

The Confessor's Tongue for June 28, A. D. 2015

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost" Venerable Cyrus and John; Sergius & Herman of Varlaam
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.

The Sayings of St. Anthony the Great 22

Abba Anthony said, 'I believe that the body possesses a natural movement, to which it is adapted, but which it cannot follow without the consent of the soul; it only signifies in the body a movement without passion. There is another movement, which comes from the nourishment and arming of the body by eating and drinking, and this causes the heat of the blood to stir up the body to work. That is why the apostle said, "Do not get drunk with wine for that is debauchery." (Eph 5.18) And in the Gospel the Lord also recommends this to His disciples: "Take heed to yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness" (Luke 21:34). But there is yet another movement which afflicts those who fight, and that comes from the wiles and jealousy of the demons. You must understand what these three bodily movements are: one is natural, one comes from too much to eat, the third is caused by demons.' Saying 22 *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*

Commentary: This is not an easy saying for us to understand. It is not so much that we do not live as monks, but that we are so habituated to abundance of good things and an ease of acquiring whatever our body desires that we are deadened to the dynamic Antony describes. We are acquainted, at least, or know all too well, the effect drinking too much alcohol has: it decreases our inhibitions, loosens the rational mind's control over the body, and allows the passions free rein, particularly anger and lust. Antony and many other experienced fathers bear witness to the same dynamic, only more subtle, in response to eating too much, pandering too much to the taste, and pampering the body.

The body is ever to be guided by the soul rather than to guide the soul. It is designed to serve the soul, especially the rational element in man and highest part of the soul, the *nous* illumined by Christ. In man disordered by sin, the soul becomes enslaved to the body and its desires. The body is not evil, and has a proper movement natural to it. When it is in subjection to the soul, it does not move without the soul's consent. We can stir up passionate movements in our bodies, however, by excessive eating and drinking (i.e. more than the body needs to maintain health), by pampering and indulging the body. These give the body pleasure and increase its desire for more. This movement is always passionate, and is involuntary, though it is voluntarily aroused through excessive eating and drinking. Increasingly, the body impresses the soul as its servant to fulfill its growing desires, even against the rational judgment of the soul. Hence we witness the drug addict or drunkard, who though he knows with his mind that he needs to stop and that what he is doing is self-destructive, his body lords it over his soul and compels the mind to scheme as to how it can get the next fix or drink.

A publication of St. Maximus Orthodox Church, 2026 West Oak, Denton, TX, 76201 (940) 293-3032

By this we may better appreciate how fasting is indispensable for keeping the body in proper subjection to the soul.

Anthony admits of another movement of the body that is not a natural motion or caused by over-eating or drinking but by direct stimulation from demons. Troubling though this may be, it must be borne with faith and patience and humility. Most often, those who are actively engaged in spiritual combat and are making progress in spiritual life experience have the experience of this third motion.
Fr. Justin Frederick

To the Venerable Hierarchs, Reverend Clergy, Monastics, and Faithful of the Orthodox Church in America:

Dearly Beloved,

The recent ruling by the US Supreme Court on the legality of "same-sex marriages" has received much press coverage and has already caused some consternation about its implications and ramifications. But we Orthodox Christians must rest assured that the teaching of our Holy Church on the Mystery of Marriage remains the same as it has been for millennia.

Over the past few years, the Holy Synod of Bishops of our Orthodox Church in America has issued a number of statements outlining, detailing and clarifying the teaching of our Holy Faith on this matter in light of challenges from our American society. These teachings remain in effect, in spite of the Supreme Court's decision. Links to these statements are provided below.

As we reflect on the Supreme Court's ruling, we should thank Almighty God that we live in a country that allows us the First Amendment rights to worship freely, practice what we believe as Orthodox Christians, and live as examples of Christ our Savior and His love for others.

The ruling does not change the teaching of the Church, but it does remind us of the need to be Christ-like in our dealings with everyone. The state has the responsibility to enact laws that protect the rights of each individual. The Church, while it does not bless "same-sex marriages" or view them as sacramental, does see the image of Christ in every individual, and his or her worth in the eyes of the Lord Who died upon the Cross for our salvation.

As the Orthodox Church in America, it is our responsibility to care for those who are in need, help those who are victims of prejudice, racism or persecution of any kind, and to provide for those who are sick, destitute, homeless or imprisoned.

The Church's mission continues, and we have a great responsibility to be "all things to all people," so that we all may be "one in Christ," and hear on the last day, "Well done, good and faithful servant, you

were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord" (Matthew 25:21).

With love in the Lord,+ Tikhon
Archbishop of Washington
Metropolitan of All America and Canada *oca.org*

The Virtue of Hatred

Abhor that which is evil, cleave to what is good. Romans 12:9

Do you realize that the Bible commands us to hate, and that command not found in the Old Testament, but the New? This hatred is both a virtue and a necessity for us if we are to live a Christian life.

We generally think of hatred as a sin, and, when directed against man made in God's image, it is. Yet hatred is not something that has to be completely rooted out of our souls; it merely needs to be directed against the proper object.

In Romans chapter 12, St. Paul commands us to "abhor that which is evil." The Greek word *apostugeo* contains the root verb "to hate" with a prefix which adds intensity to that hatred. This hatred, properly translated as 'abhor', is not a passive dislike; it is an active, violent hatred and detestation. The Latin word from which we get 'abhor' means 'to shudder' a violent, involuntary reaction to something with which we desire no close contact, for example, the sound of fingernails on a slate blackboard.

This violent reaction of intense hatred is to be directed against that which is evil. The Greek word for translated as 'evil', *poneros*, used 80 times in the NT, is translated as "evil or wicked" in all but five occurrences in the King James. Satan, the devil, is "the evil one" from whom we ask deliverance in the Lord's Prayer. Things that are evil harm and oppress us and others and corrupt our souls and faculties so that they do not work as they were created to work. God is good, *kalos*, and makes us such while our enemy is evil and seeks to make us like himself.

Thus we are to hate both the devil and his evil works; we are to hate the corruption that the devil works in human lives through sin and death. We are to hate sin, not merely hating it but abhorring it.

But all too often we do not abhor sin; rather we like it or even love it. Rather than shuddering before it in revulsion and fleeing from involvement with it, we toy with it, play with it, entertain ourselves with it, and as a result, we live lives far short of the potential God has given us—simply due to failure to abhor evil.

When I was on vacation a few years ago, I had the misfortune of being exposed to two episodes of *The Bachelorette* on television. It was repulsive to see a young woman set up with first four then three young men, to 'date' them in exotic, romantic locations far removed from the reality of day to day life, to kiss them, to sleep with them—all on national television, all in the name of finding 'true love' and the man she should pick to marry. The woman had no clue as to

the real nature of love or on what basis she might make a wise, rational decision about what man would be good to marry, and so she could offer no guidance in the matter to a viewer. Yet this most unworthy material is offered to us as 'entertainment' and consumed ravenously by millions who sit enthralled, hanging on the outcome.

Such 'entertainment' is unworthy of a Christian. If there is anything of Christ's life in us, such things must cause our souls to shudder and turn away. To hate and despise such things is both virtuous and necessary for Christians to protect us from what will harm us. And if we find our hearts sinfully drawn to such things, let us ask God to strengthen us in the virtue of hatred of evil! *Fr. Justin Frederick*

Homily on the Living Stone

St. Nicholas of Zicha (+1956)

"To whom coming, as unto a living stone...ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood. I Peter 2:4-5

What does a stone mean, my brethren, but stability? What can it teach us, my brethren, but stability? The living stone means immortality. The Apostle refers to Christ the Lord as the living Stone, because He is immortal and the giver of immortality. The Apostle also refers to Christians as living stones, as partakers of the immortality of Christ.

My brethren, what do unbelievers think will be the last end of man? They think that his last end will be like that of a stone; a man will die, he will become insensate and turn to dust. A stone is already dead and without feeling, and can easily be turned to dust. Thus both unbelievers and believers compare men with stone, unbelievers because of its deadness and lack of feeling, and believers because of its endurance and stability. For the first, stone is a symbol of death, but for the second, it is a symbol of immortality.

In truth, without Christ, men are and always will be like dead stones. But Christ is like living stone. Ally yourself with Him alone, and you will be like living stones. In building a house, a builder chooses only those stones that are hewn and dressed to fit together with the other stones in the wall. Those that are unhewn, undressed, rough, and dilapidated, he throws away. Building the house, or the Temple, of His immortal Kingdom, Christ chooses men as a builder selects stones, with one characteristic: life, spiritual life. The Lord casts aside the spiritually dead as useless material, and only takes those that are alive with His life, and who fit well with the other living stones—the angels and the prophets, apostles and saints. Let us strive, my brethren, to be holy material for the holy house of Christ's Kingdom, which He is building day and night, and which He will complete in the fullness of time.

O Lord Jesus, Thou builder of the heavenly Kingdom, enliven us by Thy Holy Spirit and build us as living stones into the house of Thine eternal glory. To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen

Upcoming Events 2015

25 July Baptism of Onesimus Bramlett (note correction)
1-14 August Dormition Fast
6 September Maevers-Williams Wedding
7 September Labor Day Picnic

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!