us in the Gospel, and how the spiritual fathers and mothers of the Church have instructed us to live. However, this cannot be done without the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. If our Lord Himself insisted that the Apostles return to Jerusalem and wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit, before they began their ministry, how much more do we need the gift of the Holy Spirit in order for us to live a truly Orthodox Christian life (*Acts 1:4-5, 8*).

All Orthodox Christians, to be a part of the Church, have come though the waters of holy Baptism, or through the anointing of holy Chrism. In many cases, however, those who came into the Church as infants, or small children, have not had a personal encounter with Jesus Christ and an empowering experience of the Holy Spirit. They have, as St. Symeon the New Theologian teaches, "darkened and stained their baptismal garments by sin" to the point of almost extinguishing the grace of the Spirit given to them when they received the sacraments of Baptism and Chrismation. They were baptized and chrismated and then left to themselves,

never being catechized on how to live a life in Christ. Never taught how to pray, how to read or study the Scriptures, how to live as a genuine disciple of Jesus Christ. They may have even received holy Communion, now and then, but they have had no ongoing, daily spiritual life. They are in need of a “second baptism”, a “baptism of the Holy Spirit” in order to rekindle the flame of grace in their lives. This is what is meant by Spiritual Renewal. To be spiritually renewed to encounter Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior and the Holy Spirit as the One who fills us with His power, gifts and virtues (fruit).

How do we enter into this life of Spiritual Renewal? First, we must acknowledge that we need such an encounter. We must come to the realization and be honest with ourselves that Jesus Christ is a concept and not a personal Savior to us. We know about Him, but, we do not KNOW Him! We know things about His life, the name of His Mother, where He was born, His miracles, but we have not personally encountered Him! We may attend Church, serve on the parish council, teach Sunday School, work at the summer parish festival, but we do not KNOW Jesus Christ in a personal way. This is the first step, acknowledging we need to MEET Him.

Second, when we come to the realization that we need a personal encounter with Christ, then we must answer the question, do we want to truly meet Him, to encounter Him? Do we DESIRE to begin a daily, personal relationship with Him? Some may know they need to begin this life in Christ, but they know that to do so means that the Lord will make certain demands of them. He wants to be the center of our lives, our thoughts, our actions and our affections. He tells us to deny ourselves, to take up our Cross and follow Him.

Third, to enter into a relationship with Jesus Christ, we “must believe in our hearts and confess with our mouths.” We must confess that we are sinners and ask the Lord to forgive us of

sins, naming each of them as many as we can remember. We must confess with our mouths: **“Lord Jesus, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God and that You rose from the dead!”** We also “must make our vows to the Lord.” Those vows are presented to us in the service of Holy Baptism. We must first, “renounce Satan, his works, his worship, his angels and his pomp.” We should face the West, if we can, and say this three times by repeating loudly, with our mouths: **“I renounce you Satan. I renounce your works, I renounce your worship, I renounce your angels and I renounce your pomp!”** (3x) Then we should say loudly: **“I renounce Satan, I renounce Satan, I renounce Satan! I blow and**



**spit upon him!”** Then we must, if we can face East, say loudly, **“I unite myself to Jesus Christ! I unite myself to Jesus Christ! I united myself to Jesus Christ!”** Then again say loudly: **“I have united myself to Jesus Christ! I have united myself to Jesus Christ! I have united myself to Jesus Christ!”** Then bow down and say loudly, **“I believe in You, Jesus Christ, as my King and my God!”** If you make these vows from the depths of your heart and in true repentance and faith then you have made, or renewed, your personal commitment to Jesus Christ. Now you are ready to “break open” the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit. Not “break” the seal as in destroy it, but rather “break open” the

seal, as in opening it up. By that I mean you have already been “sealed” but the gift of the Holy Spirit that was given to you in holy Chrismation needs to be “opened” in your life heart and life. The gift of the Holy Spirit needs to be “released” in you. That gift has been sitting dormant in your heart. He wants you to invite Him to be released into all areas of your life. Pray and ask Jesus Christ, **“Baptize me, Lord, in the Holy Spirit. Come, Holy Spirit, abide in me, and cleanse me from every impurity.”** You may feel a quickening in the very core of your being, in your “stomach”, so to speak. Tears may come to your eyes, or a strong sense of joy well up inside of you. Allow yourself to express that joy through uttering words of thanks, praise and worship to the Lord. **“Lord, thank you for filling me with Your Holy Spirit. Thank You for giving me Your holy power, so I can speak to others about Jesus Christ and His Gospel. Take me Lord, take all of me, that I may do Your will in all things.”**

These are the beginning steps of experiencing a personal Spiritual Renewal in Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. However, this is only the beginning. In order to grow and mature in this new life we need to 1). Pray to God each and every day. Confessing our sins, asking His forgiveness, asking Him to fill us with His Spirit, in order to do His will. 2). Read the Bible to discover what His will is. 3). Seek out the friendship of other Spiritually Renewed Orthodox Christians who can pray with us, study the Bible with us and encourage us.

This message of Spiritual Renewal for all Orthodox Christians was the reason Fr. Eusebius was called of God to begin the Logos Ministry and continue it in the Brotherhood of St. Symeon the New Theologian. If we desire to honor his legacy and continue the call, let us personally enter into this life of Spiritual Renewal, OR, if we've become lax, to renew our life in the Holy Spirit, AND, to share it with others.