

# The Confessor's Tongue for April 19, A. D. 2015

Thomas Sunday, Antipascha; Ven. John of the Ancient Caves

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.

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## On the Artos

The blessing of the Artos is one of the special paschal rites, "in honor and glory and memory of the glorious resurrection" of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Artos is understood to be a Prosphora with an image on it of the cross crowned with thorns or with the image of the resurrection of Christ as signs of victory of Christ over death. The word "Artos" is Greek; translated into Russian it means "bread".

The historical origin of the Artos is as follows: the Apostles, who were accustomed to partake a meal together with the resurrected Lord (Acts 10:41), after His ascension to heaven, remembering His covenantal words: "I am with you always" (Mt. 28:20), felt the invisible presence of the Lord through living faith in their assemblies, but could not see Him with carnal eyes. The natural expression of this burning faith of the disciples to their Teacher and their desire to have a constant reminder of His abiding with them, was that at a meal they left an unoccupied place for Jesus Christ to recline with them, but placed on the table before that place some bread as if for Him, and each time after the end of the meal, lifting up thanksgiving to God, lifted this bread, saying: "Christ is Risen."

When the disciples of Jesus Christ went away to various countries for the proclamation of the Gospel, they whenever possible tried to observe this custom: each of the Holy Apostles in whatever country founded a new society of followers of Christ and when beginning a meal left a place and a fragment of bread in honor of the Savior, and after the end of the meal together with them glorified the risen Lord, raising up the fragment of bread placed in memory of Him.

What is accepted by the first students of the Gospel from the lips of the Apostles and was done by them daily, that is what the fathers of the Church of the following centuries have applied to the feast of the Resurrection of Christ in order to keep forever the apostolic tradition in the Church. In this way this custom was really kept in the Church and through a number of centuries reached our time. As the Apostles during their assemblies have placed the particle of bread in the place appointed for the Savior reminded them of the risen Christ, so, intentionally the Holy Church even at the present time places an Artos on Holy Pascha in the temple in full view of the faithful to serve as their same reminder of the invisible presence of the risen Lord with us. Thus, preparing the Artos, the Holy Church imitates the Apostles and by these blessed loaves remembers the appearances of the risen Lord to the Apostles.

At the same time the Artos reminds us that Jesus Christ by His death on the cross also has become for us the rising of the truly living bread. Such is the

meaning of the Artos and is revealed in the prayer of its blessing (see below). Besides, in this prayer the priest, calling down the blessing of God on the blessed Artos, asks the Lord to heal any infirmity and illness and to grant healing to all who eat of the Artos. According to the Supplemental Book of Needs in monasteries the sanctification of the Artos is done on the first day of Holy Pascha and is done as follows: "The Artos, which is bread usually with a cross on it prepared for this, is brought to the priest in the sanctuary. After the Prayer before the Ambo and the ending of the Divine Liturgy, the Deacon says: "Let us pray to the Lord", and the clerics: "Lord, have mercy" and the priest reads this prayer over it:

"O All-powerful God and Almighty Lord, Who by Thy servant Moses during the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, and the liberation of Thy people from the bitter slavery of Pharaoh, didst command that a lamb be slain, prefiguring the Lamb, Thy beloved Son our Lord Jesus Christ, who voluntarily was slain on the cross for us, taking away the sins of the whole world, do Thou now also, we humbly pray Thee, look down upon this bread and bless and sanctify it. For we Thy servants, in honor and glory and in commemoration of the glorious Resurrection of Thy Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom we also have received remission, freedom and release from bondage of the eternal slavery of the enemy and from the indissoluble bonds of Hades, do now offer this before Thy Majesty on this bright, all-glorious and saving day of Pascha. Grant that we who offer this and kiss it and eat of it become partakers of Thy heavenly blessing, and by Thy power burn away from us every sickness and infirmity, granting health to all. For Thou art the source of blessings, and the Bestower of healing, and unto Thee we send up glory, to the Unoriginate Father, with Thine Only-begotten Son, and Thine All-holy, Good and Life-creating Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages".

Choir: "Amen".

"Immediately the priest sprinkles the Artos with Holy Water (of Theophany) saying: "This Artos is blessed and sanctified by the sprinkling of this Holy Water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen", three times. And after this he goes out and places it on the Analogion, and the people, as they receive the Antidoron, kiss the Artos".

On the day of Pascha and during all Bright Week the Artos with an image of the Resurrection of the Lord is placed on an Analogion purposely arranged either in the sanctuary or in the temple. In monasteries after the Liturgy there is a procession to the refectory with the icon of the Resurrection of Christ, with the Artos, with a lampada or two, with

the ringing of all bells simultaneously, and with the singing of "Christ is Risen!". After the meal there is a lifting up of the Artos. At the raising of the Artos, the cellarer says: "Christ is Risen!" once; and all respond: "Indeed, He is Risen". Then, having signed the Artos cross-wisely, he says: "Let us worship His three-day resurrection", and places the Artos on the Panagiaron (a special vessel). Then everyone kisses the Artos, singing the ninth ode of the canon of Pascha: "Shine, shine". After kissing the Artos sing the Hypakoe and the Kontakion of Pascha, then comes the Dismissal, and the Artos is then returned to the temple, according to the former order, and is placed in its proper place in the temple (for details see "The Order of the Blessing of the Artos on the day of Holy Pascha in the Ustav and the Pentecostarion). In parish churches during the cross processions done during Holy Pascha (see about them below), the Artos is carried around the temple. Both on the first day of Pascha and during all Bright Week the Artos with the image of the Resurrection of the Lord is placed on the Analogion in the temple.

### The Sayings of St. Anthony the Great 13

*A hunter in the desert came to find Abba Anthony enjoying himself with the brethren and he was shocked. Wanting to show him that it was necessary sometimes to meet the needs of the brethren, the old man said to him, 'Put an arrow in your bow and shoot it.' So he did. The old man then said, 'Shoot another,' and he did so. Then the old man said, 'Shoot yet again,' and the hunter replied, 'If I bend my bow so much, I will break it.' Then the old man said to him, 'It is the same with the work of God. If we stretch the brethren beyond measure, they will soon break. Sometimes it is necessary to come down to meet their needs.' When he heard these words, the hunter was pierced by compunction and, greatly edified by the old man, he went away. As for the brethren, they went home strengthened.*  
Saying 13 in *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*

*Commentary:* This same wisdom is found in the cycles of fasting and feasting in the Church. We are called to make a considerable ascetic effort in prayer, fasting, and almsgiving during the four fasts of the year, but especially during Great Lent. But at the end of each season of fast comes a festive season and a relaxation of ascetical effort. Few of us could bear it if we had to try to live life at the level of effort demanded by Great Lent. Like the overstressed bow, we would break.

Though the feasts bring us a relaxation of ascetical effort and a time to rejoice and be glad, we must not conceive of this 'relaxation' as though it were a sort of 'spiritual vacation', during which we are freed from prayer, temptation, and struggle. There is no such thing as a spiritual vacation, for our adversary the devil prowls about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. To try to take a vacation will always spiritually disarm us and harm us. It is for this reason that St. Anthony the great was always urging

others to hold on to their ascetic labors and not relax them, and why he himself throughout his life increased his own.

King Solomon writes in Ecclesiastes, "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven.... A time to weep, and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance.... A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away.... A time to keep silence, and a time to speak..." (Ecc 3:1-8). Though this life generally is a time for us to lose our life that we may find it, to give that we may receive, to weep and cultivate repentance so that we may rejoice in the age to come, yet even this life in this fallen world and evil generation has its joys, its rewards, its times of laughter, rest, getting, and dancing. The Optina Elders often referred to these little relaxations and joys along the way as "consolations" sent by God. Such times help us who are weak from breaking under the strain of constant effort.

Yet every such consolation and joy in this life is only relative compared to the joy to come, a foretaste, a glimpse. We cannot live here in rest, relaxation, and meeting the needs of the body, for these pleasures are only a pale reflection of what is to come; the joys here are not the ultimate end. In this life, we get only a foretaste of the Kingdom, not the fullness of it. God grants us consolations along our difficult way so we don't lose heart, but we cannot long tarry in them. Even though we cannot linger long in them, we should not disdain them nor be ashamed of our need for them, or judge others over them as the hunter did. *Fr. Justin Frederick*

### A Holy Week Custom to Reclaim

A widespread custom associated with Matins of Holy Friday, the service of the Twelve Passion Gospels, has a deep meaning. In that service, we see Christ betrayed, condemned unjustly, and crucified as an innocent, about the time the Jews were slaughtering their lambs for Passover.

According to the Orthodox custom, the faithful preserve the fire from their candles lit during the service. They keep the candles burning and take the flame home. At home, they smoke the sign of the cross over the doors of their home (they may also keep their lampada burning with this flame too). Just as the Hebrews in Egypt applied the blood of the Passover lamb to their doors to avoid the angel of death, so Christians smoke the sign of the cross on their doors, the sign of Christ's victory over death.

This custom is a good one which we should consider adopting for ourselves in years to come. I recall that the Serbs at seminary always did this to the doors to their dorm rooms.

### Upcoming Events 2015

21 May Ascension  
25 May Memorial Day Picnic

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!