

The Confessor's Tongue for January 19, A. D. 2014

30th Sunday After Pentecost: St. Mark of Ephesus; St. Macarius the Great

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 19: St. Mark of Ephesus

St. Mark, Archbishop of Ephesus, was the well-known defender of Orthodoxy at the Council of Florence. Nothing could make him agree at this council to the submission of the Eastern Church to the Roman Pope. Quietly leaving Florence for Constantinople, he zealously convinced its inhabitants to be faithful to Orthodoxy. The people, inspired by St. Mark and despite the persuasions of their emperor and patriarch to the contrary, rejected the union with Rome effected at Florence. He died in peace in 1444. He is known as one of the three 'pillars of Orthodoxy' along with St. Photius the Great and St. Gregory Palamas.

Blessed Theodore of Novgorod, Fool for Christ

Son of pious parents, eminent and wealthy Novgorod citizens who lived in the Torgov quarter, he was nurtured in strict piety, in the spirit of lofty Christian love for neighbor and from his early years grew fond of piety. After reaching mature age when he had an opportunity at his own discretion to distribute the remainder of his parents' wealth, he used all his estate for the use of the neighbor, setting this example of the highest self-denying love for neighbor for his fellow-citizens.

To have the opportunity and comfort to denote and catechize each and all, he voluntarily took up the special, exclusive asceticism of folly and steadily followed this thorny way until his very death. He voluntarily suffered every need, distributing everything he had and had received to the poor, did not want to have any kind of refuge, slept in the open air in heat and cold, even in the greater freezes, and went about barefooted and half-naked. Accused by the rebellious Novgorodians, he did not murmur against their ridicule, but asked God that this sin be not charged to them.

St. Nicholas Kochanov (see July 27) practiced the same asceticism of folly in Novgorod simultaneously with him. Exposing the mutual enmity of the Novgorod citizens of the Torgov quarter with the inhabitants of the Sophia quarter, Blessed Theodore, who practiced asceticism in the Torgov quarter, continually maintained a similar [sham] enmity against St. Nicholas, who practiced asceticism in the Sophia quarter, not under any circumstances permitting the latter to enter the Torgov quarter of the city. In turn, every time when St. Theodore came over to the Sophia quarter, he met the same feigned enmity from St. Nicholas.

Frequent and fervent prayer was for Blessed Theodore consolation among the difficult asceticism of folly. He lovingly passed by nearby monasteries, also constantly visited the city temples, praying in them, especially at night, for the prosperity of his

fellow-citizens. He especially liked to visit the Church of Saint George on the Torgov and spent many nights on its porch in continuous prayer. For his lofty blessed life he was awarded by God with the gift of clairvoyance. Thus, he once predicted a Novgorodian famine and another time, a fire. For some days having clearly foreseen his death, he peacefully reposed in 1392 and was buried, according to his will, near the temple of St. George the Victory-bearer where his relics repose in a hidden place in a special chapel even up to now, being the source of many wonderful healings.

From *The Hermitess Photini* (+1928)

Indeed, man has a high calling because he was created in the image and likeness of God. That is, he came from God and will go back to God again to partake of His divine glory and blessedness. Since God is the source of blessedness, he who communicates with God also becomes blessed. Eternal life, blessedness, the Kingdom of Heaven, joy, paradise, gladness, delight: this is what God is. 'I am the resurrection and the life,' said the Savior. Everyone who communicates with God has blessedness. Whereas hell, which the Savior calls outer darkness, gnashing of teeth, torture, fire, abyss, etc., is nothing but the deprivation of divine grace and a departure from God—not spatially but morally. Wherever there is no light, there will definitely be darkness. What is darkness? Absence of light. This is also how it is with the blessedness of heaven. God is the Ultimate Good. The more man approaches God through the virtues, the more blessed and happy he becomes.

Sin, though, is the ultimate evil. The more a person distances himself from God—not physically, as we said, but spiritually through sin—the more unhappy he becomes. Who is gnashing his teeth? He who is unhappy, due to sin. Who is burning in the unquenchable fire of torture? He who perceives that he himself is the cause of his plight! So where is the seat of eternal fire? In the heart of the sinner. The Savior implies this in the parable of Lazarus and the rich man. Thus hell is essentially the complete deprivation of divine grace. What is illness? Lack of health. What is sorrow? Lack of joy. The demons used to be bright, good angels, as the Holy Scriptures say. But by sinning, they lost divine grace and became dark, evil, miserable. Since they lost the divine illumination that enlightens and gladdens, they were darkened, and, so to speak, they got drunk with ignorance so that, just as a drunk person under the influence wants to drink even more, likewise those who are drunk with sin always desire evil. They think that by doing evil they will find rest, but this is in vain. They will always be unhappy, because the evil

distance them even more from the light until it throws them into the utmost misery, which the Savior calls 'the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'

So distancing oneself from God is the most terrible punishment. That becomes clear from observing the workers of sin in the world, who are always in fear; they always have inner disturbance and anxiety. The purpose of man is to work at the virtues through which he partakes of divine glory and becomes like God, not by nature, but by grace.

The Word "Anathema" and Its Meaning *Saint John of San Francisco*

The Greek word "anathema" consists of two words: "ana", which is a preposition indicating movement upwards and "thema", which means a separate part of something. In military terminology, "thema" meant a detachment; in civil government "thema" meant a province. We currently use the word "theme", derived from "thema", to mean a specific topic of a written and intellectual work.

"Anathema" literally means the lifting up of something separate. In the Old Testament this expression was used both in relation to that which was alienated due to sinfulness and likewise to that which was dedicated to God.

In the New Testament, in the writing of the Apostle Paul it is used once in conjunction with "maranatha", meaning the coming of the Lord. The combination of these words means separation until the coming of the Lord; in other words - being handed over to Him (1 Cor 16:22).

The Apostle Paul uses "anathema" in another place without the addition of "maranatha" (Gal 1:8-9). Here "anathema" is proclaimed against the distortion of the Gospel of Christ as it was preached by the Apostle, no matter by whom this might be committed, whether by the Apostle himself or an angel from the heavens. In this same expression there is also implied: "let the Lord Himself pass judgment", for who else can pass judgment on the angels?

St John the Theologian in Revelation (22:3) says that in the New Jerusalem there will not be any anathema; this can be understood in two ways, giving the word anathema both meanings: 1) there will not be any lifting up to the judgment of God, for this judgment has already been accomplished; 2) there will not be any special dedication to God, for all things will be the Holy things of God, just as the light of God enlightens all (Rev 21:23).

In the acts of the Councils and the further course of the New Testament Church of Christ, the word "anathema" came to mean complete separation from the Church. "The Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematizes", "let him be anathema", "let it be anathema", means a complete tearing away from the church. While in cases of "separation from the communion of the Church" and other epitimia or penances laid on a person, the person remained a member of the Church, even though his participation

in her grace filled life was limited, those given over to anathema were thus completely torn away from her until their repentance. Realizing that she is unable to do anything for their salvation, in view of their stubbornness and hardness of heart, the earthly church lifts them up to the judgment of God. That judgment is merciful unto repentant sinners, but fearsome for the stubborn enemies of God. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God ... for our God is a consuming fire" (Heb 10:31 ; 12:29).

Anathema is not final damnation: until death repentance is possible. "Anathema" is fearsome not because the Church wishes anyone evil or God seeks their damnation. They desire that all be saved. But it is fearsome to stand before the presence of God in the state of hardened evil: nothing is hidden from Him. *from Orthodox Life, vol 27, Mar-April 1977, pp 18,19*

Travel By Automobile

The dangers of the road are self-evident, given the number of people who lose their lives on the road each year. One must always be alert and exercise one's responsibility to be a good, courteous driver. While careless driving might be an involuntary sin, reckless driving is a voluntary sin of serious character, because we endanger not only our own lives but the lives of others. Need it be said? Texting while driving is reckless driving.

As pious Christians we entrust ourselves to the providence of God whenever we travel. Making the sign of the Cross as we begin our daily travels should be as standard as wearing our seat belt. The following troparion may be sung in tone 2 or said upon setting out:

O Christ the Way, the Truth, and the Life, / as Thou didst send Raphael the archangel as a guide for Tobias, / so now send Thine angel to accompany Thy servant. / May he protect him from every evil thing. / Bless this journey, that Thy servant may glorify Thy name, through the prayers of the Theotokos.

Some Christians will sing the Troparion to St. Nicholas, the patron of travellers, upon setting out.

Thou wast revealed to thy flock as a rule of faith, / an image of humility and a teacher of abstinence. / because of thy lowliness, the heights were opened to thee, / because of thy poverty, riches were granted to thee. / O holy Hierarch, Father Nicholas, / intercede with Christ our God // that our souls be saved.

There is also an excellent pious custom practiced by many saints of saying the prayer "Let God Arise, and let His enemies be scattered..." (found at the end of the evening prayers) upon leaving one's home. Such practices are recommended to us to establish.

Upcoming Events 2014

20 January 6:00 p.m. Vigil for St. Maximus
21 January 9:00 a.m. Liturgy 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!