

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

26<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost: Prophet Habakkuk

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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## December 2: Holy Prophet Habakkuk

Eighth of the twelve Minor Prophets, he was from the root of Simeon and prophesied during the Babylonian Captivity. In the words of the Holy Church, the Prophet Habakkuk (Abbacum) "standing guard for the Divine", "comprehended the advent of God" and "announced to the world Christ's resurrection". He left his book, consisting of three brief chapters, in which is his prophecy about the captivity of the Judean people and about the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans. He died about 600 years before the Nativity of Christ.

### Confession in the Fast

The Nativity Fast is given to us to remove the clutter from our lives that displaces Christ and make room for Him in our hearts that we may receive Him in greater measure. An important means of doing this is preparing ourselves for Holy Confession. If we have not been to Confession since the Fast began, or have not gone for a long time, we should make the effort to prepare ourselves and make a good Confession so that we may be cleansed and illumined by Holy Communion.

### On Living in the Present

From *The Diary of a Russian Priest*

Our continual mistake is that we do not concentrate upon the present day, the actual hour, of our life; we live in the past or in the future; we are continually expecting the coming of some special moment when our life will unfold itself in its full significance. And we do not notice that life is flowing like water through our fingers, sifting like precious grain from a loosely-fastened bag.

Constantly, each day, each hour, God is sending us people, circumstances, tasks, which should mark the beginning of our renewal; yet we pay them no attention, and thus we continually resist God's will for us. Indeed, how can God help us? Only by sending us in our daily life certain people, and certain coincidences of circumstance. If we accepted every hour of our life as the hour of God's will for us, as the decisive, most important, unique hour of our life—what sources of joy, love, strength, as yet hidden from us, would spring from the depths of our soul!

Let us then be serious in our attitude towards each person we meet in our life, towards every opportunity for performing a good deed; be sure that you will then fulfill God's will for you in these very circumstances, on that very day, in that very hour.

### From the Fathers on the Scriptures

Great is the profit of the divine Scriptures, and all-sufficient is the aid which comes from them. And

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Paul declared this when he said, "Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written aforetime for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." (Romans 15:4, I Corinthians 1:11). For the living oracles are a treasury of all manner of medicines, so that whether it be needful to quench pride, to lull desire to sleep, to tread under foot the love of money, to despise pain, to inspire confidence, to gain patience, from them one may find abundant resource. *St. John Chrysostom, Homily 37 on John 5*

This is the cause of all evils, the not knowing the Scriptures. *Chrysostom Homily 9 On Colossians 3:16-17*

Since, therefore, the entire Scriptures, the prophets, and the Gospels, can be clearly, unambiguously, and harmoniously understood by all, although all do not believe them; and since they proclaim that one only God, to the exclusion of all others, formed all things by His word, whether visible or invisible, heavenly or earthly, in the water of under the earth, as I have shown from the very words of Scripture; and since the very system of creation to which we belong testifies, by what falls under our notice, that one Being made and governs it,—those persons will seem truly foolish who blind their eyes to such a clear demonstration, and will not behold the light of the announcement [made to them]; but they put fetters upon themselves, and everyone of them imagines, by means of their obscure interpretations of the parables, that he has found out a God of his own. *Irenaeus, Against Heresies, III.xxvii.2*

If, however, we cannot discover explanations of all these things in Scripture which are made the subject of the investigation, yet let us not on that account seek after any other God besides Him who really exists. For this is the very greatest impiety. We should leave things of that nature to God who created us, being most properly assured that the Scriptures are indeed perfect, since they were spoken by the Word of God and His Spirit; but we, inasmuch as we are inferior to, and later in existence than, the Word of God and His Spirit, are on that very account destitute of the knowledge of His mysteries. *Irenaeus, Against Heresies, III.xxviii.1*

But for the searching of the Scriptures and true knowledge of them an honorable life is needed, and a pure soul, and that virtue which is according to Christ; so that the intellect, guiding its path by it, may be able to attain what it desires and to comprehend it, in so far as it is accessible to human nature to learn concerning the Word of God. For without a pure mind and a modeling of the life after

the saints a man could not possibly comprehend the words of the saints. . . . He that would comprehend the mind of those who speak of God must needs begin by washing and cleansing his soul, by his manner of living, and approach the saints themselves by imitating their works; so that, associated with them in the conduct of a common life, he may understand also what has been revealed to them by God, and thenceforth, as closely knit to them, may escape the peril of the sinners and their fire at the Day of Judgment, and receive what is laid up for the saints in the Kingdom of Heaven, which 'eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man,' whatsoever things are prepared for them that live a virtuous life, and love the God and the Father, in Christ Jesus our Lord: through whom and with whom be to the Father Himself, with the Son Himself, in the Holy Spirit, honor and might and glory for ever and ever. Amen. S. Athanasius the Great, *On the Incarnation*, 57

It is one and the same God whom both the Old and the New Testament proclaim, who is praised and glorified in the Trinity: *I am come*, saith the Lord, *not to destroy the law but to fulfill it*. For He Himself worked out our salvation for which all Scripture and all mystery exists. And again, *Search the Scriptures, for they are they that testify of me*. And the Apostle says, *God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son*. Through the Holy Spirit, therefore, both the law and the prophets, the evangelists and apostles and pastors and teachers spake. All Scripture, then, is *given by inspiration of God and is also assuredly profitable*. Wherefore to search the Scriptures is a work most fair and most profitable for souls. For just as the tree planted by the channels of waters, so also the soul watered by the divine Scripture is enriched and gives fruit in its season, viz. orthodox belief, and is adorned with evergreen leafage, I mean, actions pleasing to God. For through the Holy Scriptures we are trained to action that is pleasing to God, and untroubled contemplation. For in these we find both exhortation to every virtue and dissuasion from every vice. If, therefore, we are lovers of learning, we shall also be learned in many things. For by care and toil and the grace of God the Giver, all things are accomplished. *For every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened*. Wherefore let us knock at the very fair garden of the Scriptures, so fragrant and sweet and blooming, with its varied sounds of spiritual and divinely-inspired birds ringing all round our ears, laying hold of our hearts, comforting the mourner, pacifying the angry, and filling him with joy everlasting: which sets our mind on the gold-gleaming, brilliant back of the divine dove, whose bright pinions bear up to the only-begotten Son and Heir of the Husbandman of that spiritual Vineyard and bring us through Him to the Father of Lights.

But let us not knock carelessly but rather zealously and constantly: let knocking we grow weary. For thus it will be opened to us. If we read once or twice and do not understand what we read, let us not grow weary, but let us persist, let us talk much, let us enquire. For *ask thy Father*, he saith, *and He will shew thee: thy elders and they will tell thee* [Deut32.7]. For *there is not in every man that knowledge*. Let us draw of the fountain of the garden perennial and purest waters springing into life eternal. Here let us luxuriate, let us revel insatiate: for the Scriptures possess inexhaustible grace. But if we are able to pluck anything profitable from outside sources, there is nothing to forbid that. Let us become tried money-dealers, heaping up the true and pure gold and discarding the spurious. Let us keep the fairest sayings but let us throw to the dogs absurd gods and strange myths: for we might prevail most mightily against them through themselves. *John of Damascus, On the Orthodox Faith, Book 4.17*

**St Caesarius of Arles, On the Coming of Christ**

Since the Lord's birthday is approaching, let us with Christ's help prepare ourselves for the nuptials and heavenly banquet by being clear of all dissipation and adorned with good works. Let us give alms to the poor, attend vigils more promptly, pray or chant the psalms standing in church; observe peace with all men, and recall to harmony those whom you know are at variance. If with the help of Christ you are willing to fulfill these things faithfully, you will be able to approach the Lord's altar in this life with an easy conscience and in the future life will happily arrive at eternal bliss.

**December Namedays**

6 Alexander Nicholas Sancer; 13 Lucia Lydia Sancer; 16 Joseph (Derek) Sancer (Righteous Joseph the Comely)

**December Birthdays**

2 Anna Birthisel (2004); 5 Alexander Sancer; 7 Nancy Saito; 11 Lydia Sancer;;13 Eilis Birthisel (2006) 16 Emmanuel Lyda (2005); 19 Patrick St. Jean; 28 Nathan Brouillette; 31 Leah Cole

**Upcoming Events 2012**

6 December: Feast of St. Nicholas  
 9 December: Mission Council Meeting  
 18 December: Vigil for Patronal Feast of St. Nicholas, McKinney (old style).  
 20 December: Holy Unction Service, 7:00 p.m., for the healing of soul and body, 7:00 p.m. To receive the anointing, one must be Orthodox and have made a Confession since the Nativity Fast began.  
 21 January 2013: Feast of St. Maximus and the First Annual St. Maximus Memorial Lecture

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!