

The Confessor's Tongue for March 22, A. D. 2015

4th Sunday of Lent; St. John of the Ladder; Hieromartyr Basil of Ancyra

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.

Letter of Metropolitan Tikhon to the DOS

Metropolitan Tikhon, Primate
March 21, 2015

To the Clergy, Monastics and Faithful of the Diocese of the South, Christ is in our midst!

The Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America, at its most recent meeting held March 17-20, 2015, received the report of His Eminence, Archbishop Nikon, concerning the Special Assembly of the Diocese of the South held on February 16, 2015, at Christ the Saviour Orthodox Cathedral, Miami Lakes, Florida.

His Eminence presented the name of Archimandrite Gerasim (Elie) for consideration as the sole candidate for canonical election to the see of Dallas, which has remained vacant since the time of the retirement and repose of the Diocese's founder and beloved archpastor, Archbishop Dmitri of blessed memory.

After careful reflection and prayerful discussion, including extensive dialogue with Archimandrite Gerasim, the Holy Synod decided that, rather than proceeding immediately to a canonical election, it would appoint Archimandrite Gerasim Administrator of the Diocese of the South. This action will be reviewed at the next Holy Synod Meeting in October 2015. The Holy Synod has identified the need to provide all candidates for the episcopacy with a limited period of administrative experience prior to canonical election and is following the precedent established recently in the Diocese of Alaska and the Diocese of the Midwest, where the candidates were asked to serve as Administrator prior to canonical election. In conjunction with this decision, the Holy Synod thanked His Eminence, Archbishop Nikon for his sacrificial and devoted service as Locum Tenens, both in pastorally overseeing the Diocese during some of the difficult years following the retirement and repose of Archbishop Dmitri and in bringing to a conclusion the process that led to the recent special nominating assembly. The Holy Synod has decided that I should assume the Locum Tenency of the Diocese of the South.

I have been, and will continue to be in direct communication with Archimandrite Gerasim and have already established a clear understanding of his responsibilities as Administrator and my role as overseer. While I will reserve for myself all actions that require a bishop (ordinations, clergy transfers outside the diocese, presiding at Diocesan Assemblies, etc.), I am delegating to Archimandrite Gerasim full authority in most other areas (pastoral visits to parishes and celebrations of anniversaries, pastoral guidance to the clergy, communications on all levels, presiding at Diocesan Council and Deanery meetings, coordination of clergy transfers within the diocese, oversight of education and outreach programs, exercising pastoral action and discipline in reference to diocesan clergy and laity, and encouraging the establishment of building programs and growth of missions).

I have full confidence in the ability of Archimandrite Gerasim to guide the Diocese in a pastoral and God-pleasing manner and I ask all the clergy and faithful of the diocese to pray for him and support him as he continues to build upon the good work of the ever memorable Archbishop Dmitri, His Eminence Archbishop Nikon and

all the good and faithful clergy, men and women who have worked so tirelessly to share the light of Orthodoxy throughout the South.

I also offer to you and to him my full support as Locum Tenens. While giving Archimandrite Gerasim broad latitude in his authority, I also look forward to the opportunity to make pastoral visits to the diocese and I will be in dialogue with him and your Chancellor, Archpriest Marcus Burch, concerning these possibilities.

On behalf of the entire Holy Synod, I thank you for your patience and your faithfulness to Christ and His Holy Church. May the Cross of Christ, lifted up during this middle point of the Great Fast continue to strengthen us and fill us with joyful expectation of the coming Resurrection.

Sincerely Yours in Christ,
+TIKHON

Archbishop of Washington
Metropolitan of All America and Canada Locum Tenens
of the Diocese of the South

The Sayings of St. Anthony the Great 10

Abba Anthony said, "Just as fish die if they stay too long out of water, so the monks who loiter outside their cells or pass their time with men of the world lose the intensity of inner peace. So like a fish going towards the sea, we must hurry to reach our cell, for fear that if we delay outside we will lose our interior watchfulness."

Saying 10 in *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*

Commentary: The monk has a special vocation, to leave the world and all ties thereto and to live separated from the affairs of the world so he can devote himself to prayer. In the desert, the advice to monks was always to "stay in your cell" for "your cell will teach you everything." Even in the desert, the monk was tempted to "make the rounds", to "hang out" with other monks, to fall into idle chatter. Even worse was the monk who was frequently absent for business in town. The canons of the Church affirm the special vocation of the monk; he is to remain in his monastery, subject to his bishop, engaged in prayer and whatever work he is given. To be outside for long is to be in the wrong environment and to run a serious spiritual risk.

Likewise, the first (but not only) place of a Christian in the world is the Church. The natural expectation she has of all Christians is that they gather every Lord's Day in the Lord's house. So strong is that expectation and she has decreed in a holy canon that to be voluntarily absent for three or more weeks in a row is to excommunicate oneself from the Church. If we are absent for long, we begin to die spiritually. Just as the employee goes to work every day appointed for him by his employer, so the Christian sets aside the time asked of him by his Lord.

In the *Apostolic Constitutions*, a third-century document containing material still more ancient, Christians are urged to “assemble yourselves together every day, morning and evening, singing psalms and praying in the Lord’s house.... And on the day of our Lord’s resurrection, which is the Lord’s Day, meet more diligently, sending praise to God who made the universe by Jesus, and sent him to us, and condescended to let him suffer, and raised Him from the dead” (Bk 2.59). This was written for laity in the world who had to work six days a week, not for monks! Of course, it was written long before the coming of our many addicting, time-wasting technologies which serve well to kill time but have little eternal value.

Most parishes do not even bother to try to serve daily services, fearing that no one would come. But certainly it is not too much for our Lord, who made us and died for us, to ask that we be present at the Vigil for two hours Saturday evening (especially if we plan to go to Holy Communion), the Hours and Divine Liturgy for two hours Sunday morning, and perhaps an hour at a midweek service? Altogether, that would represent five hours a week in church of the 168 given to us each week, or 2.9% of our time. Take another five hours for prayer and reading at home, including time preparing for Communion, and you have ten hours, just under 6% of our time each week. Even if we exclude from our calculations eight hours per night for sleep, that ten hours still represents only 8.9% of our waking time, not even a ‘tithe’ offered to God. Even if you attended all the services here during a typical week (Vigil, three Liturgies, three Vespers, two Matins—about 12 hours) and spent four more at home, that 16 hours would still be but 9.5% of your total time each week and 14% of your waking time (if sleeping 8 hours)—not a lot to ask when eternity is at stake.

Sometimes we wonder why our spiritual lives are weak and why we make little progress. The answer may well be how little time we devote to preparing for eternity. If nearly all our time is spent in the world engaged in worldly activities, attending to the cares of life, how can we expect to become fit for heaven? Many of us would be ashamed to see how much time we spend each week watching television or movies, playing sports or video games, reading novels or newspapers or surfing the web compared to how much time we spend on the One we call our Lord.

Since this life is preparation for the life to come, let us, for a moment, compare our Christian practice with college, which is popularly thought to prepare us for adult life ‘in the real world’. How likely would you be to graduate if, while signed up for a full load (12-15 credits), you attended five hours of class (of the 12-15) a week and studied five more hours (usually 2-3 hours of study outside of class are required for each hour spent in class, so 24-60 would be needed) for a total of ten spent each week on college? In other words, you skip half your classes and study only 20% of the

recommended minimum. Good luck. As Christians, how can we expect progress and success in spiritual life and entrance into the Kingdom if we (grudgingly) give God but two or three hours a week? Sunday Liturgy alone with a hurried “our Father” as we fall into bed each night won’t cut it.

Moreover, we notice that it is not just time out of the cell that is a threat to the monk but time spent with ‘men of the world,’ or worldly people. “Bad company corrupts good morals,” as St. Paul says. Our choice of friends plays a decisive role in the quality of our spiritual life, as we become like those with whom we spend time and open ourselves too. If most or much of our time is spent with people who drink too much, do drugs, doubt God, scoff, and otherwise live sinful lives, it should not surprise us if we find ourselves doing such things too and that our love for God and His people and Church is growing cold.

Our life is found in Christ and His Body, the Church. As Christians, that is our natural environment (through baptism) just as a fish lives in the water. May we all be found more commonly in our natural element for the salvation of our souls!

Fr. Justin Frederick

From the Priest: Confession

Two weeks remain before Holy Week. If you have not been to Confession since the beginning of the Fast, or if your regular time for confession will fall due before Pascha, you should plan on coming to Confession before Holy Week. *Fr. Justin*

From St. John Climacus on Despondency

A man in obedience does not know despondency, having achieved spiritual things by means of sensory things.

Despondency reminds those standing at prayer of necessary duties. And, brutish as she is, she leaves no stone unturned to find some plausible pretext to drag us from prayer as with a kind of halter.

Spiritual heroes come to light at the time of despondency, for nothing procures so many crowns for a monk as the battle with despondency.

He who mourns over himself does not know despondency.

Observe, and you will find that if you stand on your feet, despondency will battle with you. If you sit, it will suggest that it is better for you to lean back; and it urges to lean against the wall of the cell; then it persuades you to peep out of the window, by producing noises and footsteps.

Let this tyrant be bound by the remembrance of your sins, Let us buffet him by manual labor. Let him be dragged forth by the thought of blessings to come.

Upcoming Events 2015

5 April: Palm Sunday
12 April: Holy Pascha, Feast of Feasts, Picnic
25 May: Memorial Day Picnic

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!