

# The Confessor's Tongue for September 2, A. D. 2012

13th Sunday after Pentecost: Martyr Mamas, John the Faster, Anthony & Theodosius  
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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## A New Year

As the beginning of the Church year falls on September 1, we entered a new year yesterday, a new year in which we shall see new developments and face new challenges as we seek to grow in Christ.

It is likely that we shall be given a new Metropolitan on November 13, as the Church will meet in Parma, Ohio, for a one-day assembly for that purpose. Delegates from each attending parish will vote, and the Holy Synod will make the final decision and election of the new primate.

We may also expect to choose a new bishop for the Diocese of the South. Though that assembly is not now scheduled, it is likely to take place early next year. We have been praying for a faithful bishop to replace the ever-memorable Archbishop Dmitri of blessed memory. We continue to pray, trust that God will answer our fervent prayer for a good overseer and father in Christ.

The new year will see the completion of our new hall (God willing!) By providing more easily accessible public space, it will allow us to more fully and comfortably use our existing chapel, to grow to fill it, and to position us for construction of a new church, something which could begin before this new year is out. It will provide us with space for fellowship, classes, lectures, and other gatherings, and will make it possible to convert our existing hall (or coffee hour room) into a working kitchen.

The new hall will enable us to institute an annual lecture in honor of St. Maximus, a key figure in the development of the expression of the Church's teaching. The first lecture we expect to be held in January on the feast of St. Maximus with John Granger, who will speak on how reading St. Maximus' *400 Chapters on Love* changed his approach to reading, speaking, and listening.

The construction of a proper temple remains an important goal for our parish. We have yet to complete the design of the temple. Once that design is done, nothing stands in our way to build other than money and the will. The money to build is available, as the cathedral has authorized securing a loan for us up to \$400,000. The will we must supply, and that will must express itself in our monthly giving, which must rise to about \$10,000 to support the construction. This is within our reach, or soon will be.

The new year witnesses the resumption of our church school program. While the primary spiritual education of our children takes place in the services of the Church and at home through the instruction and example of parents, we offer our church school classes to help assist in that holy task of imparting faith in Jesus Christ to our children.

The new year needs to see the resurrection of our campus ministry in one form or another. The

Orthodox Christian Fellowship (OCF) chapter which was once thriving here has fallen on hard times. It needs to be revived in order to help support the faith of Orthodox students at our two local universities and to provide a means of reaching out to non-believing college students to bring them to Christ. The resurrection of this ministry depends on our students themselves, any who would work with them, and your prayers for this important ministry.

Part of our responsibility as the family of God is to care for those in need, first for those among ourselves and then for those outside whom God brings our way. While each of us is personally responsible before God to fulfill the command to "give to those who ask of you" and to give to our brother whom we see in need what he needs for his body, we need to grow in our ability to do this as a parish, whether by supporting existing local charities with our time and money or developing our own.

Christ has given us a great gift by conveying to us through himself His life, participation in the divine life, membership in the family of God, incorporation into His Body the Church, and adoption as children of God the Father with the inestimable privilege of calling God "Father." Have we fully appropriated this gift? No, but we may grow in our appropriation, appreciation, and participation in it over the course of this new year. Not only do we have the possibility to grow, we have the need to grow. There is no stasis in spiritual life: we are either growing or declining. The time of our life passes, and we lose opportunities that cannot be regained, we lose time for growth that we cannot recover. The year awaits our decision to commit ourselves to Christ, to give ourselves more fully to Him, to seek His face and allow Him to work in us to cleanse us from what hinders the flow of His life in us and fill us with an ever-deepening love for Him and for one another.

May God grant us all a profitable new year in the Church! And when we arrive at this time next year, may we all be able to rejoice in having used the year well and seeing the fruit of God's increased presence in our lives.  
*Fr. Justin Frederick*

## September 2: St. John the Faster

St. John under the assumptions of his parents should have become a simple handicraftsman. But the young man was disposed to the monastic life and because of his morally good life he was ordained a deacon. Being among the church clergy, he was worthy of a vision that served this sign to St. John that he will be the shameless recipient of the grace of God of prayerful reinforcement and spiritual enlightenment for the hungry and the thirsty. Within a short time St. John was elected Archbishop of Constantinople. Throughout his episcopacy he did

not abandon that life view that for the most part was proper chiefly to the strictest desert ascetics and as a result he received the name 'faster'. By the example of his life he very strongly taught all believers to restrain capricious wants and to be able to control themselves. The hierarch could not with equanimity view the clear disregard in his flock for the institutions of the church. When the inhabitants of Constantinople decided to give in to their passions by attending a horse show in the hippodrome on eve of the feast of Pentecost, the hierarch fell on his knees before God and fervently prayed that the Lord destroy the impious intention of his flock. And, as soon as the inhabitants were on their way to the hippodrome, a terrible storm with thunder, rain and hailstones suddenly came up so that all dispersed in fear and should understand the reprehensibility of the untimely entertainment. Distinguished "by abstinence and unflinching prayer", St. John had such love for the poor, that nothing was refused them from his estate, so that after his death he had nothing except some old clothes. During his life he performed many miracles and shone "in the world of piety with light", and was glorified, in the words of a church writer or in the expression of the Church, "as the guide of pious doctrines and the speaker of wise words". He died in the year 595.

### September 8: Nativity of the Theotokos

On the eighth day of the Church's new year, She celebrates the Great Feast of the Nativity of the Theotokos. The Feast has a pre-feast of one day and a post-feast of four days.

This feast marks the birth of Mary to her parents Joachim and Anna in their old age. The Church attributes great importance to the birth of Mary, the Mother of God, because it was through her and her acceptance of God's will that our Lord became man. This Feast occurs at the beginning of the Church year because Mary's birth marks the beginning of the process that led to our salvation. Without her cooperation and freely-given assent, the eternal Word of God would not have become man. The following hymn from Vespers of the Feast expresses much of the Feast's meaning:

Today is the beginning of joy for all the world; today the winds blow that bring tidings of salvation. The barrenness of our nature hath been loosed: for the barren woman is revealed as the mother of her, who, after bearing the Maker, still remained virgin. From her He who is God by nature taketh what is alien and maketh it His own; through her Christ worketh salvation for those gone astray in the flesh, He who loveth mankind and is the Deliverer of our souls.

The Feast marks the "beginning of joy," for through the godly inheritance of many generations, the way had been prepared for the birth of the woman who would be fitting to give birth to God in the flesh. God's plan awaited the coming of the suitable vessel who could bring His Son into the world, giving Him human flesh.

Man's nature, rendered barren by the curse, unable to fulfill his potential for achieving God's likeness, enslaved to sin, death, and the devil, is ended; for Anna, long barren, gives birth to the perfect flowering and offering of the human race, her pure daughter Mary, and Mary, through her purity and willing submission to God, permits "He who is God by nature" to take "what is alien" (i.e. human nature) and to make that created human nature His own. Through her, Christ comes to work salvation for man whom He loves.

The Troparion of the Feast, which expresses the external meaning of the Feast, gives the reason for the claim that Mary's birth is "the beginning of joy for all the world" which "hath brought joy to all the inhabited earth." Through her, Christ is born who delivers us from the curse and from death and pours out upon us blessing and eternal life.

The Kontakion of the Feast, which expresses the internal, or hidden, meaning of the Feast, describes the cosmic effects of Mary's birth: Adam and Eve are set free from death and corruption, and God's people are delivered from sin. A barren woman, Anna, bears a woman, Mary, who sustains our lives, and she does this because of whom she bore: Christ our God.

As usual, we sing or say the troparion and kontakion of the feast at meals and as part of our daily prayers from the Vigil of the Feast through the Leavetaking on September 12<sup>th</sup>.

#### Troparion tone 4

Thy birth, O Theotokos, / hath brought joy to all the inhabited earth: / for from thee hath shone forth the Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God. / He hath loosed us from the curse and given the blessing; / He hath made death of no effect and bestowed on us eternal life.

#### Kontakion tone 4

O Undeiled, by thy holy nativity / Joachim and Anna were set free from the reproach of childlessness, / and Adam and Eve from the corruption of death. / Delivered from the guilt of sin, Thy people keep the feast as they sing unto thee: / The barren woman beareth the Theotokos who sustaineth our life.

"For so ought he that corrects do: since he at least, who acts merely from anger is but satisfying his own feeling; but he who after correcting the sinner renders also the offices of love, shows that those words also, whatsoever he spake in reproof, were words of fond affection. Just so let us too chasten one another; and let neither the corrector be angry, (for this belongs not to correction but to passion,) nor let him that is corrected take it ill. For what is done is healing, not despite." *St. John Chrysostom*

#### Upcoming Events 2012

- 3 September: Labor Day Picnic
- 8 September: Nativity of the Theotokos
- 14 September: Exaltation of the Precious Cross
- 30 September: St. Maximus Annual Meeting

**GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!**