

The Confessor's Tongue for July 28, A. D. 2013

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost: Seven Sleepers of Ephesus; St. Cosmas of Aetolia
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.

August 4: St. Cosmas of Aetolia

Born to noble parents from the province of Aetolia, he at first practiced asceticism as a monk in the Philotheou Monastery on Athos where was ordained a Hieromonk. Burning with fervent love for the Christian enlightenment of his neighbors, he preached the Gospels of the heavenly kingdom in various places: in the vicinity of Constantinople, on Mt. Athos, in Macedonia, Chimara, Acarnania, Aetolia, and topped off his Apostolic labors with a martyr's death in Albania. In 1779 the Turks strangled him at the instigation of the Jews who reported to them that he was sent by the Russians to foment a revolt in Albania.

August 4: Seven Sleepers of Ephesus

They were children of famous citizens of Ephesus, served in the military and were close friends. In the Decian persecution they left for a certain cave with the purpose of preparing themselves through fasting and prayer in the asceticism of martyrdom. The Emperor, having learned the whereabouts of their residence, ordered the entrance to the cave filled up with stones. After the passage of more than 170 years, during the reign of Emperor Theodosius the Younger, the entrance to the cave was accidentally opened and "an awesome wonder" happened before the eyes of all: the blessed young men woke up from the almost two century sleep for the shame of the unbelievers rejecting the truth of the resurrection of the dead, "foretelling the future resurrection of all". Within a few days the youths reposed into eternal rest.

In memory of the seven youths, the Holy Church, asks their intercessions for the rest and healing of sleep for the sick exhausted from prolonged sleeplessness.

Report on DOS Assembly 2013

The annual Assembly of the Diocese of the South met this past week at St. Justin Martyr Parish in Jacksonville, Florida. Archbishop Nikon, our *Locum Tenens*, was present and chaired the meetings. Forty-four clergy delegates and thirty-two lay delegates attended the meetings.

In his address to the clergy, the Archbishop expressed his disappointment over clergy who asked to be excused from attending the Assembly since we were not nominating a bishop. He reminded us of the protocol of getting a blessing for having visiting clergy in our parishes from outside the diocese. He reported that the Holy Synod has come to a settlement with Metropolitan Jonah, but did not give the details. Vladyka Jonah is a retired hierarch of the OCA, and securing the blessing of the diocesan bishop is necessary in order for him to come to your

parish. He reminded the clergy that weddings are normally performed Sunday afternoons. If a dispensation is needed for Saturday, a good reason is needed. While expressing some concern over the leaving of one's body to science, he mentioned that organ donation to save lives is permissible.

Regarding the search for a bishop for our diocese, Archbishop Nikon informed us that the Synod in light of recent difficulties with bishops is taking seriously its responsibility to prepare a list of candidates. Bishop Melchisidek has compiled a list of all eligible monks, celibate clergy, and widowers in the OCA. The Lesser Synod now has the task of preparing a list of suitable, vetted candidates from that list. All retired bishops and auxiliary bishops are also technically candidates. Archbishop Nikon gave no timeline for the preparation of a list of vetted candidates, nor did he say when we might have a nomination of a candidate for the diocese. It seems the Synod wishes that the Diocese of the South consider candidates from the list yet to be prepared, but when it will be ready and when we may proceed is entirely unclear. +Nikon remarked that his Diocese of New England went without a bishop for eleven years and the Albanian Diocese for twenty-seven years, suggesting that the Diocese of the South could get along fine without a ruling bishop for some time yet.

Archbishop Nikon expressed the desire that the diocese formalize the process of ordaining people to the lesser orders: reader and subdeacon. These people should be competent and be prepared through a more formal process than has been used hitherto. They also should have no impediments to ordination to the higher orders.

Regarding going to seminary, Archbishop Nikon said that a student should have been Orthodox at least three years before going to seminary. He should have the strong recommendation of his parish priest and experience in various aspects of service and leadership in the parish.

Fr. John Behr, the dean of St. Vladimir's Seminary, was in attendance to give two talks about reclaiming death in the Church for our spiritual benefit. He has a book on the subject coming out in the fall. He also spoke on the role of the bishop as found in the letters of St. Ignatius, and preached on the Cross at the Divine Liturgy.

In two plenary sessions, the delegates passed a budget for 2014 and approved a set of bylaws for the diocese, something the diocese has never had. The expressed intention was to document for a new bishop the way things have been done in the diocese until now—not wholly possible since Archbishop Dmitri was in essence the bylaws of the diocese. Judge Lanier told us that a civil entity needs two documents to be complete in the eye of the State: a

charter that expresses what it is, and a set of bylaws to express how it operates. Not having bylaws left the diocese legally incomplete, a condition in which some legal danger lurked.

A report was heard from our Chancellor, Fr. Marcus Burch of St. John of the Ladder Parish in Greenville, South Carolina. He reported that the diocese had sent two names to the Holy Synod to be vetted as episcopal candidates. One was rejected outright, the other was recommended to gain experience in the diocese. This candidate, Fr. Gerasim, will begin his duties as rector of St. Seraphim's Cathedral, Dallas, on September 1.

An extensive report was given by Noel Bush, a member of the Diocesan Council, about his efforts on behalf of the council to be prepared for the day when Milos Konjevich is no longer able to serve as diocesan treasurer, especially given the innovative managed debt program and church deposit program. Thus, he recommended that the diocese provide for a financial trainee to study to take Milos' place one day, that all these transactions be better documented than they are to preserve institutional memory, that a transactional review (internal audit) be done, and that the diocese consider taking out "key man insurance" on Milos, to protect itself from any loss that might occur if he should be unable to serve. He also urged for the creation of guidelines and guardrails for the managed debt program and for financial reports that could be understood by everyone. Milos rejoined that not everyone can understand financial reports, so that is not a reasonable goal.

From St. Ignatius Brianchaninov

The Rule of St. Pachomius

An angel of God taught St. Pachomius the Great a rule of prayer for the vast community of monks dependent on him. The monks under the spiritual direction of St. Pachomius had to perform the rule every day. Only those who had attained perfection and the unceasing prayer connected with it were freed from the obligation to perform the rule. The rule taught by the angel consisted of the Trisagion (O Heavenly King..., Holy God..., Glory...now and ever..., All-holy Trinity have mercy on us..., Lord, have mercy (3), Glory...now and ever...), the Lord's Prayer, Psalm 50, the Symbol of Faith (Nicene Creed), and 100 Jesus Prayers. *On the Prayer of Jesus*, p. 37.

The Jesus Prayer and the Commandments

Make your one aim in life the doing of the will of Jesus in every circumstance, however important or trifling it may seem. Try to do only what is pleasing to Jesus, and all your actions will be equally worthy of heaven. Love the will of Jesus more than the desires of your flesh, more than your soul. As often as possible, read the Gospel, and learn in it the will of your Lord and Savior. Do not disregard the smallest feature of the Gospel, not the least commandment however unimportant it may seem. Check and

mortify all movements of your own, not only the sinful ones but also the apparently good ones which belong to fallen human nature, often very developed among pagans and heretics who are as far from the virtues of the Gospel *as the East from the West*. Let all your old man be silent within you! Let Jesus alone act within you by His most holy commandments, and by the thoughts and feelings that arise from these commandments. If you live in this way, the prayer of Jesus will certainly blossom within you, quite independently of whether you dwell in the deepest solitude or amidst the noise of a community, because the place of abode and rest of this prayer is the mind and heart, renewed by the knowledge, experience, and fulfillment of the *good and acceptable and perfect will of God* (Romans 12:2). Life according to the commandments of the Gospel is the one true source of spiritual progress, accessible to everyone who sincerely desires to succeed in whatever outward situation he may be placed by the inscrutable providence of God. *On the Prayer of Jesus*, pp. 98-99

Orthodox Asceticism

The term "asceticism" in the Orthodox Church does not have the narrow sense that has often been given to it in the West. Rather, the word points to what every Christian must accomplish in order to benefit effectively from the salvation wrought by Christ. From the point of view of the great Tradition of the Orthodox Church, the work of salvation appears as a cooperation between divine grace bestowed by the Holy Spirit and the effort each baptized person must make personally in order to be open to this grace and to take hold of it. One makes this effort throughout one's life, at every moment and in every act of existence. Besides this, the Greek word *askesis* means "exercise," "training," and "way of life." In addition, the corresponding Russian words *podvig* and *podvizhnichestvo*, derived from the Slavonic verb *podvizatsya* (meaning 'to move or go forward') translate an eminently dynamic conception of spiritual life. These words make it clear that the spiritual life is conceived of as a process of growth; namely, that of the gradual actualization of the grace received in the sacraments and particularly in Baptism. Likewise, the process is that of the progressive assimilation of the grace of the Holy Spirit that effectively incorporates the baptized into the dead and resurrection Christ. Such grace allows man to acquire for himself the human nature that is restored and deified in the person of the God-man. *Dr. Jean-Claude Larchet, in Therapy of Spiritual Illness, volume 1, p. 8.*

Upcoming Events 2012-2013

August 6: Holy Transfiguration

August 15: Dormition of the Theotokos

September 29: Annual Meeting

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!