

The Confessor's Tongue for August 30, 2009

12th Sunday after Pentecost; Right-Believing Prince Aleksandr Nevsky

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.

August 30: St. Alexander Nevsky

The son of Prince Iaroslav Vsevolodovich of Vladimir, he was distinguished by reason, courage, power of bodily strength, majestic beauty, love of truth, co-suffering and truly Christian piety. "From his youth he loved Christ and turned away from worldly sophisms, he was charmed by the voice of the church hymns, and his soul thirsted for knowledge of the Holy Fathers. His favorite occupation was the all-night vigil and silent prayer to God".

In 1236, St. Alexander was made the Prince of Novgorod. In 1240, the Swedes attacked his principedom. St. Alexander was not afraid of the enemies and left to fight against them. Not only by the strength of his army, but as much by faith in the help of God, had he with deep feeling of faith spoken before the battle: "God is not on the side of force, but of truth". On the shore of the Neva River the holy prince gained full victory over his enemies for which he received the name "Nevsky". In 1242, he freed the city of Pskov from the Germans. The same year he won a glorious victory over the Lithuanian knights on the ice of Chudskoie (Peipus) Lake (known by the name "Battle on the Ice"). Then in 1242 and 1245, he gained many victories over the Lithuanians.

Having become the grand prince of Vladimir in 1250, St. Alexander did much work at restoring and building up the Russian land, strongly suffering at that time from the violence of the Tartars, and revealed him the firm defender and guardian of Orthodoxy. He repeatedly appeared in the camp of the Tartar khan to petition him on behalf of his oppressed native land, and by this he not only prevented many afflictions, but also was able to ask the khans for many privileges.

The first time being among the Tatar Horde, St. Alexander proved not only to be the defender of the advantages of the state, but also the confessor of the Christian faith, ready to suffer for it. As to the requirement of the pagan priests to pass through fire and to worship idols, he bravely answered the Khan Batu: "I shall bow to you, for God granted you a kingdom. I shall not bow to created things (i.e. to idols). I am a Christian and it is not necessary for me to worship created things. I worship God, One in Trinity, who gloriously created heaven and earth. I serve Him and I honor Him". The Khan, respecting the courage and intelligence of St. Alexander, allowed him to forgo the requirement of the (pagan) priests. [For this courage, he is honored as a "martyr by intention."]

Being the zealous advocate of Orthodoxy, St. Alexander rejected the proposition of Pope Innocent IV to accept the Roman Catholic confession, having told the representatives from the Pope with unbreakable resolution: "We know the true history of the faith that contains the teaching given to the

Apostles, and we do not wish to accept your teaching".

The holy prince was the guardian angel of his people, interceding for them before God, to Whom he turned to in difficult times with prayer for help and heavenly protection to Whom he attributed not a few happy events and cases of salvation from various misfortunes. Not one year of the reign of the holy prince, the chroniclers with awesomeness observed: "that this year was a good one for a Christian". "He labored hard for the Russian land, for Novgorod and Pskov, for all the great reigning even giving his life for the Orthodox faith", the holy true believing Prince Alexander was a most remarkable figure of the appanage-veche period of our history. For twenty seven years the holy true believing Prince Alexander reigned, courageously and immutably standing guard over his domestic country and consolidating her security and prosperity.

The Holy Church in its hymns, singing of the valor of St. Alexander, glorifies him as "the authority of pious kings, and the praise of Orthodox princes", "maintainer of warriors, and vanquisher of barbarians", "who is wonderful in wonders, co-habitant with the fleshless ones", "defender of the despairing". Heavy labor and ascetic effort disturbed the health of the holy prince.

Feeling the approach of death and following the inclination of his heart of always rushing to God, he accepted the schema, taking the name Alexis, received the Holy Mysteries, and died on November 14, 1263 and was buried in the Nativity of Christ-Theotokion Monastery in Vladimir (see Vladimir Diocese).

According to legend, before the burial of the holy prince a wonder was worked: he himself took in his hand as if alive the prayer of absolution. In 1381 the relics of the holy prince were opened and placed in the cathedral temple of the monastery. During the reign of Tsar Ivan IV the special service for the holy prince was composed and in 1547 it was established to honor his memory on November 23 (the day of his burial). In 1724, by command of Emperor Peter the Great, the relics of the holy prince were transferred to the Alexander Nevsky Laura in St. Petersburg where they now repose. See Aug 30. *S. V. Bulgakov, Handbook for Church Servers, 2nd ed. 1274 pp. (Kharkov, 1900) pp. 0425-0428 Translated by Archpriest Eugene D Tarris © October 19, 2005. All rights reserved.*

Upcoming Events 2009

- 1 September, Church New Year, Liturgy 9:00 a.m.
- 7 September, Labor Day Picnic noon, Liturgy 10:00.
- 8 September, Feast of the Nativity of the Theotokos
- 4 October, Annual Parish Meeting
- 11 October, Blessing of Automobiles after Liturgy

We have shared these before, but they bear repeating.

55 Maxims for Christian Living

Fr. Thomas Hopko

1. Be always with Christ.
2. Pray as you can, not as you want.
3. Have a keepable rule of prayer that you do by discipline.
4. Say the Lord's Prayer several times a day.
5. Have a short prayer that you constantly repeat when your mind is not occupied with other things.
6. Make some prostrations when you pray.
7. Eat good foods in moderation.
8. Keep the Church's fasting rules.
9. Spend some time in silence every day.
10. Do acts of mercy in secret.
11. Go to liturgical services regularly
12. Go to confession and communion regularly.
13. Do not engage intrusive thoughts and feelings. Cut them off at the start.
14. Reveal all your thoughts and feelings regularly to a trusted person.
15. Read the scriptures regularly.
16. Read good books a little at a time.
17. Cultivate communion with the saints.
18. Be an ordinary person.
19. Be polite with everyone.
20. Maintain cleanliness and order in your home.
21. Have a healthy, wholesome hobby.
22. Exercise regularly.
23. Live a day, and a part of a day, at a time.
24. Be totally honest, first of all, with yourself.
25. Be faithful in little things.
26. Do your work, and then forget it.
27. Do the most difficult and painful things first.
28. Face reality.
29. Be grateful in all things.
30. Be cheerful.
31. Be simple, hidden, quiet and small.
32. Never bring attention to yourself.
33. Listen when people talk to you.
34. Be awake and be attentive.
35. Think and talk about things no more than necessary.
36. When we speak, speak simply, clearly, firmly and directly.
37. Flee imagination, analysis, figuring things out.
38. Flee carnal, sexual things at their first appearance.
39. Don't complain, mumble, murmur or whine.
40. Don't compare yourself with anyone.
41. Don't seek or expect praise or pity from anyone.
42. We don't judge anyone for anything.
43. Don't try to convince anyone of anything.
44. Don't defend or justify yourself.
45. Be defined and bound by God alone.
46. Accept criticism gratefully but test it critically.
47. Give advice to others only when asked or obligated to do so.

48. Do nothing for anyone that they can and should do for themselves.
49. Have a daily schedule of activities, avoiding whim and caprice.
50. Be merciful with yourself and with others.
51. Have no expectations except to be fiercely tempted to your last breath.
52. Focus exclusively on God and light, not on sin and darkness.
53. Endure the trial of yourself and your own faults and sins peacefully, serenely, because you know that God's mercy is greater than your wretchedness.
54. When we fall, get up immediately and start over.
55. Get help when you need it, without fear and without shame.

A PRAYER

TO THE IMMACULATE VIRGIN

Saint Nektarios the Wonderworker

Take away from me, O Virgin, the fetters of sin, of my lusts and the other transgressions: the terrible carelessness and the overcaring, the evil curiosity and the talkativeness, the useless incontinence and the haughtiness, the negligence, the drunkenness and the lack of mercy, the bad desires, the terrible impurity, the extravagance, the darkness, the great insensitivity. Take away the tendency to say jokes, the enjoyment, the prodigality, the laughter of immorality and every evil. Give me, O maiden, chastity, give me continence, fasting, carefulness, vigilance and perfect obedience. Give me carefulness in all and acute discernment, silence, order and holy patience. Grant to me, O Lady, eagerness to work and to attain my perfection, and zeal for virtues and exercise. Keep, O most-holy One, my soul, my heart and my mind in holiness and guard it in virginity.

St. Theophan on Wandering Thoughts

Thoughts wander when one is reading spiritual works and during prayer. What should one do? No one is free from this. There is no sin in it, only vexation. Having wandering thoughts becomes a sin when one willingly allows flightiness of mind. But if thoughts scatter involuntarily, what fault can there be? there is fault, though, when one notices thoughts wandering and, taking no action, one wanders along with them. When we catch our thoughts wandering off, we must bring them back to their proper place at once.

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!