

# The Confessor's Tongue for October 18, A. D. 2015

Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost; Evangelist Luke, St. Peter of Cetinje

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.

## October 18: St. Peter of Cetinje

Saint Peter was born in Njegushi, Montenegro on April 1, 1747. He was tonsured a monk and ordained to the diaconate when he was only seventeen. He accompanied his uncle Bishop Basil to Russia the following year in order to study there. His uncle died within a year after arriving in Russia, and so Peter was obliged to return to Montenegro.

The young deacon was ordained to the holy priesthood, and was later elevated to the rank of archimandrite. St Peter assisted Metropolitan Sava in the administration of the diocese until that hierarch died in 1781. St Peter seemed the logical choice to succeed him.

As Metropolitan of Montenegro, St Peter also became the secular leader (governor) of the Montenegrans. For the rest of his life he devoted himself to promoting peace and unity among warring tribes and clans, and to helping his flock rise above petty quarrels and animosity at a difficult time in their history.

St Peter also defended his nation against the onslaught of enemies. He successfully opposed Napoleon's army at Dalmatia, and took part in the first Serbian uprising against the Turks, defeating Mahmut-Pasha, Vizier of Skadar twice. He united Montenegro and Brda and was the first to introduce written law to the land.

Although he enjoyed a certain prominence as the archpastor and governor of the Serbs, St Peter continued to live as a simple monk in a small cell where he lived in asceticism. He fasted, prayed, and read books in French, Italian and Russian in order to increase his knowledge of Orthodox doctrine and secular culture. Altogether, he spoke seven languages. While he was strict with himself, the holy bishop was merciful toward others.

St Peter contributed to the welfare of his country through his good works. As a bishop he promoted love and peace. As governor he never sentenced a criminal to death.

St Peter, the Metropolitan and governor of Cetinje and all Montenegro, fell asleep in the Lord on October 18, 1830. He was succeeded by his nephew Bishop Peter II (Njegos).

St Peter's holy and grace-filled relics were uncovered in 1834. They were found incorrupt and streaming with myrrh, and still rest in the monastery at Cetinje. He is honored as a powerful intercessor for his people, and for the whole Church.

## St. Symeon on Why We Give Alms

Do not think at all, brother, that God is at a loss and is unable to feed the poor, and for this reason commands you to show mercy to them and highly values this commandment. Far from it! But Christ

has taken that which the devil through covetousness has wrought against us for our perdition, and through almsgiving has turned to our good to make it redound for our salvation. What do I mean? The devil has suggested to us that we appropriate the things that were provided for our common use and hoard them for ourselves, so that through this covetousness he might make us liable to a double indictment and thus subject to eternal punishment and condemnation—the one, of being unmerciful, the other, of putting our hope in hoarded up wealth instead of in God. For he who has wealth hoarded up cannot hope in God, as is clear from what Christ our God has said, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." *St. Symeon the New Theologian, Discourse 9*

## The Sayings of St. Anthony the Great 26

*The brethren came to Abba Anthony and laid before him a passage from Leviticus. The old man went out into the desert, secretly followed by Abba Ammonas, who knew that this was his custom. Abba Anthony went a long way off and stood there praying, crying in a loud voice, "God, send Moses, to make me understand this saying." Then there came a voice speaking with him. Abba Ammonas said that although he heard the voice speaking with him, he could not understand what it said.*

*Saying 26 Sayings of the Desert Fathers*

*Commentary:* How many of us even think of prayer when we are confronted by a difficulty in Scripture, let alone other studies? If we are educated, we dig out the commentaries, the Greek and Hebrew dictionaries and lexicons, and other study aids and we immerse ourselves in intellectual study. But is every truth discoverable in this fashion? Suppose that when Pharaoh had asked Joseph to interpret his dreams, Joseph had sat down with all the ancient commentators and learned monographs on the art of interpreting dreams to arrive at some conclusion. Instead, acknowledging that the interpretation of dreams belongs to God, he sought illumination from God. So, too, did Daniel, when faced with not only interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's dream but also reminding the king, who had forgotten it, just what he had dreamed.

Now of course, any spiritual charlatan could claim that he used this method while presenting his own peculiar teaching as God's truth. Yet do we not need to recognize more fully that God the Logos, the Word, ultimately gives all things their meaning, and their meaning is found only in relation to him who made them for a reason? Modern man with his scientific method has entirely left God out of his search for knowledge, joining with Laplace to say "I have no need of that hypothesis". But should not those who believe in God turn to Him as the Giver of knowledge and ask Him to illumine their hearts and

minds as they seek knowledge of the truth?

The methods that apply to studying the material world do not apply to knowing the immaterial God. The atheist sneers that this is simply because there is no God to know, but the truly rational understands that the immaterial God cannot be known by material means or perceived by the five senses.

St. Paul made the point two thousand years ago: "But the natural (*psychikos*) man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But the spiritual (*pneumatikos*) man discerns all things..." (I Corinthians 2:14). The natural man is one who has not been born from above, who is spiritually dead. He perceives only the physical world in which he lives and is blind and insensitive to the spiritual world. The spiritual man, having become spiritually alive through Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit is aware of a universe much greater than the material one.

To perceive spiritual things, the things of God and the invisible world, requires a man to be spiritually alive. Connected closely to this is purity of life. St. Athanasius on this point writes, "But for the searching of the Scriptures and true knowledge of them, an honorable life is needed, and a pure soul, and that virtue which is according to Christ; so that the intellect (*nous*) guiding its path by it, may be able to attain what it desires, and to comprehend it, in so far as it is accessible to human nature to learn concerning the Word of God. For without a pure mind and a modeling of the life after the saints, a man could not possibly comprehend the words of the saints" (*On the Incarnation*, 57). To the natural man, the words of the holy ones of God will be foolishness, rooted in the spiritual world that the natural man cannot perceive. Sin corrupts the spiritual eye of the soul rendering blind to the spiritual realm it was meant to perceive.

Realizing that "the holy things are for the holy," what man would not approach the holy things of God with reverence and humility, seeking from God a clearer understanding rather than relying on his own efforts to analyze them?

Anthony displays this humility. Great as he was, and likely lacking extensive book learning, he sought the answer to question of the brethren from God in prayer as Joseph and Daniel had before him. And God granted his request. Even the greatest rely upon the illumination which only Christ can give. Thus, the Church prays before the Gospel is read at Liturgy: "Illumine our hearts and minds with the light of understanding the preaching of thy holy Gospel. Instill in us also the fear of thy blessed commandments, that trampling down all carnal desires, we may pursue a spiritual way of life, both considering and doing all things well-pleasing unto thee."

This prayer should also be ours every time we seek knowledge of any sort. Our books and methods are useful; but on their own, they will not bring us to

the Truth. May God illumine our hearts and minds and to direct our efforts unto fruitfulness as we seek to know Him, ourselves, and the world which He has made.

*Fr. Justin Frederick*

### **Three Kinds of Believing**

*The Venerable Bede*

- 1) To believe God
- 2) To believe that God is
- 3) To believe in God

Truly it is not all the same when it comes to the matter of belief. The *first* kind of belief is to believe that things that God speaks are true. Many, even the wicked, are able to believe that the things God speaks are true; they believe that they are true and do not wish to make them their own because they are too lazy to do anything about them. The *second* kind of belief is to believe that God exists. Even the demons are able to believe, however, that He is God (James 2:19). The demons even believe that Jesus is the Son of God (Luke 4:41). The *third* kind of belief is to rightly believe in God and be Christian not only in name but also in action and way of life. Without love, faith is empty; with love, it is the faith of a Christian; without love, it is the faith of a demon.

### **For Consideration**

*St. Nikolai of Zicha*

"Insofar as ye did it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye did it unto Me" (Matthew 25:40), says the Lord. It is the same in the giving of alms as it is in Communion: in Communion, under the form of bread and wine, we receive the living Lord Christ Himself; when giving alms, in giving to the poor we give to the living Lord Christ Himself. There was a man in Constantinople who had a rare compassion. Going through the streets of the city, he put his gift into the hands of the poor and immediately went on his way to avoid hearing their thanks and becoming known. When one of his friends asked him how he had become so compassionate, he replied: "One day in church, I heard the priest say that what we give to the poor we give into the hands of the Lord Christ Himself. I didn't believe this, thinking that it couldn't be so, Christ being in heaven. Once, though, on the way home, I saw a poor man standing in the beggar's place—and the face of Christ shining over his head. Someone passed by and gave the beggar a piece of bread, and I saw the Lord stretch out His hand, take the bread, and bless the giver. From that moment, I've always seen that Face over the heads of the beggars, and therefore, with great fear, I give all the alms I can." *From the Prologue*

### **Upcoming Events 2015**

31 October All-Saints Party 2:30 p.m.

**GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!**