

# The Confessor's Tongue for November 1, A. D. 2015

Twenty-Second Sunday after Pentecost; Synaxis of the Unmercenary Physicians  
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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## **The Sayings of St. Anthony the Great 28**

*They said that a certain old man asked God to let him see the Fathers [in heaven], and he saw them all except Abba Anthony. So he asked his guide, 'Where is Abba Anthony?' He told him in reply that in the place where God is, there Anthony would be.*

Saying 28 *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*

Since the French Revolution, man has been obsessed with the idea of equality. It has become a holy, unquestionable dogma, a holy grail to be pursued at all costs, and ideal whose achievement justifies the demolition of social structures and institutions laboriously erected over millennia. As zealously as it is promoted, so it is vaguely defined, meaning different things to different people. But when the holy concept is used to justify a policy or practice, woe unto the unwise soul who questions it!

Looking objectively at the world, we see that life is not fair and human beings are not equal. Beauty, wealth, intelligence, gifts, bodily strength, health, and opportunity are not equally apportioned among men. For those who view the world materialistically as the product of chance and evolution, life is a struggle to survive until death finally overtakes it. In such a world, equality is not a reality and there is no compelling moral reason to make it an ideal. The only equality in a materialistic, godless world is that all die, but even the manner of death is not equal.

Man attempts by law to make all equal, but some contrived definition of equality, but no human legislation can overcome the inequality of nature, and such efforts are akin to spitting into the wind. Even the attempt to make men equal before the law fails, for, as we see, the law is applied one way to the rich and powerful and another way to the poor and weak.

Only Christian faith in the Creator of all revealed in the God-man Jesus Christ provides any meaningful foundation for a notion of equality among men: that God made each person in His image and loves each so much that He became man and died for each, that the same law applies to everyone without exception or prejudice, and that each person is judged impartially by the just Judge for how he used the gifts given him in this life—and the giving of those gifts is not equal. To some, much is given and much expected; to others, little is given and little expected. But before God, all have an equal opportunity to please Him, regardless of their differing gifts and opportunities, for God's calculus of judgment differs greatly from our own.

The Last Judgment is just: every man is rewarded according to his deeds. Some are worthy of praise and reward, others are worthy of condemnation. Because men's deeds are not equal, neither are their punishments and rewards. Some bear fruit thirty-fold, some sixty, some a hundred. The rewards likewise

vary. To some it is given to sit at the right hand and left hand of the Savior, but not to all.

The monk who was granted to see the saints in heaven saw them all except Anthony. As this surprised him, he asked where Anthony was and learned that Anthony was to be found in the very presence of God, a place not inhabited by the others. This indicates that the condition of the saints in the kingdom of God is not equal. It is not that God plays favorites or shows partiality. All men are equal before him in this regard, all have an equal chance to please him in Christ. But all make use of what God has made available to us in Christ differently, unequally.

A saying in the *Desert Fathers* by Abba Amoun about Abba Anthony expresses in what the difference lies. "Abba Amoun of Nitria came to see Abba Anthony and said to him, 'Since my rule is stricter than yours how is it that your name is better known amongst men than mine is?' Abba Anthony answered, 'It is because I love God more than you.'" While God loves all men equally, all men do not love God equally, not all enter as deeply into His love as others. Hence, not all are to be found in the 'same place' in heaven.

There is a story of a man who was admitted to heaven and given an angel to escort him to his heavenly dwelling. They walked first through streets of the most glorious mansions. The man thought, "These are really nice. I probably won't find myself on these streets, but I wonder what I'll have?" They passed on to streets where the houses were large and fine, but not quite as fine as the first. The man began to think, "One of these would be great to have," but they passed through that district without stopping. In the next, the houses were nice but modest. "I would be very content to have one of these," the man thought, but they passed on. The houses became still smaller, and man began to wonder, "Just where have they put me?" They went on to the edge of the heavenly city to an area of miserable hovels. The angel pointed him to one and said, "This one is yours. I'm sorry, it isn't much, but it is the best we could do with the material you sent us."

Christ urges his disciples to store up treasures in heaven, where "moth and rust do not corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal", rather than on earth. Some heed him and store up much in heaven; some do not and store very little, as the man in this story.

The Christian life is life in Christ, participating in the divine nature, nourished by God's love for man. As God is infinite and man finite, man can press every further into the life of God and never exhaust Him, never come to the end, never run out of new joys and riches to discover. We get a start on this journey in this life. So get further than others. The process continues in the Kingdom of God, and the

start we got on earth is reflected there, as we see in the case of Anthony. But all of us there will be able to press ever further, ever deeper into the love and life of God unto ages of ages. *Fr. Justin Frederick*

### Therapy of Spiritual Illnesses, Session 1

The goal of Christianity and the Son of God's becoming man is the deification of man, or theosis. Deification can also be described in the following terms: being conformed to the image of Christ, becoming holy as He is holy, becoming perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect, becoming by grace what the Son of God is by nature, becoming a partaker of the Divine Nature, achieving union with God. Notice there is a process involved in this.

Man was made for God. He was made virtuous. Virtue is a natural part of human nature. Sin is not part of human nature. It is a corruption, abnormal, a parasite. All that man was at creation, Christ has restored through His work and Person. All that He accomplished He has given to us at Baptism. But the fullness of virtue is given in potential, not actuality. The seed is implanted, but the full flowering of virtue awaits man's will and decision to participate in the process. The Holy Fathers understand the command in Genesis "be fruitful and multiply" in this context of spiritual growth, having the virtues multiply in us, and for man spiritually to become mature and be no longer a child.

Man was made in the image of God, but the likeness is to be achieved as we put on God's character and gain His wisdom and become conformed to the image of Christ. The image is man's potential, the likeness the fulfillment thereof. Animals, not made in the image of God, cannot achieve likeness to God. Only man has this potential.

Man's normal state is one of virtue, and the state of virtue is the soul's health. We see very few normal, healthy people in our time.

*Come on Friday nights for more.*

### Homily on the Call of All Christians to Become Saints

St. Nikolai of Zicha

*To the saint which are at Ephesus... (Ephesians 1:1)*

*Note: In Greek, Slavonic, and Russian, the word 'saints' is the same word that is translated as 'holy': hagios, or svyatoy. Hence, the English word 'saint' means 'holy one'—a person who is holy. Fr. Justin*

The Apostle calls the Christians in Ephesus 'saints'. He does not call one or two of them saints, nor one group of them, but all of them. Is this not a wondrous miracle of God for people, not in the wilderness but in a city—and an idolatrous and corrupt city—to become saints? That married men who sire children, who trade and work, become saints! Indeed, such were the first Christians. Their dedication, fidelity, and zeal in the Faith as well as their holiness and purity of life, completely justified their being called 'saints.' If in latter times saints have

become the exception, in those earlier times the unholy were the exception. Saints were the rule. Therefore, we must not wonder that the Apostle calls all baptized souls in Ephesus 'saints' and that he has an even loftier name for all Christians, i.e., 'sons,' the sons of God (Galatians 4:6). Christ the Lord Himself gave us the right to call ourselves such when he taught us to address God as *Our Father* (Matt 6:9).

O my brethren! Do we not say to God every day: "Holy God?" Do we not call the angels holy? Do we not call the Mother of God holy? And the prophets, apostles, martyrs, and the righteous? Do we not call heaven holy and the Kingdom of Heaven holy? Who then is able to enter into the holy Kingdom but the saints [holy ones]. Therefore, if we have hope for salvation, we also have hope for holiness.

O Holy God, who dwellest in the holy place and restest among the saints and callest the holy to Thyself and showest mercy to them, help us also that we may become holy—in words, in thoughts, in deeds—to Thy glory and our salvation. To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.

### November 1: Wonderworkers and Unmercenary Healers Cosmas & Damian

Brothers by birth, they were born in Asia. Their father was a Greek pagan, and their mother, Theodotia, confessed the Christian faith. She became widowed in her youth and led a pious life, accustoming her children to a charitable life and teaching them good works. Brought up in strict piety, Cosmas and Damian from infancy tried to fulfill the law of God, and having come of age, like two candlesticks shone with good deeds. In order to better bring benefits to their neighbor, they were occupied with medical science, learned the healing properties of herbs and plants, and became skilful physicians. From their success of healing the infirm, they "neither received anything from anyone for doing this, for they did this not for the sake of their estate, to enrich themselves with gold and silver, but for the sake of God". They "helped not only people, but also cattle". Having lived in peace and hardworking, they quietly departed to the Lord, and were buried in Fereman in Mesopotamia and "in accordance with their holy repose granting healing flowing in abundance to all."

*Today instead of the service for Ss. Cosmas and Damian, we have celebrated the Synaxis of all Unmercenary healers in the Church, which commemoration is appointed for the first Sunday in November.*

### Upcoming Events 2015

- 15 November Nativity Fast begins.
- 21 November Great Feast Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple
- 6 December Feast of St. Nicholas
- 17 December Thursday, 7:00 p.m. Holy Unction

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!