

The Confessor's Tongue for June 2, A. D. 2013

Sunday of the Samaritan Woman: 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.

For Good Order at Coffee Hour

Coffee Hour is an important time in the weekly life of our parish. It allows those of us who have gathered together to worship Christ, to return thanks to Him, and to offer ourselves to Him afresh to sit down together, eat together, and share our lives with each other. We are Christ's Body the Church, joined organically to one another through Holy Baptism and by our participation in Christ's Body and Blood. We are family, adopted members of the household of God, who have been given the mandate by our Master to love one another as He has loved us. Each week Coffee Hour gives us a place to grow in that relationship of faith and love.

For Coffee Hour to work well, the following are needed. First, we all must take part. Yes, some of us leave right after Liturgy, but for those who stay is the obligation to contribute positively to the meal. We bring food and drink out of love for Christ and one another understanding the importance of this time of fellowship each week. We bring ourselves and our good disposition to engage each other lovingly. We bring our zeal to meet new people and make them welcome and to deepen our relationships with the 'old' people. We bring a willingness to work to keep our building clean after the meal.

Some of us bring these essential things each week. Some of us participate in the eating and talking each week, but rarely if ever help to provide food and drink or help cleaning up. Because the economy of the kingdom of God is expressed in these words of Christ "give and it will be given unto you," those who do not give in the concrete ways of bringing food and cleaning up are depriving themselves of a blessing, and are also subjecting their brethren to an unfair burden and a temptation towards resentment when their consistent lack of contribution to the meal is noticed (and it is).

So, if you wish to stay and eat, please bring something to eat! Make a contribution to the meal to make it better and more abundant. If you cannot bring something every week, bring something once or twice a month. There are many tasty things that can be prepared at home once or twice a month with a little planning on anyone's budget. For example, sizable pot of mashed potatoes is delicious, easy to make, and costs less than five dollars. Really!

If you really, really cannot ever bring food to share, you can bring yourself and your willingness to help clean up. Dishes need to be washed, tables wiped down, floors swept, trash taken out, dumpsters taken to the curb, the grounds picked up. Too often, it is the same people every week who clean up. And as they clean up, they notice others standing around talking, oblivious to the work going and not lifting a hand to help. Too often, those people cleaning are

the same ones who made an effort to bring food. Thus, the burden of putting on coffee hour is disproportionately borne. We'd like to see that change.

The council also wants to address some of the logistics of coffee hour to tie up a few loose ends. Please work with us on the following.

1. We will wait to take food and eat from the food line until the priest has come to bless it.
2. The priest and any other clergy will go through the line first.
3. Our visitors will be guided through the line next and invited to sit with the priest at the designated table.
4. The elderly members of our parish will go next.
5. Everyone else then follows. Children ten and under will go through the line accompanied by their parents.
6. Everyone should take portions in accordance with the amount of food available and the number of people who desire to have some.

Here is our reasoning for these requests.

First point: we eat as a family and wait until the food is blessed. Feel free to get coffee before the blessing, but please wait on the food.

Second point: it is general Orthodox custom to serve the clergy first. While your priest has no need for this personally, it is important that we all cultivate a respect for the office of the priesthood, which ultimately is Christ's as our great High Priest.

Third point: the demands of hospitality call us to be proactive about taking care of our visitors and making them feel special and welcome. Thus, we invite them to coffee hour, escort them to the head of the line, make sure they navigate it, and seat them at the designated priest's table. This will give them time with the priest to get acquainted and ask any questions.

Fourth point: to our shame, some of our elders in the parish are not getting through the line early, and when they do get through it, there is little to nothing left. Traditional Christian culture honors its elders, those possessing gray hair. We honor them by making sure they get through the line early and get to eat. Our society today reflects a cult of youth and disdains the elderly. We must not be like that.

Fifth point: Children younger than ten when left to themselves often do not make wise choices regarding food, taking either too much and then wasting it, or taking too much of the wrong foods. We ask parents to oversee the serving of their younger children. When Church School resumes in the fall, we shall have devised a system for feeding the children upstairs to facilitate a prompt start to class.

Sixth point: those at the end of the line often find little left to eat. We need to be more aware of how much food we are taking in relation to how much is available to feed the people present and take smaller portions. We may also solve this problem simply by bringing more food.

We ask that parents work with their children to ensure that plates, napkins, and plastic ware is properly disposed of and not left on the church grounds. Every week your priest finds Styrofoam, plastic, and paper littering the grounds.

Our coffee hour is a good institution. Actually, it is a ministry, and a good one, that deserves a little more of our attention and care to see that it ministers effectively to all who desire to partake of it.

Pray to the Lord for the repose of the souls of your departed forebears and brethren each day, at morning and at evening, in order that the remembrance of death may live in you, and that hope of the life to come, after death, may not become extinct in you; and that your spirit may daily be humbled by the thought of the transitory nature of your life.

St. John of Kronstadt

On "Trebi" Services

The past two weeks we have run an article by Fr. Heckman. Last week's installment mentioned services for the living and the departed outside of the regular cycle of services such as Matins, Liturgy, Vespers, Compline, the Hours. Those 'extra' services for the living and the dead are sometimes called 'Trebi' services from the Slavonic word which means 'demand'. In others words, these are 'on demand' services, services requested by the faithful to meet particular needs of the moment. Indeed, the Liturgical book which contains these services is called *The Book of Needs*, or *Trebnik*.

Last Monday before the picnic, we served two such services. The first was a Molieben, or prayer service. As the article said, these services cover a broad spectrum of situations for which one may desire God's help and blessing: the beginning of any good work, the beginning of formal instruction, for children have difficulty in school, blessing for a journey, intercession for someone who is ill or facing an operation, for general trials and tribulations, 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.

These services are available at St. Maximus at your request. You and the priest will agree on a time for the service. While your priest will not refuse reasonable requests for services if you cannot offer something, you should know that is customary to make a gift to the priest who serves your needs service—a sacrifice in addition to your time to offer along with your prayers.

Last Monday, we also served a Pannikhida, the Church's memorial service for the departed. Besides the days on which the Church offers a general Pannikhida for all the departed (Memorial Saturdays, etc.), services may be requested and offered for particular persons. Normally, the service is served for Orthodox Christians who have departed in communion with the Church. As most of us are not from Orthodox families, and few of us have departed Orthodox relatives, the typical impetus for requesting pannikhidas in the parish is lacking. But we should know of them, attend them when offered for the departed in general and for people we know (and offer our own non-Orthodox departed to the Lord in our minds), and request them for our Orthodox departed.

"...strive to possess and stir up within yourself the desire to do what the Holy Scriptures teach. If you presently lack such desires, fall down in fervent prayer before our Savior Jesus Christ and ask Him to grant you this. And once grace calls you to the way of salvation, never resist it." *St. Innocent of Alaska*

St. Symeon the New Theologian

[The Apostle Paul] proclaims, "Strive for peace with all men, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14). Why did he say, "Strive"? Because it is not possible for us to become holy and to be saints in an hour! We must therefore progress from modest beginnings toward holiness and purity. Even were we to spend a thousand years in this life, we should never perfectly attain to it. Rather, we must always struggle for it every day, as if mere beginners. This again Paul has shown us by saying, "Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect" (Philippians 3:12). *Discourse 5*

From St. John Chrysostom

Let us catch them then by our mode of life; and by these souls let us build up the Church, and of these let us amass our wealth. There is nothing to weigh against a soul, not even the whole world. So that although thou give countless treasure unto the poor, thou wilt do no such work as he who converteth one soul. "For he that taketh forth the precious from the vile shall be as my mouth." [Jer 15:19] A great good it is, I grant, to have pity on the poor; but it is nothing equal to the with-drawing them from error."

Homily 3 on I Corinthians

Upcoming Events 2012-2013

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!