

# The Confessor's Tongue for August 8, 2010

11<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost: St. Emilian the Confessor

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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## August 8: St. Emeilan & St. Myron

For veneration of holy icons, Bishop Emilian of Cyzicus underwent "much and cruel tribulations" and in the year 815 he was imprisoned. He died in prison five years later.

Born in Raucia on the island of Crete, St. Myron in the beginning of his life was a simple farmer. Zealously cultivating the ground, Myron became prosperous, and used his prosperity to help the deprived, but was content to keep for his family only what was necessary. He shared full measures of the surpluses of his crop with the poor and never demanded anything in return from them. With such unselfishness Myron combined meekness and condescension for the errors and defects of the people. So, having once seen seven thieves in his barn with bags overflowing with wheat, the Saint kindly visited them, calmed them and even helped them to lift their bags. And these thieves subsequently became honorable people. For his charitable life in mercy for the poor, St. Myron was installed as a presbyter in his native city, and later became their bishop. He fervently taught the Christian faith and piety to his flock, strengthened the witnesses and became famous for working many wonders. Having lived to a ripe old age, he died at 100 years old, in about the year 350.

*From the Bulgakov Handbook, Fr. Eugen Tarris, translator.*

## The Sayings of St. Anthony the Great

*A brother renounced the world and gave his good to the poor, but he kept back a little for his personal expenses. He went to see Abba Anthony. When he told Anthony this, the old man said to him, "If you want to be a monk, go into the village, buy some meat, cover your naked body with it, and come here like that." The brother did so, and the dogs and birds tore at his flesh. When he came back, the old man asked him whether he had followed his advice. He showed him his wounded body, and Saint Anthony said, "Those who renounce the world but want to keep something for themselves are torn in this way by the demons who make war on them." Saying 20 Sayings of the Desert Fathers*

*Commentary:* The first step to becoming a monk is renunciation of the world: of property, ties, titles, family, his name—everything that might hold him back from being fully devoted to Christ. Anything from the former life that the monk holds onto provides leverage for the enemy to torment him and overthrow his good intention to devote himself to Christ without distraction.

And for us who live in the world? We must see all things that we have as belonging to God—including ourselves: He is Master and Owner, we are but stewards who use His goods according to His purposes. For example, we tithe to acknowledge Christ as Master over the fruits of our labor (He gives us the power to make wealth Deuteronomy 8:18) and

to secure His blessing on the portion that remains to us. And of that portion that remains, part is for our use and the support of our lives, and part is for the relief of those in need. When a couple is married in the Church, we pray that God grant them an abundance of good things not so they can have financial security or live a comfortable 'middle class life', but so that they may always have something with which to relieve the needs of the poor and may never have to turn someone away because they don't have enough to share. Here surely God will judge us for our profligate spending, for our living beyond our means, for our enslaving ourselves financially through debt. Spending so much that our monthly payments consume our entire income will not excuse us before God of not tithing or giving alms. We will stand condemned for luxurious living. Even if we don't accumulate debt, but spend all that we make on ourselves, we shall still find ourselves condemned before God: our checkbook and credit card statements will tell the tale of a life squandered in pursuit of this world's goods rather than spent to acquire of the Kingdom of God.

We must not, then, hold tightly to this world's goods as though they were ours or our lives were contained in them. We cannot afford to have a sense of entitlement, that God somehow owes us a certain standard of living, certain level of comfort or ease, freedom from suffering, or anything else. Anything in this world we let our hearts get attached to can be used by our enemy to afflict us and hold us back from the kingdom of God.

Though the "love of money is the root of all evil", it is not money alone that holds us back. We can cling to relationships that pull us into sin rather than seeing them for what they are and rejecting them. We can find our identity in our jobs or positions so much so that we can't let them go or walk away when God calls us to something else. We can become so engrossed in the pursuit of pleasure that we cannot fast and are retarded in spiritual progress.

And much of the anger that afflicts us and torments us has its source in our love of things that are not God: when someone else steps between us and the object of our desire, anger arises. May God help us all to give ourselves entirely to Him.

*Fr. Justin Frederick*

## A Catechism on Confession: How To Make a Good Confession

When preparing to go to confession, every Orthodox Christian should try to remember all the sins that he has committed, whether voluntary or involuntary, and should examine his life in detail. If there are sins that were committed before his last confession, but which he then forgot to confess, he should mention these also.

When you come to confession, you should confess your sins sincerely, remembering that you are not confessing them to the priest, but to God Himself, Who already knows, but wants you to admit your wrongs and your guilt. You should not feel embarrassed before your spiritual father, because, being a man like yourself, he knows human weaknesses and the inclination that all people have towards sin, and thus he cannot judge you harshly when you come to confession. But maybe you are embarrassed to confess your sins before your spiritual father because you are afraid of losing his good opinion? On the contrary, if you value his good opinion, you should understand that he will respect you all the more for the sincerity of your confession. Also, if you are ashamed and afraid to lay bare your sins before your spiritual father, how will you bear it when at the Dread Judgment your sins—if you have not been freed of them by true repentance—will be revealed before God Himself, His angels, and all mankind, both people you know and strangers? If you remember this, you will want to free yourself from your sins and from the punishment that they bring upon you, and will confess them in all sincerity before your spiritual father. You should hide nothing wrong that you have done, but at the same time you should not add anything extra, and not blame yourself for what you have not done by simply saying, “Everything I have done is sinful,” or some such catch-phrase. Nor should you admit every sin you are asked about whether you have done it or not, as some people mistakenly think they should. Your confession must be realistic and therefore true.

Another reason why you should not simply say, “I have sinned in everything, word, deed, and thought, and by omission,” without giving further details, is because your spiritual father needs to know exactly what you have done in order to give you good advice. Also such a short, undetailed confession means that you are avoiding what confession is intended to achieve, i.e. to bring you to admit what you have done and to admit that you were wrong in doing it. Your spiritual father already knows that you are a sinner, for no man is without sin; even the holy Apostle Paul described himself as the “chief of sinners.” Each sin must be mentioned in turn, just as you would enumerate all your symptoms to a doctor. You should not just think of a couple of main trends to “discuss,” and neglect to mention the innumerable other sins.

Do not mention the sins of others in your confession, unless this is necessary for your spiritual father to understand how and why you yourself have sinned. If you have a personal problem involving other people, which you would like to discuss with your spiritual father, or if you are in need of advice or some consolation for some unkindness that has been done to you, make an appointment to see your spiritual father at some other time. Also, do not use the fact that many people commit some sin that you have committed as an excuse for it. Still less say “but everyone does that.” For one thing, you have come to

confess your own sins, not those of others. How can you be sure that without exception every human being commits any given sin? Or even though you might know of their sin, how can you be sure they have not repented of it in their heart? Pay no heed to the sins of others. Oftentimes we imagine the motives and intentions and sinful inclinations of others, for no man knows the heart of another.

Confess your sins fully but concisely; one does not have to make a story of them! That in itself can be an evidence of pride. Particularly regarding carnal sins, do not go into detailed descriptions of sin. If your spiritual father feels that you need to confess any particular sin in fuller detail, he will ask you about it, and then you should not hesitate to describe it fully and to answer all his questions.

Before going to confession make a thorough preparation, and examine your life so that you recognize your sins. If you wish you can write out a list, or keep a list day by day. In order to check your sins, it is wise to check them against some list. One can use the Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes, or the list of sins in the prayer of daily confession of sins read before going to sleep each day, or that in the prayer at the end of the Canon to the Guardian Angel in the Prayer Book. Such checking against a list is very beneficial, otherwise one tends to remember only the most serious sins, or the most noticeable or most extraordinarily, and to forget, perhaps deliberately, the underlying ones, the ones that have become habitual, and the things that we have forgotten even to remember as sins because they have become so much a part of our life. Sins of neglect, omission, and laziness often fall into this category, as do the ones that are seemingly respectable: pride, vanity, etc.

Do not try to make excuses for your sins, for the more that you justify yourself, the less forgiveness you will receive. It is important that you yourself should fully realize how wrong each sin you have committed is—and the more you understand the wrongfulness of any sin, the easier it will be for you to make an effort of will to avoid committing it in the future. However, you may mention if there is any special circumstance, such as some particular temptation or outside pressure, that it would be useful for your spiritual father to know, so that he can advise you how to deal with it. *from “The Shepherd”, London*

#### August Namedays

- 1 Elesa (Amy) Stokes (Martyr Elesa of Kythera and the Peleponesos)
- 13 Tikhon (Alan) Prater

#### August Birthdays

- 30 Melanie Betz

#### Upcoming Events 2010

- 15 August: Dormition of the Theotokos
- 6 September: Labor Day Picnic, noon to five
- 26 September: Annual Meeting, 11:30 a.m.

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!