

The Confessor's Tongue for September 23, A. D. 2012

16th Sunday after Pentecost: Conception of John the Baptist

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.

The Hundredth Person

During the time Father Moses was abbot of Optina Monastery in Russia, a certain rich merchant stayed at a monastery guest house with his grown-up son. Because of unexpected flooding, they had to remain several days. This merchant did not trust monks and was not well disposed toward them, and he was only staying so long at the monastery because he was forced by circumstances. Seeing that the monastery guestmaster had diligently waited on them for several days and brought them meals, he once said to him at dinner time, "You sure treat us well, but just how much are you going to charge us later?" "We're not going to charge you anything." "What, nothing?" "This is how we do it—we have a box on the wall and you just put in there whatever amount God puts into your heart to give." "Why, of course I'll put something in, but the next person won't, and maybe there will be a lot of people like him, and so the monastery will go broke feeding everyone for free!" "Our Father Abbot says that even if ninety-nine people do not give anything, God will send a hundredth person to make up for them all." At this the merchant looked at his son and said, "Well, my boy, it looks like that hundredth person is you and me." Astonished at the Superior's faith, he became a regular benefactor of Optina Hermitage from that time forth. From *The Elder Moses of Optina*

How to Always Get Your Way

One of the main reasons for Father Moses' always peaceful disposition—and also one of his most distinctive and remarkable traits—was that he never insistently sought his own will in anything. On the contrary, he entrusted himself to God's will with perfect submission in things great at small. He was never disturbed by anything, no matter what happened. Sometimes he would give a brother an assignment, but because of unforeseen circumstances things would not work out as he had expected. "It looks like it wasn't God's will," he would say on such occasions, and he would calmly lay aside his former plan. He would also say, "One must have patience ready at hand in all things, and not desire anything to turn out otherwise than it does, so as not to lose one's peace." He would counsel everyone to keep what he called Saint Dorotheus' rule for being at peace, "Do not want things to turn out as you would like, but want whatever happens. That way you will be at peace with everyone." Father Moses himself would find peace by fulfilling this rule even in the most trying situations. In him were fulfilled these words of Saint Dorotheus in all their force, "One who does not have his own will always gets his way. Since he has no desire of his own, no matter what happens with him, he is content—and so it turns out that he always

fulfills his desires, for he does not want things to turn out as he wishes, but as they do turn out.

Strategic Planning

Father Archimandrite Moses never liked to make long-range plans for the future. Sometimes the workers would ask him for instructions for a job that was still in the planning stages when they still had not finished the one they were working on. But the Elder would never agree to discuss anything ahead of time and would tell them to come back when the time came or when they had finished their job. He would say, "As for tomorrow, let God's will be done." Everything was accomplished peacefully because he never tried to fit the circumstances to his own preconceptions, but instead adapted his ideas to fit the circumstances, since he discerned God's will in the latter.

The Path to Confession

Disbelief and Spiritual Ignorance

I believe that there is no one on earth so unhappy as the man who, not knowing and not wanting to know God and His commandments, rejects the saving gift of grace by his own free will. This unwise soul will surely fall into the hands of evil spirits who will lock it up in a prison of dark ignorance, never to know the living God. Disbelief and ignorance always go hand in hand....

Many have sinned by not having read the Gospel, by not having learned about Church life, and by not yet having come to love our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ with their whole heart. Reverently making the sign of the Cross from the depths of our hearts, let us turn to God in repentance.

Forgive us, Merciful Lord!

Others, having received the sacrament of Holy Baptism, having made vows of belief and faithfulness to the Redeemer, have not lived up to them. They don't honor the Lord's Day (Sunday), they don't go to church on feast days, nor to Confession or Holy Communion . . . they've become like unbelievers, dooming their souls to spiritual starvation and contaminating their hearts with passions and vice.

Forgive us, Merciful Lord!

Not all of us have formed the habit of beginning and ending the day with the morning and evening prayers passed down by the Church. Others pray in an offhand and hasty manner and by doing so offend the goodness and all-embracing mercy of God. There are even wretched Christians who do not pray at all, who don't know the Lord's Prayer ("Our Father") or the Archangel's greeting to the Mother of God ("Rejoice, O virgin Theotokos...")

Forgive us, Merciful Lord.

Even among Christians who know the value of prayer, there are those who pay no attention to the

Lord's decree that "*the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent take it by force.*" This means that by wholehearted daily prayer and the use of our will for good we can enter, with God's help, into the Heavenly Kingdom. These Christians think it is somehow dishonest to pray when they "don't feel like it." This is not only a spiritual error but a sign of self-pity and indulgence.

Forgive us, Merciful Lord!

Others are simply lazy. They put off the habit of regular prayer until "tomorrow," but tomorrow never comes and the days and years given to them for repentance slip by unnoticed.

Forgive us, Merciful Lord!

Quite widespread is the sin of not observing the fast on Wednesdays and Fridays, when our Lord was betrayed by Judas and crucified on Golgotha. On these days, out of reverence for His redeeming suffering, Christians abstain from meat and dairy products according to the decree of the Lord Himself, "*Can the children of the bridegroom fast, as long as the bridegroom is with them? . . . But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast....*"

Forgive us, Merciful Lord!

Perhaps some of us who are older have succumbed to an evil spirit and, in a perilous state of spiritual blindness, said to ourselves, "I don't believe in God. God doesn't exist." Or maybe someone has tempted other children with these awful words, infecting them with the disease of unbelief, or has mocked the Church and her sacraments, or the clergy, or has read books poisoned by the venom of atheism. *Forgive us, Merciful Lord!*

Truly the sin of ignorance and hardened unbelief begins with losing interest in church services and the sacraments, with a light-minded attitude toward the truths of the faith, and ends in blasphemy.

Forgive us, Merciful Lord!

This wretched sin can be overcome by repentance, diligent attendance of church services, going to Confession and receiving Holy Communion, reading traditional Orthodox books (such as the lives of the saints) and heartfelt prayer.

From the Parish Bylaws

ARTICLE IV The Parish Meeting

Section 1 Authority

The Parish Meeting is the highest legislative, judicial and administrative authority of the Parish as a corporation. All members (as in Article III, Section 1) who have been members of the Parish for a period of six months and are at least eighteen years old may attend and vote at the Parish Meeting.

Section 2 Place of the Parish Meeting

The Parish Meeting must be held on Parish premises.

Section 3 Periodicity of the Parish Meeting

The Parish Meeting is held annually, on a determined Sunday of the year, following the celebration of the Divine Liturgy.

Section 4 Notice of the Parish Meeting

Notice of the annual Parish Meeting shall be given by the rector or priest-in-charge from the ambon at the

Divine Liturgy on the three consecutive Sundays preceding the date of the meeting. Notice must also be made at least once in written form, in a special circular or in the parish bulletin, mailed to all voting members of the Parish (See *Section 1, Article IV*).

Section 5 Competence of the Parish Meeting

Matters pertaining to the life of the Parish that may be discussed and acted upon at the Parish Meeting include:

- a) the approval of the annual operating budget submitted by the Parish Council (Article X) or by a special budget committee;

- b) the election of the Parish Council members, the lay delegate to the Diocesan Assembly, and the lay delegate to the All-American Council, if the latter is to be convened in the current year.

- c) hearing and approving of annual or special reports by committees and parish organizations.

- d) decisions on matters concerning the purchase, improvement or sale of real property, investment of Parish funds (other than in savings accounts), and the use of Parish funds for loans for any purpose;

- e) proposal of resolutions to the Diocesan Assembly, these, if any, to be submitted to the bishop six months prior to the date of the Assembly.

Section 6 Special Parish Meetings

In addition to the annual Parish Meeting, Special Parish Meetings may be convoked by the bishop, the rector or priest-in-charge, or by the Parish Council, with the approval of the rector or priest-in-charge. Voting members of the Parish may petition the rector and the Parish Council to convoke a Special Parish Meeting, such petition requiring the signatures of two thirds of the total number of members.

Special Parish Meetings are called to discuss and act upon specific matters, and no other matter may be discussed at such meetings.

Section 7 The Quorum for the Annual Parish Meeting and the Special Parish Meetings

The quorum for the annual Parish Meeting shall be no less than 50% of the number of voting members of the parish.

Section 8 Voting

A simple majority vote by those voting members in attendance at the Parish Meeting, Annual or Special, shall be decisive on all matters within the competence of the meeting.

Section 9 The Presiding Officer

The rector or the priest-in-charge is the presiding officer of the Parish Meeting, Annual or Special. The warden may also chair parts of the meeting sessions, in accordance with a prior agreement reached between him and the rector and the Parish Council.

Section 10 Confirmation of Minutes

A copy of the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting or of a Special Parish Meeting, signed by the rector or priest-in-charge and the warden, shall be sent to the bishop, through the district dean, for confirmation. All decisions and resolutions in those minutes become effective upon receipt of such confirmation.

Upcoming Events 2012

30 September: St. Maximus Annual Meeting
21 January 2013: Feast of St. Maximus and the First Annual St. Maximus Memorial Lecture

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!