

The Confessor's Tongue for December 1, A. D. 2013

Twenty-Third Sunday after Pentecost: Prophet Nahum, St. Philaret the Merciful
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.

December 1: St. Philaret the Merciful

He lived in Amnia (in Asia Minor) and was both rich and god-fearing. Being rather fainthearted, St. Philaret generously gave from his wealth to the poor, the widows and the orphans and never refused the needy, for this he was called the merciful. The love for the needy by the righteous man reached so far that, finally, he became poor, but also while in this condition he still continued to help the needy. So, once, already not having anything more, St. Philaret removed his outer clothes and gave them to the poor. For such good deeds the Lord soon again awarded St. Philaret with riches. One of his grand daughters, Mary, unexpectedly became the wife of the Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus (780-797) and the righteous man again became rich, and at the same time even famous. He died in very old age and was buried in Constantinople, in the monastery of the Judgment. At his grave many miracles and healings were performed.

Warfare with the Passions: Gluttony

The holy Fathers teach that gluttony is the "door of the passions" (St. John Climacus).

"Take care lest the Evil One tempt you into the sin of Adam and Eve. . . . He who seduced Adam from Paradise by causing him to steal food . . . will be far bolder with you in preparing this strong and poisonous drink.

"The great attraction of gluttony is not necessarily concerned with large quantities of food, but in the temptation to have just a 'little taste'. But if the wish for a taste succeeds in making you a slave to gluttony, the Evil One can then give you up utterly to destruction.

"For, just as water that irrigates many furrows makes those furrows fertile, so also the vice of gluttony, proceeding from your heart, irrigates all of your senses, raising a whole jungle of evils within you, making your soul a lair of wild beasts" (St. Basil the Great, *On Renunciation of the World*).

"There are two kinds of gluttony. One is when a man seeks food that pleases him and does not always want to eat very much, but wishes to eat only what pleases his palate. Another is when a man is overcome by a tendency to eat too much. . . . He only wants to eat and eat, not minding what the food may be, only caring to fill his belly" (St. Abba Dorotheus, *Directions on Spiritual Training*).

Gluttony blinds us to the things of God. Speaking of the Gospel passage where the Savior miraculously fed the multitudes, St. John Chrysostom writes:

"And the multitude said that this of a truth is the Prophet (John 6:14). Oh, the excess of gluttony! He had done ten thousand things more admirable than this, but nowhere did they make this confession, save

when they had been filled. . . . O wonder! How great is the tyranny of gluttony, how great the fickleness of men's minds!" (*Homily 42, On Saint John*).

"It is impossible to fill the body to satiety with food and at the same time have spiritual enjoyment of mental and Divine blessings. For inasmuch as a man panders to his belly, in the same measure he deprives himself of spiritual blessings; conversely, in proportion as he keeps his body lean, he will be filled with spiritual food and consolation" (St. Symeon the New Theologian, *Precepts*).

Saint John Climacus says that "the prince of demons is the fallen Lucifer, and gluttony is the prince of the passions." Therefore it can be said that "the stomach is the cause of all human disaster. . . . Let us then ask of this archfoe: Who is your mother? Who are your children?"

". . . And gluttony . . . furiously raving at us, answers: . . . Why do you try to separate yourself from me? I am bound to you by nature. I gain entry through the very nature of food [i.e., food is by nature pleasant to the taste and desirable]. The cause of my insatiability is habit. The foundation of my passion is repeated habit, insensitivity of the soul, and forgetfulness of death. . . . Now learn the names of my first-born and best-loved children: 1. fornication; 2. hard-heartedness; 3. drowsiness" (*The Ladder of Divine Ascent*).

"Filling the stomach to satiety and burdening it with food is an act deserving of God's wrath, as He says: *Woe to you that are filled now* (Luke 6:25) To become a slave to the pleasures of the table is to make the stomach one's god" (St. Basil the Great, *The Long Rules*). "Where there is surfeiting, there the devils surely hold their choirs" (St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 59 on St. Matthew*).

"As far as food is concerned, individual needs vary according to age, employment, and physical condition The objective, however—to satisfy need—must be common to all alike. . . . The aim should be simply the sustaining of life; pleasure ought not to be the end in eating food. Since our body, ever being emptied and drained, needs to be filled (and for this reason our appetite for nourishment is natural), right reason tells us that we need only replenish that which has been used up." More than this is unnecessary (St. Basil the Great, *The Long Rules*).

"One ought not to eat with savage gluttony, but in all things that have to do with pleasure we are to maintain moderation, quiet, and self-control. Nor may we omit thinking of God while we eat . . . bethinking us how various sorts of food which are suitable for the needs of our bodies are the result of the provisions of the great Steward of the universe" (St. Basil the Great, *Letter to Gregory*).

"In addition, we should always prefer that food which can be easily found, not concerning ourselves

with costly fare, extravagant foods, or expensive sauces. Rather, we should choose from whatever is easy to obtain and is cheap" (St. Basil the Great, *The Long Rules*).

If necessary, "when the soul lusts for various foods, let us confine it to bread and water, to make it grateful for even a thin slice of bread" (Abba Evagrius, *Directions on Spiritual Training*). From: *The Teaching of the Holy Fathers on the Passions, Chapter 2*.

Notes from the Mission Council

The Mission Council is planning to move ahead with work to complete the design of our new temple, a step necessary before getting permits and starting to build. Our need for more space grows. We have adequate resources to move ahead (more than \$100,000 in our building fund), and we have promising opportunities of working with our diocese to fund the balance of the project that we cannot immediately raise ourselves.

Next Sunday, the Council will meet to review our design as it stands to determine what needs to be added, subtracted, or modified in it in order to finish. That meeting, as are all council meetings, is open to parishioners who wish to attend.

The Council will also discuss work needed to prepare for and carry out our hosting of the pastoral conference for the Diocese of the South in February.

From St. John Chrysostom

Whenever then we commit some little fault or even negligence, let us not overlook that little; since this, being disregarded, quickly becomes great.

Let us not therefore give up in despair; for to fall is not so grievous as to lie where we have fallen; nor to be wounded so dreadful as after wounds to refuse healing. *Homily 8 on I Corinthians*

Notes on Praying in Church

Upon entering the holy temple, one makes the sign of the cross and bows three times, saying:

"Thou hast created me, O Lord, have mercy on me." "O God, be merciful to me a sinner." "Countless times have I sinned, O Lord, forgive me."

On weekdays, prostrations are made at the Divine Liturgy:

1. at the beginning of the chanting of "It is meet and right, to worship Father, Son, and Holy Spirit...", i.e., right after the exclamation "Let us give thanks unto the Lord";

2. when the hymn "We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we give thanks unto Thee, O Lord..." is finished, i.e., right after the epiclesis has been said with the triple 'amen' that follows it;

3. at the end of the prayer "Meet it is in truth to bless thee, O Theotokos" or its substitute;

4. at the beginning of the prayer "Our Father";

5. at the bringing forth of the Holy Gifts for Communion, right after the words "In the fear of God, with faith and love draw near";

6. at the words "Always, now and ever, and unto ages of ages" when the chalice is shown to the people after Holy Communion (here only those who did not commune make a prostration; those who did make a bow to the waist).

On Sundays, prostrations are not made; in all the cases above, they are replaced with bows to the waist.

December Namedays

6 Nicholas Alexander Sancer (St.)

13 Lucia Lydia Sancer

11-17 Sunday: Joseph (Derek) Sancer (Righteous Joseph the Comely)

11-17 Sunday: Rachel Rovny (St. Rachel)

11-17 Sunday: Rachel Nancy Saito (St. Rachel)

11-17 Sunday: Rebecca Rovny (St. Rebekah)

11-17 Sunday: Rebecca Choe Stokes (St. Rebekah)

11-17 Sunday: Ruth Evangeline Lyda (St. Ruth)

11-17 Sunday: Emalie Northam (St. Ruth)

31 David Hernandez (Prophet David)

December Birthdays

5 Nicholas Alexander Sancer

6 Moses Gary Reynolds

7 Rachel Nancy Saito

11 Lucia Lydia Sancer

16 James Emmauel Lyda (05)

19 Patrick St. Jean

28 Nathan Brouillette

31 Novice Svetlana Leah Cole

From St. John of Kronstadt

You are preparing yourselves to meet the Feast of the Nativity of Christ, you must ask yourselves: Have you preserved the spiritual birth from God which we each received in Baptism? Are you always heedful of your Divine sonship and the sacred treasure of the Spirit which you acquired in Baptism? Have you grown closer to God through faith and love, like His beloved children? Have you loved one another as befits children of God? Have you despised evil and all-destructive sin? Have you loved truth and every virtue? Have you loved immortal and eternal life prepared in a land which will not pass away and to which we are called by Him who now has come to our corrupt earth? These are questions which we must ask ourselves now and decide; not only with our minds, but above all, with our hearts and our very deeds.

Upcoming Events 2012-2013

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

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!