

The Confessor's Tongue for May 26, A. D. 2013

Sunday of the Paralytic: Christ is Risen!

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 Forty Paschal Days

St. Leo the Great of Rome (+461)

The forty days after Jesus spent in the desert before He began His public ministry were a period of preparation for His task of proclaiming the Kingdom of God to the people of Israel. After His Resurrection, He spent another forty days preparing His disciples for their task of preaching the Good News to the whole world. Throughout this time, His bodily presence remained with them, visible and tangible, in order that their faith in His Resurrection might be strengthened by the evidence of their senses.

The period between Christ's Resurrection and Ascension was in no means uneventful, for it was the time when the great truths of our redemption were made clear to the Apostles.

The Mystery of Religion

St. Theophan the Recluse

In what is the whole matter for those concerned with the salvation of the soul?

In this: to have God as their own God and to acknowledge themselves as belonging to God. Having God as one's own God is one side of the matter, which cannot have a durable formation if it is not joined to the second side of the matter, that is, the acknowledgment of oneself as God's, or certification in this, that as you have God as your own, so God has you as His own. In this is the essence of union with God and the whole mystery of religion. *Translation Fr. Justin*

Prayer, Time, and More Prayer, Part 2

Fr. Theodore Heckman

Public worship in the Orthodox Church has always been centered in the Eucharist which is surrounded by the daily cycle of Vespers, Matins, and the Hours. Served in their completeness, these services are entirely fulfilling. Is it not amazing then that Orthodox faithful, having access to such fulfillment, in tradition Orthodox cultures regularly and often requested services beyond those? Services of prayer specifically for the living and the departed, Moliebens (or the *Artoclasia* in the Greek Churches) and Pannikhidas (the *Trisagion* service) were served frequently, almost daily. These services crystallize the outpouring of our love for our families, neighbors, friends, people in need, even our enemies. On second thought, this is *not* amazing, but perfectly logical and natural: having been so fulfilled by God's merciful lovingkindness, we have a further desire to help extend these gifts to the whole world and beyond to the next world. What would be truly amazing would be for Orthodox people *not* to do this, to neglect the

specific needs and concerns of our loved ones, living and dead. Alas, in our present day among some of our people and parishes, these services are falling into neglect. Strangely, the services for the living are more neglected than those for the departed, prompting a certain priest to comment to his parishioners, "Perhaps if we had more requests for Moliebens [services for the living], we wouldn't need to serve so many Pannikhidas [services for the departed]!"

Apparently and sadly, however, there is a noticeable decline in requests for these services in the United States as compared with Orthodox Churches abroad, with the possible exception of Alaska. One is drawn to conclude that in the minds of the faithful in this country, the special services for the living and the departed are now considered of little importance.

Clearly, the remembrance of our departed loved ones is a necessary and integral part of a complete Christian life. The service for this is called *Pannikhida*, which means "all-night service" and is derived from the Matins of the full All-night Vigil appointed for days of remembrance at specific times throughout the church year. The term *Parastasis*, meaning "intercession", is also used to refer to this memorial service. Everyone surely understands the need and propriety of praying for one another while alive in this world. Prayers for our loved ones certainly must not cease when they depart this life, for in Christ there are no dead. The souls of the departed live on, awaiting the resurrection on the last day when the body will be reunited with the soul. And the presence of our loved ones can surely be felt by those remaining on earth if they are attuned to such a presence. Especially in the memorial services can that be felt as the prayers manifest and evoke a living, unbroken unity of love. It is this very certainty of our departed loved ones' ongoing life that transforms our tears of sorrow into tears of joy, just as our Lord transformed the tears of the Myrrhbearers at the dawn of the New Pascha.

Services for the living are called by various names: Thanksgiving Services, Moliebens, Services of Prayer and Intercession, Services for various needs, Services of Blessing, and so on. It is surely strange in view of the great variety of these and their appropriateness for all sorts of human needs and intentions, that they are not requested more often. Consider for a moment only the theme of 'thanksgiving'. How many blessings and mercies our loving Heavenly Father grants to us daily, hourly, moment by moment! One could justly give thanks at all times, whatever joys and sorrows the day has brought us. Rightly understood, all our experiences are gifts from God, and we should thereby have a permanent and uninterrupted disposition of thanksgiving all our lives. This is undeniably the mark of a true disciple of Jesus Christ. Then consider the other Moliebens and their specific

purposes: the beginning of any good work, the beginning of formal instruction, blessing for a journey, intercession for someone who is ill or facing an operation, thanksgiving for the answer to prayer or some special favor from God, prayer for deliverance from drought or flood or some other natural or national difficulty, or just praise to God for His infinite lovingkindness.

We do well in our personal rule of prayer to address all our needs and concerns to God. But there is an especially great power in the combining of prayer in the House of God in a formal Moleben addressed to a specific intention. Our Father in Heaven knows what we need as well as what is in our mind and heart. But it is right and certainly necessary to express these things openly and to unite with other sinners as our Lord specifically instructed us: "I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done by my Father in Heaven: (Matthew 18:19). A truly amazing promise! And immediately after that, our Lord tells us, "For where two or three are gathered in My Name, there am I in the midst of them" (v. 20).

Beyond the human need for prayers for the living and the departed, God bestows on us a further gift when we pray with others, a gift which we do not deserve and for which we may not even have asked: His gracious and ineffable mystical Presence.

Knowledge is a virtue, but it has humility as its guardian. *St. Gregory Dialogist (+604)*

All-Night Vigil for Feast of Peter and Paul

This year we shall celebrate the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul (June 29) with an All-Night Vigil. We have served three such Vigils for various feasts in the history of our parish. Though such a Vigil is appointed for every Saturday night and every Great Feast, only on Pascha night does a parish do anything that comes close.

Since the Feast falls on Saturday this year, we are taking the opportunity to observe a full Vigil and Liturgy Friday, June 28 through Saturday, June 29 according to the following schedule.

2200 Small Compline with Akathist (10:00 p.m.)
2245 Great Vespers with Litia (10:45 p.m.)
0000 Matins (midnight)
0215 First Hour (2:15 a.m.)
0230 Divine Liturgy (2:30 a.m.)
0400 end

Keeping Vigil through the night is an ancient Christian tradition. Early Christians are said to have gathered on Saturday evenings and kept watch in prayer through the night in anticipation of the Lord's Return. To this day, All-night Vigils are kept 50-60 times a year at Athosite monasteries. Experience has shown the Church that the hours of night are most conducive to prayer.

But rare is the opportunity to keep such a vigil in the parish and to hear it in English. So make your plans now to attend. The Eucharistic Fast for communing at the Vigil should begin no later than 8:30 p.m. (2000 hours).

How does this Vigil relate to our customary parish Vigils for Sundays and Feasts? At our usual Vigils, we omit the First Hour and both Vespers and Matins have significant abbreviations (if it can be believed). At Great Vespers, the opening Psalm "Bless the Lord, O my soul..." is to be sung in full; we sing only selected verses. Again, we only sing a few verses of the first stasis of the first kathisma. On Saturday nights, we omit the Litia portion of the service. At Matins, we read but one sixth of the appointed reading from the Psalter, we sing only selected verses of the Polyeleon, we read only half the canon. Patristic and Scriptural readings are appointed to be a part of the Vigil too.

In the past, we have tried to serve this service without omissions, and such a full Vigil with Liturgy easily can last all night. In this case, we shall serve Vespers and Matins more fully than usual but keep them within the constraints of the schedule above.

This is a rare opportunity, so please plan now to attend. If you can't come and are lamenting the fact, we plan to do something similar December 31—January 1 for the Feast of St. Basil and the civil New Year.

Concerning Spiritual Reading *St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite (+1809)*

If you continually read spiritual books with eagerness and diligence, know that this continuous eagerness and diligence will open your mind and make it receptive to spiritual meanings. And what you did not understand the first time you will easily understand when you read it two or three times. For God, seeing your continuous diligence, will illumine your mind to understand what is difficult.

June Namedays

1 Fr. Justin Frederick (St. Justin of Cheliye)
1 Jared Rovny (St. Justin Martyr)
9 Ben Lyda (St. Callum—Columba of Iona)
10 Olivia Reynolds, Olive Betz (St. Olive of Palermo, Virgin Martyr)
24 Ian Rehmet (St. John the Baptist)

June Birthdays

1 Jared Rdr Justin Rovny (1990)

Upcoming Events 2012-2013

May 27, Monday: Memorial Day Picnic, noon to five.
Moleben & Pannikhida at noon, food blessed at 1:00.
June 28-29: 10:00 p.m. All-Night Vigil and Liturgy for the Feast of SS Peter & Paul.
September 29: 12:00 p.m. Annual Meeting

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!