

# The Confessor's Tongue for November 17, A. D. 2013

Twenty-First Sunday after Pentecost: St. Gregory the Wonderworker of Neocaesarea  
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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## The Jesus Prayer and the Commandments

*St. Ignatius Brianchaninov*

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

## 'In My Father's House Are Many Mansions'

*Jesus Christ, John 14:2*

*The Scriptures say that every man will be judged according to his deeds, and this necessitates there being 'many mansions' in the Kingdom of God to reflect the "different grades of honor" attained by each person. Here is offered some patristic reflection on this theme.*

"And it seems likely that in speaking of the many mansions He wishes also to indicate the different grades of honor, implying that each one who desires to live a life of virtue will receive as it were his own peculiar place, and the glory that is suitable to his own individual acts." +*St Cyril of Alexandria, John 14.2*

"...there is this distinction between the habitation of those who produce an hundred-fold, and that of those who produce sixty-fold, and that of those who produce thirty-fold: for the first will be taken up into the heavens, the second will dwell in paradise, the last will inhabit the city; and that was on this account the Lord declared, "In My Father's house are many mansions." For all things belong to

God, who supplies all with a suitable dwelling-place; even as His Word says, that a share is allotted to all by the Father, according as each person is or shall be worthy. And this is the couch on which the guests shall recline, having been invited to the wedding." *St Irenaeus, Against Heresies, V.36 (ANF I, pp566ff)*

"For he who departs to the other world with many deeds both good and bad, will have some alleviation in respect of the punishment and the torment there; but if a man is destitute of these good works, and takes only the evil with him, it is impossible to say what great sufferings he will undergo, when he is conducted to everlasting punishment. For a balance will be struck there between the evil deeds and those which are not such; and should the latter weigh down the scale they will to no small extent have saved the doer of them, and the injury arising from the doing of evil deeds is not so strong as to drag the man down from the foremost place; but if the evil deeds exceed, they carry him off into hell fire, because the number of his good actions is not so great as to be able to make a stand against this violent impulse.

"And these things are not merely suggested by our own reasoning, but declared also by the divine oracles; for He Himself saith, "He shall reward every man according to his works." And not only in hell, but also in the kingdom one will find many differences; for He saith "in my Father's house are many mansions;" and, "there is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon." And what wonder, if in dealing with such great matters he has spoken with such precision, seeing that He declares there is a difference in that world even between one star and another?

"Knowing then all these things let us never desist from doing good deeds, nor grow weary, nor, if we should be unable to reach the rank of the sun or of the moon, let us despise that of the stars. For if only we display thus much virtue at least, we shall be able to have a place in Heaven. And though we may not have become gold, or precious stone, yet if we only occupy the rank of silver we shall abide in the foundation; only let us not fall back again into that material which the fire readily devours, nor, when we are unable to accomplish great things, desist also from small ones, for this is the part of extreme folly, which I trust we may not experience. For just as material wealth increases if the lovers of it do not despise even the smallest gains, so is it also with the spiritual. For it is a strange thing that the judge should not overlook the reward of even a cup of cold water, but that we, if our achievements are not altogether great, should neglect the performance of little things. For he who does not despise the lesser things, will exercise much zeal concerning the

greatest; but he who overlooks the former will also abstain from the latter; and to prevent this taking place Christ has defined great rewards even for these small things. For what is easier than to visit the sick? Yet even this He requites with a great recompense.

“Lay hold then on eternal life, delight in the Lord, and supplicate Him; take up again the easy yoke, bow thyself beneath the light burden, put a finish to thy life worthy of the beginning; do not suffer so great a stream of wealth to slip past thee. For if thou shouldst continue provoking God by thy deeds, thou wilt destroy thyself; but if before much damage has been done, and all thy husbandry has been overwhelmed with a flood, thou wilt dam up the channels of wickedness, thou wilt be able to recover again what has been spoiled and to add to it not a little further produce. Having considered all these things, shake off the dust, get up from the ground, and thou wilt be formidable to the adversary; for he himself indeed has overthrown thee, as if thou wouldst never rise again; but if he sees thee again lifting up thy hands against him, he will receive such an unexpected blow that he will be less forward in trying to upset thee again, and thou thyself wilt be more secure against receiving any wound of that kind in future. For if the calamities of others are sufficient to instruct us, much more those which we have ourselves undergone. And this is what I expect speedily to see in the case of thy own dear self, and that by the grace of God thou art again become more radiant than before, and displaying such great virtue, as even to be a protector of others in the world above. Only do not despair, do not fall back; for I will not cease repeating this in every form of speech, and wherever I see you, as well as by the lips of others; and if you listen to this you will no longer need other remedies.” *St John Chrysostom, Exhortation To Theodore, 1,19*

“Not with virgins alone is such a field adorned; nor with monks alone, but also with honourable matrimony and the chastity of each one. For in sowing, He did not compel the will beyond the power. Nor is mercy confined to the perfect, but it is sent down also among those who occupy the middle and the third ranks, so that He might rescue all men generally to salvation. To this intent He hath prepared many mansions with the Father, so that although the dwelling-place is various in proportion to the advance in moral attainment, yet all of us are within the wall, and all of us enter within the same fence, the adversary being cast out, and all his host expelled thence.” *St Athanasius, Festal Letter (NPNF p529)*

“And consider that, as the reward for good deeds is not equal for all men, so it is also for evil deeds. Not in one fashion shall men be judged, but every man according to his works shall receive his requital, because the Judge is clothed in righteousness and regards not the persons of men.” *Aphrahat (NPNF pp.409)*

“When the word is sown it does not yield a uniform produce of fruit in this human life, but one

various and rich; for it brings forth, some an hundred, and some sixty, and some thirty, as the Savior teaches— that Sower of grace, and Bestower of the Spirit. And this is no doubtful matter, nor one that admits no confirmation; but it is in our power to behold the field which is sown by Him; for in the Church the word is manifold and the produce rich. Not with virgins alone is such a field adorned; nor with monks alone, but also with honorable matrimony and the chastity of each one. For in sowing, He did not compel the will beyond the power. Nor is mercy confined to the perfect, but it is sent down also among those who occupy the middle and the third ranks, so that He might rescue all men generally to salvation. To this intent He has prepared many mansions (John 14:2) with the Father, so that although the dwelling-place is various in proportion to the advance in moral attainment, yet all of us are within the wall, and all of us enter within the same fence, the adversary being cast out, and all his host expelled thence.” *St Athanasius (NPNF Letter 10)*

### St. Basil the Great

from “I Will Tear Down My Barns”

Who are the greedy? Those who are not satisfied with what suffices for their own needs. Who are the robbers? those who take for themselves what rightly belongs to everyone. And you, are you not greedy? Are you not a robber? The things you received in trust as a stewardship, have you not appropriated them for yourself? Is not the person who strips another of clothing called a thief? And those who do not clothe the naked when they have the power to do so, should they not be called the same? The bread you are holding back is for the hungry, the clothes you keep put away are for the naked, the shoes that a rotting away with disuse are for those who have none, the silver you keep buried in the earth is for the needy. You are thus guilty of injustice toward as many as you might have aided and did not.

### Upcoming Events 2012-2013

- 21 November Great Feast: Entry of the Theotokos into the Temple. Vigil Nov 20, 7:00 p.m.; Liturgy Nov 21 9:00 a.m.
- 6 December Feast of St. Nicholas. Vigil Dec 5, 7:00 p.m., Liturgy Dec 6, 9:00 a.m.
- 17 December, Tuesday, Holy Unction, 7:00 p.m.
- 30 December – 3 January Winter Service Retreat at St. George's in Pharr
- 31 December – 1 January All-Night Vigil for St. Basil
- 20 January 6:00 p.m. Vigil for St. Maximus
- 17-20 February Diocese of the South Pastoral Conference at St. Maximus

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!