

# The Confessor's Tongue for August 16, 2009

10<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost; Icon "Not-Made-With-Hands"

In honor of St. Maximus the Confessor, whose tongue and right hand were cut off in an attempt by compromising authorities to silence his uncompromising confession of Christ's full humanity & divinity.

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## Icon of Christ "Not-Made-With-Hands"

In the time when our Lord preached the Good News and healed every illness and infirmity of men, there lived in the city of Edessa, on the shore of the Euphrates, a prince named Abgar, who was completely infected with leprosy. He heard of Christ, the Healer of every pain and disease, and sent an artist, Ananias, to Palestine with a letter to Christ in which he begged the Lord to come to Edessa and to cure him of leprosy. He wrote to Christ, "I also hear that the Jews hate Thee, and that they are preparing some evil against Thee. I have a city, not large, but beautiful and bountiful in every good; come to me and live with me in my city, which is sufficient for the both of us for every need." In the event that the Lord was unable to come, the prince ordered Ananias to portray His likeness and to bring it back to him, believing that this likeness would be able to restore his health. The Lord answered that He was unable to come, for the time of His passion was approaching. Instead, He wiped His face with a towel—and the image of His face remained on the towel. The Lord gave this towel to Ananias, with the admonition that the prince would be healed by it, but not entirely—He would send the prince a messenger who would complete the healing of his disease later on. Receiving the towel, Prince Abgar kissed it, and the leprosy completely fell from his body, but a little remained on his face. Later, the Apostle Thaddaeus came to Abgar, preached the Gospel, and secretly healed and baptized him. The prince then destroyed the idols which stood at the gates of the city. He placed the towel with the likeness of Christ—with a wooden backing, framed in a gold frame, and adorned with pearls—above the gates. The prince also wrote beneath the icon, directly on the gateway: "O Christ God, no one will be ashamed who hopes in Thee."

## Reflection from the Prologue

*St. Nikolai of Zicha*

Learn to respect and love lowly and simple people. Such are the most blessed on earth, and such are the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. In them there is no pride—indeed, pride is the prevalent madness afflicting the rich and powerful of this world. The lowly carry out their duty in this world perfectly; and yet, when someone praises them for it, it seems unearned to them—while the self-seeking men of the world seek praise for all their work, and often it is imperfectly done.

St. Alexander the charcoal-burner (Aug 12) was an eminent philosopher, yet he left everything, hid himself from exalted society and the praise of the world, and mingled with the lowliest and the simplest of men—a charcoal-burner among charcoal-burners. Instead of yearning for his erstwhile praise and honors, he rejoiced that children ran after him,

laughing at him because of his sooty skin and ragged clothes. Even so, Alexander was not the only who desired to live with the lowly and simple. Many kings and princes, learning of the sweetness of the Christian Faith, have removed the crowns from their heads and fled from aristocratic vanity, to be among simple people. Did not the Lord Christ Himself, the King of Kings, appear among shepherds and fishermen? St. Zeno counsels: "Do not choose a glorious place for living, and do not associate with men of prominence."

## On Remembering Past Sins

When a man once truly repents, he needs to avoid thinking about the sins he committed, so that he will not sin again. St. Anthony counsels: "Be careful that our mind be not defiled with the remembrance of former sins—that the remembrance of those sins not be renewed in you." He also says: "Do not establish your previously committed sins in your soul by thinking about them, so that they not be repeated in you. Be assured that they were forgiven you from the time that you gave yourself to God and to repentance. In that, do not doubt." It is said of St. Ammon that he attained such perfection that, in his abundance of godliness, he no longer recognized that evil even existed. When they asked him what is that "narrow and difficult path," he replied: "It is the restraining of one's thoughts, and the severing of one's desires, in order to fulfill the will of God." Whoever restrains sinful thoughts does not think of his own sin or the sins of others, or of anything corruptible or earthly. The mind of such a man is continually in heaven, where there is no evil. Thus, sin gradually ceases to be in him—not even in his thoughts. *from the Prologue of Okbrid*

## Guidelines for Funerals

*from the Clergy Guidelines of the OCA*

1. The Church has no specific rules determining the length of time between death and burial. Internment varies according to the climate, civil ordinances, customs, and circumstances, and may be held immediately following death, or after a number of days.
2. The hour of interment is also not fixed; it may be at any time during the day to accord with cemetery regulations and parish needs.
3. It is assumed that, unless the death was an accidental or untimely one, the priest has been ministering to an aging person, or one suffering from some ailment or sickness, and has prepared the person for death through participation in the Mysteries of Penance and Holy Eucharist.
4. The priest should read the Prayers at the Departing of the Soul and passages from Holy Scripture. Merely to be present at the bedside of

one's spiritual child and not minister with audible prayer is unworthy of the priesthood.

5. If the priest was not at the bedside of the dying parishioner at the time of death, he must make contact with the family, offering to assist them through the time of grieving and mourning.

6. The Service for the Departed (*pannikhida*) is sung on the eve of the burial whether the body is in the temple, funeral home, or elsewhere.

7. The body of the departed may be brought into the temple at any time prior to the time of the Funeral Service, whether days before or on the day thereof.

8. According to traditional practice, the casket is open from the first Service for the Departed (*pannikhida*) until the conclusion of the Funeral Service. The deceased is made in the image and likeness of God; the physical body is not to be shunned or rejected because it is in an altered state. To view the body at the funeral home but not in the church is illogical.

9. The casket is positioned so that the feet of the departed are toward the iconostasis. Thus, the person, if alive, would be standing facing the Holy Altar.

10. The Funeral Service is usually served in the temple on the day of burial.

11. The Divine Liturgy may be celebrated on the day of the Funeral Service. This takes place before the Funeral Service. Celebration of the Divine Liturgy is precluded during the Great Fast when the weekday liturgy is not celebrated.

12. The Funeral Service and burial is generally not officiated on Sunday or Pascha. If the Funeral Service is scheduled for Monday, the body may be brought into the temple only after the service of Vespers on Sunday evening. There may be circumstances for which immediate burial may be necessary, and in this case pastoral discretion is to be used.

13. Between the day of Pascha and Thomas Sunday, the Funeral Service follows the Typicon for these specific days of celebration.

14. An Orthodox clergyman may not take part in a service for a non-Orthodox deceased person even if that person is related to a parishioner. If invited, however, he may offer some words of consolation at the graveside or funeral meal.

15. Non-Orthodox clergy may not be invited to participate in the Funeral Service or offer any form of homily or public statement in the temple, or participate in the graveside service. The officiating priest, however, cannot control what takes place after the Orthodox service of burial has been concluded in a public cemetery.

16. Prayers for the dead are usually offered immediately after the burial at the memorial meal, on the third, ninth, and fortieth day after death, and every year thereafter.

17. Saturday is the usual day for a memorial service. It can be scheduled immediately before the Vigil service. In this way, the prayers for forgiveness

and repose preceding these services are illumined through the proclamation of the Lord's Resurrection in the hymns that are sung in the following services. However, the Pannikhida may be served after the Sunday Divine Liturgy if the hierarch has given his blessing for this to take place at that time.

18. The Church has set aside definite days on which remembrance of the dead should take place. Among these are Meatfare Saturday, the second, third, and fourth Saturdays of the Great Fast, the Saturday before Pentecost, and St. Demetrios Saturday.

19. In addition to these specific items, the faithful may have the names of the deceased remembered at the Proskomede and during the Divine Liturgy.

20. Memorial services are not permitted on feast days or from the Nativity of our Lord to Theophany, and from Palm Sunday to Thomas Sunday.

21. The rector is responsible for entering into the metrical book the required information about burials. *Funeral guidelines to continue next week*

### Sayings of St. Poemen the Great

Abba Poemen said, "Experience is a good thing; it is that which tests a man."

He also said, "A man who teaches without doing what he teaches is like a spring which cleanses and gives drink to everyone, but is not able to purify itself."

He also said, "A man may seem to be silent, but if his heart is condemning others, he is babbling ceaselessly. But there may be another who talks from morning till night and yet he is truly silent; that is, he says nothing that is not profitable."

He also said, "If man remembered that it is written, 'By your words you will be justified and by your words you will be condemned' (Matt. 12:37), he would choose to remain silent."

He also said, "The beginning of evil is heedlessness."

Abba Poemen said, "As the breath which comes out of his nostrils, so does a man need humility and the fear of God."

### Upcoming Events 2009

12 August, Summer Feast of St. Maximus, Liturgy  
9:30 a.m.

15 August, Feast of the Holy Dormition

16-19 August, Men's Retreat at Monastery

23 August, 3 p.m. Women's Tea at Louise Newcomb's

1 September, Church New Year

7 September, Labor Day Picnic

8 September, Feast of the Nativity of the Theotokos

4 October, Annual Parish Meeting

11 October, Blessing of Automobiles after Liturgy

**GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!**