

The Confessor's Tongue for June 13, 2010

3rd Sunday After Pentecost: Martyr Aquilina, St. Triphyllius

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.

June 13: Martyr Akylina

Truly God is wondrous in His saints when even children hold firm to Christ even unto death!

In third-century Palestine, a ten-year-old Christian girl preached Jesus Christ with wisdom and authority. She even accompanied the older men as a missionary. At the age of twelve, Akylina was seen as a threat to the idol-worshipping Romans and brought before the imperial governor of the town of Biblos. She was beaten, then a heated rod was forced between her ears and brain, and she fell over as one dead. Her body was thrown outside the city unburied. That night, an angel of God healed her. Akylina gave thanks for this, but she prayed not to be denied martyrdom. Ghostlike, she went and stood and the governor's head. Horrified, he ordered her beheaded the next day. Her relics healed the sick.

The Sayings of St. Anthony the Great

A brother said to Abba Anthony, 'Pray for me.' The old man said to him, 'I will have no mercy upon you, nor will God have any, if you yourself do not make an effort and if you do not pray to God.'

Saying 16 in *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*

Commentary: To be a Christian requires that we desire God, that we actively seek Him, that we pray, we give, we keep Christ's commandments. Indeed, the great commands to love God and love neighbor call us to action, not merely to have a passive feeling of warmth towards the objects of our love.

Some people, however, for whatever reason, will ask others to do for them what they will not do for themselves, as in this case. The monk seeks the prayers of the recognized holy man, thinking that having Anthony's prayers will be more effective than his own and save him. Yet Anthony discerns that the monk is seeking an easy way out and exhorts him to make the needed effort on his own behalf.

Some Christians might think the same: sending their names to be commemorated at monasteries, asking for special prayer services for their living and dead, and going to see holy elders. But no number of requests for prayer by holy elders and the like will ultimately benefit us if we do not make our own effort to pray and keep Christ's commandments.

The prayers of others help strengthen our feeble efforts, and at some dark times of life, we may even be carried by the prayers of others. But the prayers of others, no matter how holy and powerful they may be, can never be a substitute for our own prayer. If the four friends carried the paralytic to Christ for healing, symbolizing the power of intercessory prayer to bring the spiritually paralyzed to Christ and to do for them what they cannot do for themselves, once healed, the former paralytic was then responsible to come to Christ and to the Temple on his own.

Our desire for God, expressed in our feeble efforts to pray and do His will, attracts God's grace to enable us to do and be what we cannot do and be by our own strength. If we have insufficient desire even to make a weak, inadequate effort, neither God nor a holy man can help us, for such help would mean God was compelling us against our will. His love for us means He allows us to choose our eternal destiny as much as our wrong choices grieve Him. Such is the mystery of God's love for us.

Fr. Justin Frederick

Confession: Avoiding the Line

Our bishops have set this norm for Confession, that if we receive Communion more than once a month, we should confess no less frequently than once a month. If we commune less frequently, then we are to make a confession before each communion. This includes children (who normally begin making Confession at age seven) and teenagers.

Any time you see Confession on the weekly or monthly schedule, you are free to turn up without an appointment: those are open times for anyone who needs to make a confession to come. Saturday night after Vigil is the primary open time, but number of people confessing then is increasing, meaning that that line for Confession is longer.

If you wish to avoid the likely line, consider the following options: Friday Vespers is followed by an open Confession (except the Friday before the third Saturday when Father serves Russian Vespers in Dallas). Thursday Vespers at 2:30 is followed by open Confession about 3:10. While not scheduled, in practice there is open Confession after Matins if it is not followed by Liturgy.

Confessions may also be made by appointment. Good times for appointments include Friday before Vespers, Saturday before Vigil, and numerous times during the day throughout the week.

Confessions are not normally heard the morning of any Divine Liturgy (unless there is a very special need), on the priest's day off (currently Monday), or on Wednesday evenings due the Basics Class.

Generally, your priest will work to accommodate your need to make a Confession, even on short notice; but it is better to plan ahead.

From Time to Eternity: The Internal Mission of the Church, Part 1

St. Justin (Popovich) of Cheliye (+1979)

It is difficult, very difficult, for infinite and eternal life to enter the narrow human soul and the even narrower human body. The imprisoned inhabitants of earth stand with suspicion before everything that is beyond here. Imprisoned in time and place, they cannot bear — whether on account of atavism or inertia — anything beyond time, anything beyond space to enter into them, anything eternal.

They regard such an invasion as an attack, and they respond with war. Furthermore, given the fact that the rust of time corrupts man, he does not like the intervention of eternity in his life and he adapts to it with difficulty. He often regards this intervention as an act of violence, an unforgivable audacity. At times he becomes a harsh rebel against eternity, because he sees that in the face of it he is insignificant, while at other times he lashes out against it in vehement hatred because he views it through a very human, very earthly, inner-worldly prism. Submerged with the body in matter, tied by the force of weight in time and space, his spirit withdrawn from eternity, the worldly man abhors the difficult excursions towards the beyond and the eternal. The chasm between time and eternity is for him unbridgeable, because he lacks the necessary ability and strength to step over it. Besieged from all sides by death, man mocks those who tell him: Man is immortal and eternal. Immortal as regards what? His mortal body? Eternal as regards what? His feeble spirit?

For man to be immortal, he must feel himself immortal in the center of his self-awareness. To be eternal, he must recognize himself as eternal in the center of his self-consciousness. Without this, both immortality and eternity are for him conditions imposed from outside. And if man once had this sense of immortality and the recognition of eternity, this occurred so long ago, that already it has atrophied under the weight of death. And truly, it has atrophied: this is what the whole mysterious structure of human existence tells us. Our whole problem lies in how to rekindle that quenched feeling, how to resurrect that atrophied recognition. People cannot do it, neither can the transcendent gods of philosophy. Only God can do this, He Who incarnated His immortal Self in the human self-awareness and His eternal Self in human self-consciousness. Christ did precisely this when He became incarnate and became God-Man. Only in Christ, and in Christ alone, did man feel himself immortal and recognize himself as eternal. Through His Person, the God-man Christ bridged the chasm between time and eternity and reinstated the relations between them. For this reason only that person truly feels himself immortal and truly knows himself to be eternal who organically unites himself with the God-man Christ, with His Body, the Church. Hence, for man and humanity, Christ became the unique crossing and passage from time to eternity. For this reason, in the Church, the Orthodox Church, the God-man Christ became and remained the unique way and the unique guide from time to eternity, from the self-awareness of mortality to the self-awareness of immortality, from the self-knowledge of finitude to the self-consciousness of eternity and the un-extended.

The eternal living personality of the God-man Christ is precisely the Church. The Church is always the personality, and furthermore the theanthropic personality, the theanthropic spirit and body. The

definition of the Church, the life of the Church, its purpose, its spirit, its program, its methods — all have been given in that wondrous Person of the God-man Christ. Therefore, the mission of the Church is organically and personally to unite all its faithful with the Person of Christ; to make their self-awareness Christ-awareness and their self-knowledge (self-consciousness) Christ-knowledge (Christ-consciousness); for their life to become life in Christ and through Christ; so that not they themselves live in themselves but Christ lives in them (Gal. 2:20). The mission of the Church is to secure for her members immortality and eternity, making them partakers of the Divine nature (II Peter 1:4). The mission of the Church is furthermore to create in each member the conviction that the normal condition of the human personality is comprised of immortality and eternity and not temporality and mortality, and that man is a sojourner who through mortality and temporality journeys towards immortality and eternity.

The Church is the theanthropic ['God-human'] eternity incarnated in the boundaries of time and space. It is in this world, but it is not of this world (John 18:36). It is in this world to elevate this world to the world above, from which she herself came. The Church is ecumenical, catholic, theanthropic, eternal, and for this reason it entails a blasphemy, an unforgivable blasphemy against Christ and the Holy Spirit to make the Church a national institution, to narrow her to the small, finite, and temporal purposes and methods of a nation. Its purpose is supra-national, ecumenical, panhuman: to unite in Christ all people, completely, regardless of nationality or race or social stratum. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:28), because Christ is all, and in all (Col. 3:11).

The methods of this panhuman-theanthropic union of all people in Christ have been given by the Church in her holy Mysteries and in her theanthropic words (asceses, virtues). And truly, the Mystery of Divine Eucharist composes and defines and comprises the method of Christ and the means for uniting all people: through this Mystery, man is organically united with Christ and with all faithful. Through the personal exercise of the theanthropic virtues — faith, prayer, fasting, love, meekness, and utter compassion and charity — man makes himself firm in this union, he preserves himself in this holiness, he himself lives Christ as the unity of his personality and as the essence of his unity with the other members of the holy Body of Christ, the Church. *To be continued...*

Upcoming Events 2010

4, 11 July: Fr. Justin gone; Fr. Christopher Allen here
1-15 August: Dormition Fast
6 September: Labor Day Picnic

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!