

The Confessor's Tongue for November 29, 2009

25th Sunday after Pentecost; Martyr Paramon

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.

November 29: Martyr Paramon & 370 Others

All these holy martyrs suffered for Christ during the reign of Decius in 250. When Aquiline, Prince of Bithynia, Asia Minor, required 370 Christians to bring offerings to idols, St. Paramon was passing by and seeing so many sufferers, exclaimed: "how many innocent die who do not bow to soulless idols!" For this the holy confessor was pierced through the tongue and all his body was pierced with spears, but the other 370 martyrs were cut down by the sword.

S. V. Bulgakov, *Handbook for Church Servers*, 2nd ed., 1274pp. (Khar'kov, 1900). P 405. Translated by Archpriest Eugene D. Tarris © 11/7/05. All rights reserved.

To Learn the Eight Tones

We sing the tones week by week; many of us know how to sing them well. But given a text, told it is in tone 3 and confronted with singing it, we are at a loss as to how to proceed. Here is a way to master some of the tones.

First, understand that in our system the melodies we use to sing Troparia and Kontakia in the eight tones differ from those we use to sing stichera (hymns sung at Lord, I have cried, the Beatitudes, and elsewhere).

To learn the Troparia tones, it is easiest to relate a tone to a well-known hymn. You already know these. All you have to do is connect the number of the tone to the melody you know.

Troparion tone 1 is the tone used for singing the Troparion of the Cross:

O Lord, save Thy people / and bless Thine inheritance. / Grant victory to Orthodox Christians / over the enemy; / and by Thy Cross // preserve Thine estate. This is also the melody we use for singing the hymn for the feast of Theophany that we sing at house blessings:

When Thou, O Lord wast baptized in the Jordan / the worship of the Trinity was made manifest. / For the voice of the Father bare witness to Thee, / naming Thee His beloved Son. / And the Spirit, in the form of dove, / confirmed the certainty of that word. / O Christ our God, who hast manifested Thyself and enlightened the world // glory to Thee.

Tone 2 Troparion tone 2 is the way we sing the troparion to St. Innocent at the end of Liturgy:

Thou didst evangelize the northern people of America and Asia, / proclaiming the Gospel of Christ to the natives in their own tongues. / O Holy Hierarch, Father Innocent, / Enlightener of Alaska and all America, whose ways were ordered by the Lord: // Pray to Him for the salvation of our souls in His heavenly Kingdom.

Troparion tone 3 is the tone for the Troparion to St. Maximus:

By an outpouring of the Holy Spirit / thou didst pour forth Christ's sacred teachings, / thou didst expound with Divine authority / the self-emptying of God the Word / and wast radiant in thy confession of the True

Faith:/ O, Glorious Father Maximus / pray to Christ our God // to grant us His great mercy.

Troparion tone 4 is the most commonly used troparion tone. At the end of Vespers during the Vigil, we sing the Theotokion in this tone.

Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos, Mary full of grace, / the Lord is with Thee. / Blessed art thou among women / and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. // For thou hast bourned the Savior of our souls.

We also sing the common troparion for a male martyr in this tone:

In his sufferings, O Lord, / Thy Martyr Name received an imperishable crown from Thee, our God. / For possessed of Thy might, / he cast down the tormentors and crushed the feeble audacity of the demons. // By his supplications save Thou our souls.

Troparion tone 5 is the same as stichera tone 5. The Troparion to the Resurrection in tone 5 may help us remember it:

Let us the faithful hymn and worship the Word / who with the Father and the Spirit hath no beginning, / and was born for our salvation of the Virgin; / for He was pleased to ascend the Cross in the flesh, / and to endure death / and to raise the dead // by His glorious Resurrection.

We also sing the troparion (every week at the end of Liturgy) to St. John of San Francisco in this tone

Like a spiritual daystar in heaven's firmament, / thou didst encompass the whole world / and didst enlighten men's souls. / Hence thy name is glorified in the East and West, / for thou didst shine with the grace of the sun or righteousness, / O John, our beloved shepherd: / Wherefore, cease not to entreat Christ that He may have mercy on our souls.

We use **troparion tone 6** to sing the hymn to the Theotokos during the Liturgy:

Steadfast protectress of Christians / constant advocate before the Creator / despise not the voice of the sinner's prayer / but in that thou art good come quickly to help those who call upon thee in faith. / Make speed to intercede and make haste to supplicate, // O Theotokos who dost always protect those that honor thee.

One of the Kontakia to St. Maximus is sung in tone 6:

The thrice-radiant Light which abode in thy soul / showed thee to be a chosen vessel / revealing divine things to the ends of the earth, / O blessed Maximus, who givest utterance to concepts hard to grasp, / and manifestly proclaimest unto all // the transcendent and unoriginate Trinity.

Troparion tone 7 is used least, but we use it every eighth Sunday for the Resurrection

By Thy Cross Thou didst destroy death. / To the thief Thou didst open Paradise. / For the myrrh-bearers Thou didst change their lamentation into joy. / And Thou didst command Thine Apostles, O Christ God, / to proclaim that Thou art risen, // granting unto the world great mercy.

We also use it to sing the Troparion for the Feast of Transfiguration:

Thou wast transfigured upon the mountain, O Christ God, / showing Thy glory to Thy disciples as far as they could bear it. / Through the prayers of the Theotokos, / make Thine everlasting light shine also upon us sinners. // O Giver of Light, glory to Thee!

Troparion tone 8 is what we use to sing the hymn to the Theotokos after classes:

Meet it is in truth to bless Thee, O Theotokos, / who art ever blessed and all-blameless, and the Mother of our God, / more honorable than the cherubim / and more glorious without compare than the seraphim, / who without corruption gavest birth to God the Word, // verily, Theotokos, we magnify thee.

By correlating the tone number to the hymns we already know, we can quickly learn to sing the Troparion tones on command.

On Reading the Scriptures

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path."

The Scriptures contain the Spirit-inspired words of the prophets and apostles, the record of God's revelation to man. In the Scriptures God reveals much of His will for us and guides us on the path to knowing Him and pleasing Him. Knowing the Scriptures is a source of spiritual strength; neglect of them will result in spiritual weakness and ignorance of God's will. As St. John Chrysostom puts it in his ninth homily on Colossians, "This is the cause of all evils, the not knowing the Scriptures." How much trouble and suffering we would be spared if we read and meditated upon the Scriptures regularly, if we endeavored to organize our lives in accordance with their teaching! How many mistakes we would avoid, and how much more quickly we would recover from falls if we knew them!

Much profit comes to us by bringing the words of Scripture into our lives each day. St. John Chrysostom writes in Homily 37 on John:

Great is the profit of the divine Scriptures, and all-sufficient is the aid which comes from them. And Paul declared this when he said, "Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written aforetime for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." (Romans 15:4, I Corinthians 1:11). For the living oracles are a treasury of all manner of medicines, so that whether it be needful to quench pride, to lull desire to sleep, to tread under foot the love of money, to despise pain, to inspire confidence, to gain patience, from them one may find abundant resource.

St. John of Damascus speaks at length about Scripture in his work *On the Orthodox Faith (Book 4.17)*: It is one and the same God whom both the Old and the New Testament proclaim, who is praised and glorified in the Trinity: *I am come*, saith the Lord, *not to destroy the law but to fulfill it*. For He Himself worked out our salvation for which all Scripture and all mystery exists. And again,

Search the Scriptures, for they are they that testify of me. And the Apostle says, *God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son.* Through the Holy Spirit, therefore, both the law and the prophets, the evangelists and apostles and pastors and teachers spake. All Scripture, then, is *given by inspiration of God and is also assuredly profitable*. Wherefore to search the Scriptures is a work most fair and most profitable for souls. For just as the tree planted by the channels of waters, so also the soul watered by the divine Scripture is enriched and gives fruit in its season, viz. orthodox belief, and is adorned with evergreen leafage, I mean, actions pleasing to God. For through the Holy Scriptures we are trained to action that is pleasing to God, and untroubled contemplation. For in these we find both exhortation to every virtue and dissuasion from every vice. If, therefore, we are lovers of learning, we shall also be learned in many things. For by care and toil and the grace of God the Giver, all things are accomplished. *For every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.* Wherefore let us knock at the very fair garden of the Scriptures... But let us not knock carelessly but rather zealously and constantly: lest knocking we grow weary. For thus it will be opened to us. If we read once or twice and do not understand what we read, let us not grow weary, but let us persist, let us talk much, let us enquire. *For ask thy Father, he saith, and He will shew thee: thy elders and they will tell thee* [Deut.32.7]. *For there is not in every man that knowledge.* Let us draw of the fountain of the garden perennial and purest waters springing into life eternal. Here let us luxuriate, let us revel insatiate: for the Scriptures possess inexhaustible grace.

Now at the start of December during the Nativity Fast as we seek to make room in our hearts for Christ is a good time to apply ourselves afresh to the Holy Word of God.

Reading the chapter of Proverbs (OT) that corresponds to the day of the month will give us much wisdom for daily life. If, in addition, we will undertake to read one chapter from the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) and two chapters from the Epistles (Acts – Revelation), we shall read the entire New Testament in three months (the monks of Optina keep this rule of reading). Think what a difference reading the entire NT four times a year would make in your thoughts and soul!

For a greater challenge, read the whole NT by the end of the year by reading 3 Gospel chapters and 6 Epistle chapters each day. May it be blessed!

Upcoming Events 2009

- 15 November Nativity Fast begins.
- 22 December, Tuesday, 7:30 p.m. Holy Unction served.
- 24 December, Thursday, 5:30 p.m. Nativity Eve Vigil, 7:30 p.m. Holy Supper.
- 13 February 2010, 6:00 p.m. Forgiveness Vespers, Great Lent Begins.
- 26-27 February 2010 Metropolitan Jonah visits.
- 4 April 2010, Holy Pascha, the Feast of Feasts.

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!