

# The Confessor's Tongue for July 20, A. D. 2014

Sixth Sunday After Pentecost; Prophet Elijah

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.

## Vatopedi Monastery and Mt. Athos

Mount Athos, on the easternmost of three fingers of land that protrude southeast into the Aegean sea from the Halkidiki Peninsula east of Thessaloniki, is a unique autonomous state under Greek sovereignty and has existed as such since the Great Lavra Monastery was founded by St. Athanasius of Athos (feast July 5) in 963.

The monastic state comprises twenty ruling monasteries. Each of the twenty appoints a member of the ruling council each year, and the top five monasteries in precedence (Great Lavra, Vatopedi, Iveron, Hilandar, and Dionysiou) take turns in supplying the 'protos', the executive head of state.

In addition to the twenty ruling monasteries, there are a baker's dozen of smaller sketes (smaller in theory, but several of them are as large as any of the monasteries). These began to be established in the late seventeenth century and later. Smaller still, are the nearly 100 kelli and hermitages. As it was held that no more monasteries could be founded on the mountain after the fall of Constantinople, all sketes, kelli, and hermitages are owned by one of the twenty monasteries and exist only with their consent. I stayed at one of the kelli, Marouda ("Little Mary") Kelli, a dependency of the Serbian Hilandar Monastery. Housing three monks and a novice, it has a capacity of twenty-five.

Vatopedi Monastery was built on the site of a previous monastery that had been destroyed by pirates. Documents show that it existing in 985. By 1045, it had achieved its present rank of second among the monasteries. In the 1190s, young Prince Ratsko became a monk there, and a few years later, his father, Stephan Nemanja, having laid aside his throne, was tonsured there. In 1197 they were given leave to found the Serbian monastery of Hilandar, and Stephan reposed there. Stephan was later canonized as is known as St. Simeon the Myrrhusher, and his son, who later returned to Serbia to strengthen spiritual life at Studenitsa Monastery, which had been founded by his father in 1186, and later became the first Archbishop of the Serbian Church, is known to us as St. Sava of Serbia.

The catholicon, or main church of the monastery, is a thousand years old and is essentially unchanged.

Today Vatopedi houses 118 monks from many nations, though in essence it is a Greek monastery. Its abbot Igumen Ephraim is well known, but has been persecuted by secularists in the Greek government. The monastery has many connections with Russia.

Services begin at 0400 daily, with the Midnight Office read in the narthex and Matins served in the catholicon. They conclude about 0700, and the congregation disperses among four or so of the more than twenty chapels of the monastery for Divine

Liturgy. Following Liturgy about 0800 is breakfast in the Trapeza, right across from the catholicon. Then the working day begins. Rest period is in the afternoon before Vespers at 1800.

Among the treasures preserved at the monastery, five are brought out each day after Vespers and the evening meal for veneration. The belt of the Theotokos, the reed which Jesus held when he was mocked by the Roman soldiers, the skull of St. John Chrysostom with its incorrupt right ear, the skull of St. Gregory the Theologian, and the skull of St. Andrew of Crete.

## Sermon on Law and Grace

Metropolitan Hilarion of Kiev, cir. A.D. 1037

Blessed be the God of Israel, the God of Christianity who visited his people and brought them salvation. He did not disdain his creation which was for ages possessed by pagan darkness and by worship of the devil, but he enlightened the Children of Abraham by giving them his Law tablets, and later he saved all nations, sending them his Son, his Gospel, and his baptism, and by giving them resurrection to eternal life.

Law was the precursor and the servant of Grace and Truth. Grace and Truth were the servants of the future life and immortal life. Law led its people of the Old Testament toward the blessing of baptism, and baptism led its sons to the life eternal. Moses and the prophets announced the coming of Christ, but Christ and the Apostles announced resurrection and the future age.

And what could the Law achieve? And what could Grace achieve? First was the Law and then Grace. Hagar and Sarah are the pictures of Law and Grace: Hagar was a handmaid and Sarah was free. First comes the handmaiden and then the free woman may come. And he who reads (the Bible) must understand this. Abraham, since his youth, had Sarah for his wife and she was free and not a slave, and so God decided before all ages to send his Son into the world that Grace might appear through him (but sent him to man only later). But Sarah was restrained from bearing children, since she was unfruitful. But she was not actually unfruitful, but was chosen by divine Providence to bear in her old age. The wisdom of God was not revealed to anyone, but concealed from both angels and men. This wisdom was not shown, but was concealed to be revealed at the end of the age.

It was Sarah who said unto Abraham: "Behold now, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children; go in to my maid; it may be that I shall obtain children by her."

And so the divine Grace (of the Son) announced to God, the Father: "It is not yet my time for

descending to the earth and to save the world. Descend to Mount Sinai and give them the Law."

And, just as Abraham did as Sarah told him and went into Hagar, so God, the Father, did as he was told by the divine Grace and descended to Mount Sinai.

And Hagar, the handmaid, bore from Abraham a servant (not a truly free man), and Abraham gave him the name Ishmael. And Moses brought from Mount Sinai the Law and not the Grace, the shade and not the Truth.

When Abraham and Sarah were old, God appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. And he ran to meet him, and bowing low to the earth, he hastened into the tent (to Sarah). And so, when the end of the age was nearing, God appeared to humankind, descended to the earth, and blessed the womb of the Virgin. And he was received by the Immaculate Virgin into the tent of the flesh.

And the Virgin said to the angel: "Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word."

Once the Lord gave Sarah to bear a child, and she begat Isaac, and the free woman begat a free son. And, when once more our Lord visited humankind, he appeared unknown and hidden from men and then was born Grace and Truth, but not the Law. And now it was the Son and not the servant.

And the child grew up and was weaned; and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. And when Christ was upon the earth Grace did not reveal Itself and Christ was hiding himself until he was thirty. And when he had grown and was weaned, then there, in the river Jordan, Grace was revealed by a man. And our Lord invited many and made a great feast and offered up the fatted calf of the age, His beloved Son, Jesus Christ, and God then called to this feast many of heaven and earth and they the angels and men into one (Church). This blessed faith spreads now over the entire earth, and finally it reached the Russian nation. And, whereas the lake of the Law dried up, the fount of the Gospel became rich in water and overflowed upon our land and reached us. And now, together with all Christians, we glorify the Holy Trinity, while Judea remains silent.

*The original title for this work: Concerning: the Law given by Moses and the Grace and Truth which came by Jesus Christ. And: how the Law departed, and Grace and Truth filled all the earth, and Faith spread forth to all nations, even unto our nation of Rus'.*

*The Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America approved a book of "Guidelines for Clergy" in June of 1998. These do not comprise an all-encompassing pastoral handbook, but rather a limited compilation addressing significant aspects of a pastor's ministry.*

*The Confessor's Tongue shall contain sections from these guidelines over the next few weeks (we ran these back in 2006). One might ask, if they are for the clergy, why print them for the laity? We do so because there is mutual*

*accountability in the Church. The laity should be aware of the duties of the clergy, as well as of their own duties. The disciplines provided in the guidelines are those of the Church, not merely the opinion of any particular bishop or priest. By reading, knowing, and conforming to these guidelines, both the clergy and laity prove to be faithful and honorable members of the Body of Christ. Please read these carefully, and if you have questions or desire clarification on any point, please ask your parish priest.*

I. A Selection of clergy disciplines according to the canons of the Church (*References to pertinent canons are provided in parenthesis*).

1. The clergy are strictly to observe the teachings of the Church regarding Christ, the Sacred Scriptures, and Holy Tradition (*Ephesus canons 6, 7; Trullo c. 1; Carthage c. 2*).

2. The clergy are under the complete authority of the diocesan hierarch, without whose blessing they cannot function and to whom they must show proper respect (*Laodicea c. 57; Holy Apostles c. 31, 39, 55; Carthage c. 10*).

3. The clergy are to show respect and concern for other members of the clergy (*Holy Apostles c. 56, 59*).

4. The duty of the priest is to instruct the faithful in the way of godliness (*Holy Apostles c. 58*).

5. Clergy are to be examples to the flock through prayer and fasting as prescribed by the Church (*Carthage c. 41; Holy Apostles c. 69*).

6. Clergy should not abstain from the Eucharist (*Trullo c. 80; Holy Apostles c. 8*).

7. Clergy should always be diligent and sensitive in encouraging pious repentance and receptive to a sincere confession (*Holy Apostles c. 52; Trullo c. 102*).

8. Clergy must not run for political office (*Carthage c. 16; Holy Apostles c. 81, 83; Chalcedon c. 7*).

9. Clergy may not accept secular appointments or engage in business without permission of the diocesan hierarch (*Holy Apostles c. 39; Chalcedon c. 3*).

10. Clergy have the right to a hearing before a Church Court (*Chalcedon c. 9; Statute of OCA, article xi*).

#### Upcoming Events 2014

- 20 July, 5:00 p.m. Fr. Justin's presentation about his pilgrimage
- 29 July Thirteen-year anniversary of the first Divine Liturgy at St. Maximus
- 1 August Procession of the Cross, Dormition Fast begins.

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!