

The Confessor's Tongue for June 27, 2010

5th Sunday After Pentecost: Ven. Sampson the Hospitable

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 27: St. Sampson the Hospitable

A rich and famous Roman, he mastered medical science among other sciences with the purpose of helping suffering humanity as an unmercenary healer. After the death of his parents, he distributed his estate to the poor, freed his slaves and moved to Constantinople. Here St. Sampson built a house for the oversight of pilgrims, the poor and the sick that he also served with the same Christian love. The patriarch ordained him a presbyter, but Emperor Justinian, who was healed from an illness by him, made him the chief of the imperial hospices and hospitals. Here, vigilantly and with love serving patients and the poor, Sampson practiced asceticism until his death in about 530.

The Sayings of St. Anthony the Great

Some brothers were coming from Scetis to see Abba Anthony. When they were getting into a boat to go there, they found an old man who also wanted to go there. The brothers did not know him. They sat in the boat, occupied in turns with the words of the Fathers, Scripture, and their manual work. As for the old man, he remained silent. When they arrived on shore, they found that the old man was going to the cell of Abba Anthony too. When they reached the place, Anthony said to them, 'You found this old man a good companion for the journey?' Then he said to the old man, 'You have brought many good brethren with you, father.' The old man said, 'No doubt they are good, but they do not have a door to their house, and anyone who wishes can enter the stable and loose the ass.' He meant that the brethren said whatever came into their mouths.

Saying 18 in *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*

Commentary: In the armed forces there is a saying (originally coined by the US War Office for use on the home front in World War Two) "Loose lips sink ships." The careless revelation of knowledge that others don't need to know can lead to disaster. Christians may be likened to ships on the stormy sea of life seeking their calm haven in Christ. A careless use of the tongue can lead to spiritual shipwreck rather than safe arrival at our destination. King Solomon in his Proverbs (10:19) writes, "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise." Many Christians have had the experience of being filled with grace through Confession and Holy Communion only to have it depart after allowing words of judgment to escape their lips. A perfect man has bridled his tongue (James 3), and even a fool, when he keeps quiet, may be counted wise, but not bridling the tongue opens the stable door to let loose the ass within.

Certainly sinful words do our souls harm and grieve the Holy Spirit in us, but even good words to excess can lead to harm. For example, talking with others about spiritual blessings and gifts can lead to their loss and the assault of temptations. Telling

others of our victory over a particular sin may open the door to being tempted by that sin again. Even in speaking about God and the Scriptures, one can speak to excess, and one's good words become bad thereby. As Solomon says in Ecclesiastes (3:7), "There is a time to keep silence and a time to speak." Notice which comes first: silence. Only by avoiding sinful and excessive words, by refraining our lips, do we learn wisdom to speak to the profit of others and ourselves.

What is more, talk tends to displace prayer and the remembrance of God. "Be still and know that I am God," says the Lord, but we fill our lives with noise and chatter. Consider how our lives would be different if the time we now typically spend talking to others (including blogging, texting, etc.) we spent consciously praying to God instead, and the amount of time we now typically spend in prayer was all we had for chatter!

Fr. Justin Frederick

From Time to Eternity: The Internal Mission of the Church, Part 3

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

The fourth is the theanthropic virtue of meekness and humility. Only he who is meek in heart makes rebellious and wild hearts meek. Only he who is humble in heart humble proud and haughty souls. To show meekness towards all people is the obligation of every true Christian (Titus 3:2). But man becomes truly meek and humble when he makes the meek and humble Lord Jesus the heart of his heart, He who alone is truly meek and humble of heart (Matt. 11:29). The soul of the people must be made meek with the meekness of Christ. Every man must learn to pray: O most meek Lord, make my wild soul meek! The Lord humbled Himself with the greatest humility: He became incarnate, He became man. If you are Christ's, humble yourself to the utmost, to a worm; incarnate yourself in the pain of every pained person, in the affliction of every afflicted person, in the sufferings of every tortured person, in the grief of every animal and bird. Humble yourself below everyone: be everything to everyone — through Christ and according to Christ. When you are alone, pray: O Humble Lord, humble me through Thy humility!

The fifth is the theanthropic virtue of patience and humility. That is, to forbear evil, not to return evil for evil, to forgive with total compassion the curses, the slanders, the wounds. This is Christ's: constantly to feel crucified in the world, persecuted by the world, cursed and spat upon. The world cannot bear Christ-bearing people, just as it could not bear Christ. Martyrdom is the atmosphere in which the Christian bears fruit. We must teach this to our people. For Orthodox, martyrdom is purification. It

is Christian not only to bear sufferings with joy, but also to forgive with total compassion those who cause them, to pray for them to God, just as did Christ and the Archdeacon Stephen. For this reason, pray: O long-suffering Lord, give me long-suffering, magnanimity and meekness!

The mission of our Church is to make these theandric virtues-ascetics the methods of life for the people, to weave the Christ-like theanthropic virtues into the soul and life of the people. In this lies the salvation of the soul from the world and from all soul-corrupting, homicidal, atheistic movements and worldly organizations. Against the educated atheism and the gentlemanly cannibalism of contemporary civilization, we must array Christ-bearing personalities, which with the meekness of a sheep will be victorious over the excited passions of the wolves, and with the innocence of doves will save the soul of the people from the cultural and political stench. We must counteract cultural asceticism — which takes place in the name of the rotted and deformed European man, in the name of atheism, of civilization, of the antichrist — with asceticism in the name of Christ.

For this reason the main obligation of our Church is to create Christ-bearing ascetics. The voice which must be heard in it today is: Go back to the Christ-bearing ascetics, towards the Holy Fathers! Go back to the asceticism and virtues of the Holy Fathers! Go back to the virtues of Saints Anthony and Athanasios, of Saints Basil and Gregory, of Saints John Chrysostom and Damascene, of Saints Sergei and Seraphim (the Russians), of Saints Savva, Prochor and Gabriel (the Serbs), and others! Because these theanthropic asceticism-virtues created Saint Anthony, Saint Gregory and Saint Savva. And today, only the Orthodox asceticism-virtues are capable of sanctifying every soul and the soul of our whole people, because the theanthropic purpose is eternal and unalterable, and its means are also eternal and unalterable, because Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb. 13:8). Here is the difference between the human world and the world of Christ: the human one is finite and temporal, while Christ's is unalterable and eternal. Orthodoxy, as the unique bearer and guardian of the perfect and all-radiant Person of the God-man Christ, is realized exclusively with the theanthropic-Orthodox means, the ascetical virtues in grace, not with means lent by Roman Catholicism or Protestantism, because these are Christianities according to the version of the proud European man, and not of the humble God-man. God Himself facilitates this mission of our Church, because in our people there exists a spirit of asceticism, as Orthodoxy created it through the ages. The Orthodox soul of our people inclines towards the Holy Fathers, towards the Orthodox Ascetics. The personal, familial, and parochial asceticism — especially in prayer and fasting — is characteristic of Orthodoxy. Our people, the Orthodox people, are the people of Christ because, like Christ, they

summarize the Gospel in these two virtues: prayer and fasting. They are convinced that every impurity, every impure thought, every impure desire, every impure spirit, can be chased out of man only by prayer and fasting (Matt. 17:21). In the depths of their hearts our people know Christ, they know Orthodoxy, know what it is that makes the Orthodox man Orthodox. Orthodoxy always creates ascetical rebirths; it does not recognize other rebirths.

The ascetics are the only missionaries of Orthodoxy. Asceticism is the only missionary school of Orthodoxy. Orthodoxy is asceticism and life, for this reason only with asceticism and life does she reach and realize her mission. Asceticism — personal and ecclesiastical — must be developed; this must be the internal mission of our Church towards our people. The parish must become an ascetical center. But this can only be done by an ascetic parish priest. Prayer and fasting, the ecclesiastical life of the parish, the liturgical life — these are the chief means by which Orthodoxy brings about rebirth in people. The parish, the parish community must be reborn, and in Christ-loving and brother-loving love humbly serve Christ and all people with meekness and humility, with sacrifice and self-denial. This service ought to be saturated and nourished by prayer and a liturgical life. This is fundamental and absolutely essential. But all of these demand as a prerequisite that our hierarchs, our priests, our monastics become ascetics, and for this: Let us beseech the Lord. *Finis.*

Prayer of the Incense

Every time a censuring is made, the priest makes the sign of the cross over the censer and prays: *"Incense do we offer unto Thee, O Christ our God, for an odor of spiritual sweetness, which do Thou accept upon Thy most heavenly altar, sending down upon us in return the grace of Thy Holy Spirit."*

Incense is an offering made to God. It costs us.

Incense concretely depicts the rising of our prayers to God and the sweetness He perceives in them.

Incense also evokes the sweet presence of God's Spirit.

Man offers incense, something material, something God has made and given to man in the first place, to God who is Spirit. In return for this small offering, we ask not something material but something immaterial and of immense value: the grace of the Holy Spirit, God's uncreated energies which penetrate, sanctify, and empower us.

In church, every time we offer incense, we should remember the great boon we ask of God: His very presence and power to come upon us. To have this awareness with each censuring will help us humbly to open our hearts to God who gives us so much in exchange for so little.

Upcoming Events 2010

4, 11 July: Fr. Justin gone; Fr. Christopher Allen here

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!