

The Confessor's Tongue for January 12, A. D. 2014

Sunday After Theophany; St. Sava of Serbia; Martyr Tatiana

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.

January 12: St. Sava of Serbia

In the world Rastko (Rostislav), son of the Serbian King Stephan (see Feb. 13), at the age of 18, he abandoned the local principedom given to him by his father and left for Mt. Athos with a Russian monk who came to Serbia and accepted the little tonsure in the Russian St. Panteleimon Monastery. Soon after that, at the urgent invitation of the monks of the Greek Vatopedi Monastery, he went over to this monastery and here received the great tonsure with the name Sabbas. "Having transformed the height of nobility to the humility of a servant", he "oppressed his body with many labors and enlightened his soul with prayer". Joining to the asceticism of abstinence, humility, prayer and good deeds of a hermit and the Vatopedi Monastery, he gave charity to all from what he received from his father in Serbia. Then with the grants from his father he built the Chilandari Monastery on Mt. Athos, settled in this monastery, gave it a Typikon [Ustav], established a strict way of life, created a charitable institution in it and engaged in education. Within eight years for a short time he became Hegumen of the Serbian Studenica Monastery, but then, being zealous for the increase of piety in Serbia, together with his brother Stephen (see Sept. 24), he built a new monastery in district of Zhicha on the Ibar River. After this, St. Sabbas returned a second time to Mt. Athos and from there to Nicaea where at that time the Greek emperor and patriarch were residing, from whom St. Sabbas tried, although with greater effort, to get approval for the establishment of an autocephalous or independent Archdiocese in Serbia. The Emperor insisted that the same Sabbas accept this calling, and St. Sabbas, in humility, refused, but had to agree, and he was consecrated to the archiepiscopacy by Patriarch Germanus in 1219 and thus "he adorned the first Serbian see". On his return he visited Mt. Athos and arrived in Salonika and here "wrote many legal books about the exercise of the faith". Having arrived in Serbia, he immediately undertook the building of the church. He was zealous about destroying the rest of the pagan superstitions and "destroyed the transgressing heresies". Sometimes he went around the country correcting inadequacies, exposing errors and thin morals, and strengthening the people in faith and piety. As a deep patriot, St. Sabbas was zealous for the security of Serbia, threatened by the neighboring Ugars and for the defense and elevation of the political values and national worthiness of Serbia. St. Sabbas practiced asceticism for 14 years for church and country and in 1233 appointed his disciple Arsenius as his successor, and then he traveled to the Far East and arrived in Tirnovo [Trnovo], Bulgaria. He died in this city on January 14 (according to others on the 12th), 1236. A half-year later, the relics

of St. Sabbas were solemnly transferred to the Milesheva Monastery in southwest Herzegovina, near the small town Prepolie on the Mileshevka River. In 1595 the relics of St. Sabbas were burnt by Sinan Pasha, who died a shameful death that same year. The Serbs glorify St. Sabbas as the enlightener of Serbia. During his lifetime he was a great advocate of Orthodoxy, taught the flock entrusted to him that the right faith and good life are necessary for salvation, inspired them not to rely on wealth and to be merciful, to love one's neighbor, not to render evil for evil, begged with tears for all to protect their chastity and to defend widows and orphans. After his death St. Sabbas became glorified for wonders.

Dogmas of Faith & Moral Dogma

a Reflection by St. Nikolai of Zicha

If, at times, the dogmas of the Faith seem like hard food, you should first endeavor to fulfill the moral dogmas of Christianity: then the understanding of the dogmas of the Faith will be revealed to you. The inquisitive examination of higher things, without effort regarding the improvement of your life, does not bring any benefit. Once, the monks of Egypt were reflecting on Melchizedek, and not being able to come to a clear understanding of the mysterious personality of this ancient king and high priest, they invited Abba Copres to their assembly and asked him about Melchizedek. Upon hearing this, Copres struck himself three times on the mouth and said: "Woe to you Copres! You left that which God commanded you to do, and you inquire into that which God does not require of you." Hearing him, the monks were ashamed and dispersed. St. John Chrysostom writes: "If we adhere to the true dogmas and are not concerned about our behavior, we will not have any kind of benefit; and in the same way, if we concern ourselves about our behavior and neglect true dogmas, we will receive no benefit for our salvation. If we want to be delivered from Gehenna and to gain the Kingdom, we need to be adorned on both sides—with correctness of dogmas and honorable living."

On Correcting the Faults of Others

If you wish to correct the faults of anyone, do not think of trying to do so solely by your own means: you would only do harm by your vices, for instance, by pride and the irritability arising from it; *but cast thy burned upon the Lord*, and pray with all your heart that God Himself will enlighten the mind and heart of that man. If he sees that your prayer breathes love, and that it really comes from the depths of your heart, he will undoubtedly fulfill it, and you will soon see, from the change that has taken place in him for whom you prayed, that it is the work of the most high God. *St. John of Kronstadt*

We must pray fervently for all those enslaved by vices, for the enemy works within them.

Church Building Update

We have been given the task of establishing the first permanent Orthodox parish in Denton County. We are well on our way to doing that: what remains is for us to build a proper church that can be consecrated to be our permanent home. Our love for God is manifested in the house we build to honor Him. Our faith is not only reflected but also proclaimed by such a building, for the traditional architecture of the Church in itself proclaims the Gospel, the good news that God has become man to reconcile mankind with Himself.

The time has come for us to build that permanent temple for the worship of God here in Denton. We have little more worship space in which to grow. Our building has served us well for twelve years, but it is no longer adequate. We need a bigger church. We need more parking.

To meet this need, the council has reanimated the process of designing the building, which has been in abeyance for a couple years now (as we've worked to complete the hall), in order to complete the design and stand ready to build the church. We have contacted our architects and are moving forward again. We are not starting afresh, but are taking the basic design most recently offered to us by architect Andrew Gould and bringing it to completion with all the blueprints needed to build it.

This project will probably cost \$500,000, including the extension of the parking lot. We currently have a little more than \$100,000 on deposit with the Diocese, enough to make a good beginning and to help secure financing either through the Diocese or the banks.

We can begin to raise money for this now, by making sure we are worshipping God by bringing our tithes into His house and making additional offerings toward building a church, just as the children of Israel did to build the tabernacle in the wilderness.

This may seem a large task, one beyond our means. In fact, it is not so far beyond our present means as we think, and God, whose work this is, will provide in ways we do not expect as we move forward in faith and do what is already in our power to do. I challenge the parish to begin this month to give an extra thousand dollars a month designated for construction. We have about ninety adults associated with our parish. If each gave \$20 a month extra towards building, that would be \$1800. We only need fifty adults to step up with an extra \$20 a month to reach \$1000 a month. I challenge each of us to give willingly and generously, but for each of us to participate. This is not something we should leave others to do for us, pleading poverty or lack of funds. If your worship here, if you are fed and nourished spiritually here, here is where your duty lies to help build a permanent, beautiful temple to God's glory.

Squander not the opportunity to be a founder of St. Maximus Orthodox Church of Denton by not participating with your freewill offerings! May God bless those who participate and may He prosper this work of our hands and bring it to a speedy and successful completion!

On Praying for the Departed

Some ask, what is the use of naming the departed, or of praying for them? God Himself knows the names and needs of all. But those who so speak forget, or do not know, the importance of prayer, do not realize the importance of every word uttered from a whole heart; they forget that the justice and mercy of God are moved by your heartfelt prayer, which the Lord in His goodness imputes to the merit of the living or the departed themselves, as to the members of the one body of the Church. They do not know that the *Church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven*, in her love continually prays to God for us, and expressly names before God those who pray for them—equal for equal. We name them, and they name us. But he who does not lovingly remember his brethren in prayer will not himself be remembered, and does not deserve to be named. Even one word of faith and love means much in prayer: *The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*

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

Upcoming Events 2014

- 18 January 9:00 a.m. Parish Workday
- 20 January 6:00 p.m. Vigil for St. Maximus
- 17-20 February Diocese of the South Pastoral Conference at St. Maximus
- 2 March Forgiveness Sunday, Vespers, 6:00 p.m.
- 20 April Great and Holy Pascha

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!