

## **Pentecost Sunday**

The festival of Pentecost has its roots in the Old Testament. It began as a harvest feast and later added the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai as the "harvest" of the Old Covenant. The church celebrates Pentecost on the 50th day after Pascha (the Resurrection of Christ).

On this feast the Descent of the Holy Spirit affected a new covenant. The Spirit revealed to the world the mystery of the Holy Trinity, consubstantial, undivided and yet distinct.

Acts of the Apostles (2:2) records that "suddenly from up in the sky there came a noise, like a strong, driving wind which was heard all through the house where they were seated." In contrast, serenity and composure characterized the icon.

The Apostles sit, some gesturing as if in subdued conversation with one another. The gift of the Holy Spirit remains the inner life of grace. The event of Pentecost forms the church and inaugurates the kingdom of God.

The Twelve Apostles form a semi-circle to express the unity of the mystical body of Christ, the church. They are pictured in an inverse perspective - their figures grow larger as they recede into the background. The Mother of God occupies the center place; she personifies the church.

Above the semi-circle, beyond the edge of the panel, there is a symbol of heaven from which rays or tongues of fire descend. The Apostles and disciples are both sanctified and baptized with the Holy Spirit and fire.

At the bottom of the icon sits a king who represents the world, to which the Apostles would preach. He is known as "Cosmos" and represents the whole world enveloped by sin. He sits in a dark place since the whole world formerly had been without the light of faith. Through the power of the Holy Spirit the Twelve Apostles brought light to the whole world by their teaching.

The feast of the Descent of the Holy Spirit recalls the great sanctifying event which took place in the apostolic community. At the same time, it expresses the sanctification of our lives in the church by the Holy Spirit who is constantly glorified: "Treasury of Blessings and Giver of Life."

## **TROPARION**

Blessed are you, O Christ our God. You have shown the fishermen to be all wise, sending down upon them the Holy Spirit. Through them you have caught the whole world in your net. O Lover of us all, glory to you!