

"Lord, I thanks thee." And why do I speak of the afflictions of this world? It is our duty to give God thanks, even for hell itself, for the torments and punishments of the next world. For surely it is a thing beneficial to those who attend to it, when the dread of hell is like like a bridle on our hearts. Let us therefore give thanks not only for blessings which we see, but also for those which we see not, and for those which we receive against our will. For many are the blessings He bestows upon us, without our desire, without our knowledge.

And if you believe me not, I will at once proceed to make the case clear to you. For consider, I pray, do not the impious and unbelieving Gentiles ascribe everything to the sun and to their idols? But what then? Doth He not bestow blessings even upon them? Is it not the work of His providence, that they both have life, and health, and children, and the like? And again they that are called Marcionites, and the Manichees, do they not even blaspheme Him? But what then? does He not bestow blessings on them every day? Now if He bestows blessings on them that know them not, much more does he bestow them upon us. For what else is the peculiar work of God if it be not this, to do good to all mankind, alike by chatishments and by enjoyments? Let us not then give thanks only when we are in prosperity, for there is nothing great in this. And this the devil also well knows, and therefore he said, "Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast Thou not made a hedge about him and about all that he hath on every side? Touch all that he hath; no doubt, he will renounce Thee to Thy face!" However, that cursed one gained no advantage; and God forbid he should gain any advantage of us either; but whenever we are either in penury, or in sicknesses, or in disaster, then let us increase our thanksgiving; thanksgiving, I mean, not in words, nor in tongue, but in deeds and works, in mind and in heart. Let us give thanks unto Him with all our souls. For He loves us more than our parents; and wide as is the difference between evil and goodness, so great is the difference between the Love of God and that of our fathers. And these are not my words, but those of Christ Himself who loveth us. . . .

The ungrateful, however, and unfeeling say, that this were worthy of God's goodness that there should be an equality amongst all. Tell me, ungrateful mortal, what sort of things are they which thou deniest to be of God's goodness, and what equality meanest thou? "Such an one," thou wilt say, "has been a cripple from his childhood; another is mad, and is possessed; another has arrived at extreme old ages, and has spent his whole life in poverty; another in the most painful diseases: are these works of Providence? One man is deaf, another dumb, another poor, whilst another, impious, yea, utterly impious, and full of ten thousand vices, enjoys wealth, and keeps concubines, and parasites, and is owner of a splendid mansion, and lives an idle life." And many instances of the sort they string together, and weave a long account of complaint against the providence of God.

What then are we to say to them? . . .

"But such a one, " you will say, "is poor, and poverty is an evil. And what is it to be sick, and what is it to be crippled?" Oh, man, they are nothing. One thing alone is evil, that is to sin; this is the only thing we ought to search to the bottom. And yet we omit to search into the causes of what are really evils, and busy ourselves about other things. Why is it that not one of us ever examines why he has sinned? To sin,-- is it then in my power, or is it not in my power? And why need I go round about me for a number of reasons? I will seek for the matter within myself, Now then did I ever master my wrath? Did I ever master my anger, either through shame, or through fear of man? Then whenever I discover this done, I shall discover that to sin is in my own power. No one examines these matters, no one busies himself about them. But only according to Job, "Man in a way altogether different swims upon words." For why does it concern thee, if such a one is blind, or such a one is poor? Gold hath not commanded thee to look to this, but to what thou thyself art doing For if on the one hand though doubtest that there is any power superintending the world, thou art of all men the most senseless; but if thou art persuaded of this, why doubt that it is our duty to please God?, *Chrysostom, Homily 19 on Ephesians*

### The Eight Deadly Thoughts

Ennumerated and discussed in Conference Five of St. John Cassian and in Dr. Jean-Claude Larchet's book *Therapy of Spiritual Illness*, as well as other places, the Eight Deadly Thoughts/Passions are:

1. Gluttony
2. Fornication
3. Love of Money (Avarice)
4. Anger
5. Sadness
6. Acedia
7. Vainglory
8. Pride.

### Upcoming Events 2014

16 December: Holy Unction  
25 December: Nativity of our Lord in the Flesh  
31 December: All-Night Vigil for St. Basil/New Year

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!

# The Confessor's Tongue for December 7, A. D. 2014

Twenty-Sixth Sunday After Pentecost; St. Ambrose of Milan

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 7: St. Ambrose of Milan

The son of the Roman prefect of Gaul (born in 333 or about 340), he received a brilliant secular education in Rome. Gifted with brilliant talents and possessing an unusual gift of eloquence, he chose for himself a career as a lawyer. He entered into civil service and soon achieved the rank of prefect (deputy) of Liguria. Having arrived in Mediolanum [as ancient Milan was known as] on the occasion of the election of bishop, St. Ambrose was himself elected (in the year 374) bishop of Milan, by special indication from above. During the time of the procession into the temple for the election of the new archpastor, heated arguments arose between the Orthodox and the Arians. Ambrose, as the prefect, with all the power of his eloquence convinced the people to come to order. A child's voice suddenly gave out: "Ambrose is bishop"! And both the Orthodox and the Arians, all being in the church, unanimously proclaimed: "Ambrose is bishop"! Ambrose, understanding himself unworthy of this dignity, used all means to evade this election, but was forced to undertake the hierarchical service. Not being baptized at that time but only prepared for baptism, he, after the statement of his election by the emperor, was baptized by the Orthodox bishop. In seven days he passed through the church degrees, and on the eighth, December 7, 374, he was consecrated the Archbishop of Mediolanum.

Having taken his cathedra, he distributed gold and silver to the poor, and dedicated his real estate to the Church and all was given over to the performance of his high duties. He performed the divine services daily and all the time remaining from the management of the church, he devoted day and night to studying the Holy Scriptures and the works of the Greek fathers and writers. Having made the Holy Scriptures and the truths of the faith his own in mind and heart, St. Ambrose began with great fervor to preach to the people, not leaving one Sunday or one feast without teaching and in every instance taking that opportunity, and sometimes more than once a day he ascended the cathedra. His word was comprehensible and pleasant, his voice was quiet, and consequently in the temple, a surprising quietness reigned during his sermon. Also he was especially zealous in preparing the catechumens in the truths of the faith and their preparation for holy baptism. He applied great care to the improvement of the church clergy and set himself as an example of how to connect a strict ascetic life to the duties of a servant of the church. The holy bishop "was a man of great abstinence, long vigils and works. Daily he mortified his flesh with fasting which he interrupted only on Saturdays and Sundays and on the feasts of the most famous martyrs. He offered prayers day and night and

did not avoid the labor of writing books in his own hand if he were not kept from this by bodily illness". Being strict with himself, he was good, gracious and accessible to all. "He rejoiced with the rejoicing and cried with the crying. If anyone fell he confessed his sins to him. He so cried, that he raised you to tears". With varying affability and compassion, he helped the poor and consoled the unfortunate.

As a zealous advocate of Orthodoxy, he led a continuous struggle against heretics and his special merit consists in the eradication of the Arian heresy in Italy. Dying paganism tried to return life to itself, but St. Ambrose subverted all its plans and its adherents. Political upheavals, civil wars and abuse of authority forced him to necessarily accept his important participation in the affairs of state, and in these cases he displayed surprising magnanimity, common sense and firmness. He died on April 4, 397. His relics are in Milan. St. Ambrose wrote many dogmatic and moral compositions. As a witness to his hierarchical care of the clergy is his treatise "De officiis ministrum" (Concerning the Duties of the Clergy) where he gives them advice, and manuals of a mainly practical character supported with examples from the lives of the Old and New Testament righteous ones. Among the many of his hymns is the especially well known church hymn: "Let us praise Thee as God" [*Te Deum*] composed on the occasion of the victory of Orthodoxy over Arianism. S. V. *Bulgakov, Handbook for Church Servers, 2nd ed., 1274 pp. (Kharkov, 1900. Translated by Archpriest Eugene D. Tarris ©. All rights reserved.*

## On Giving Thanks Always

*St. John Chrysostom*

What then? Are we to give thanks for everything that befalls us? Yes; be it even disease, be it even penury [poverty]. For if a certain wise man gave this advice in the Old Testament, and said, "Whatsoever is brought upon thee take cheerfully, and be patient when thou art changed to a low estate"; much more ought this to be the case in the new. Yes, even though thou know not the word, give thanks. For this is thanksgiving. But if thou give thanks when thou art in comfort and in affluence, in success and in prosperity, there is nothing great, nothing wonderful in that.

One thing alone is evil, that is to sin; this is the only thing we ought to search to the bottom. And yet we omit to search into the causes of what are really evils, and busy ourselves about other things. Why is it that not one of us ever examines why he has sinned?

What is required is, for a man to give thanks when he is in afflictions, in anguish, in discouragements. Utter no word in preference to this,