



My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today, we celebrate Pentecost, the birthday of the Church. It is truly a blessing to us, because the Holy Spirit (the third Person of the Blessed Trinity) is the very bond of love between the Father and the Son. Since Jesus poured out the Holy Spirit on the Church, this means that the Church is *much more* than an organization – she is a person.

The Sacred Scriptures describe the Church as the Body of Christ and the Bride of Christ. Can you imagine this – because the Holy Spirit has been poured upon us, we have divine dignity flowing through our veins!

One of my favorite quotes about the Holy Spirit reminds us of how the Holy Spirit changes *everything*:

**Without the Holy Spirit,
God is far away
Christ stays in the past,
the Gospel is a dead letter,
the church is simply an organization,
authority a matter of domination,
mission a matter of propaganda,
the liturgy no more than an evocation,
Christian living a slave morality.**

**But in the Holy Spirit:
the cosmos is resurrected and groans with
the birth-pangs of the kingdom,
the risen Christ is here,
the Gospel is the power of life,
the church shows forth the life of the Trinity,
authority is liberating service,
mission is Pentecost,
the liturgy is both memorial and anticipation,
human action is deified.**

(Metropolitan Ignatios of Latakia, "The Main Address", *the Uppsala Report* 1968 (Geneva: WCC, 1969), p. 298. Quoted in Ralph Martin, *The Catholic Church at the End of an Age: What is the Spirit Saying?* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994), p. 108.)

All of this is to say that the Holy Spirit pours *supernatural life* into us and into the world. Note the lines about the Church – with the Holy Spirit, she is not merely an organization, but "shows forth the life of the Trinity". Also, the authority of the Church, in the Holy Spirit, is not a matter of dominating others, but a "liberating service". What does this mean? It means that if we're trying to find the best way to live, the best way to become the best-version-of-ourselves, we can easily be misdirected by the world, the culture and even our own reasoning. How often have we done something because we thought it would make us happy – and it didn't! The authority of the Church (with the Holy Spirit) speaks from the Heart of the *Author* (hence, *authority*) of life – God – and so can speak with surety about how we are to live life to the fullest (see John 10:10). So, when the Church lays forth the moral law for us, it is not a matter of "the Church meddling where she doesn't belong" but of showing us: *This is where you will find joy! This is how you will find fulfillment. Is it hard? Yes, the Cross always is, but it is here that you will find all that you have wanted to be!*

May we turn with confidence to the Lord and Giver of Life – the Holy Spirit who dwells in the heart of the Church and infuses the Church with the very life of God – and ask to be made whole and holy!