

The Confessor's Tongue for May 15, A. D. 2016

3rd Sunday of Pascha; Holy Myrrhbearers, Ven. Pachomius

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.

Sunday of the Myrrhbearers

This Sunday the church services are taken from the Gospel narration about the appearance of the risen Lord to the Myrrhbearing women. This all-joyful appearance of the Lord was the first after His rising from the grave and consequently it is glorified by the Church as the undoubted proof of His resurrection.

Among the Myrrhbearers mentioned in the Gospel are the following: Mary Magdalene (Jul. 22), Mary Cleopas or James (May 23), Salome (3 Aug.), Johanna (Jun. 27), Martha and Mary, sisters of Lazarus (Jun. 4, Mar. 18) and Susanna (see Lk. 8:3; she is not mentioned in the Menologion). Besides these seven Myrrhbearing women, "there were also others, very many others, who served Christ and His disciples out of their means". The Holy Myrrhbearing Women and the circumstance of the appearance of the risen Lord to them are glorified in the stichera and troparia of the Canon for the third Sunday after Pascha and on all the days of this week and consequently it is called the Sunday of the Myrrhbearing Women.

Besides the Holy Myrrhbearers, the church hymns glorify Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, the secret disciples of the Savior on this present Sunday². According to the explanation of the Synaxarion, the Holy Women Myrrhbearers were "the first to truthfully bear witness to the Resurrection, Joseph and Nicodemus to the burial, but this is the most important and best kept of our teachings. This is the reason that they are the true witnesses of the burial together with the women, who have seen the Resurrection, and it was established to celebrate them after the first verification of Thomas, which came before because it happened in eight days as the holy evangelist said".

The diligence of the Holy Myrrhbearing Women is truly great and their fervent love for the Lord is constant. Free from every earthly predilection their hearts lived and breathed only for the Lord: all their thoughts, desires and hope were concentrated in Him and all their blessings and treasure consisted in Him. For the sake of their beloved Teacher they willingly leave their homes, their close and known relatives, forget the weakness of their gender, are not frightened by the cruelty of the numerous enemies of the Lord, steadily follow Him everywhere, long-sufferingly pass through the cities and villages with Him and minister to Him from their means. They do not abandon their beloved Teacher during His suffering and His death. Trailing behind with love, they accompany the Lord also to Golgotha and they look upon the Crucified One, taking measure of the compassionate feeling of His extreme suffering. Having disdained all the dangers of the frantic enemies of Christ, they finally come nearer, to His

very cross and by their participation ease the unquenchable grief and illness of His All-pure Mother. Having fervently served the Lord with their means during His lifetime, they do not stop serving Him even after His death. According to their internal burning love of their Divine Teacher they will zealously render Him the final burial honor: the anointing of His body with aromatic spices (Mk. 15:40, 47, 16:1-2; Mt. 27:55; Lk. 23:28-31, 49-56, 24:1; Jn. 19:25). In a holy impulse to see and to visit the tomb of the Lord they forget about themselves, about their need for rest, do not remember the obstacles and dangers, and even the weakness of their sex does not stop them.

Such is the true love of the holy women for the Lord. It is continual, pure and simple, deep and strong. The burning continual love, the sincerest unquenched diligence of the holy women was worthily rewarded by the Lord Himself. The Holy Myrrhbearing Women, who preceded every one to the tomb of the Lord, also went before everyone in the joy of the Resurrection (Mt. 28:1-10; Mk. 16:6; Lk. 24:1-11). From this time the holy women have become true witnesses equally with Holy Apostles to the resurrection of Christ for all the people.

The ardor and continual love of the Holy Myrrhbearers for the Lord also serves as an example for our love for Him. By the example of the holy women, we also should strengthen in our hearts the true self-denying love for our Savior. Even the strength of our love for Him should be like those, as the holy Apostle says, that nothing could separate us from Him, neither things present nor things to come, neither life nor death, neither angels nor men (Rom. 8:38-39). Besides this, in the example of the Holy Myrrhbearing Women the Holy Church presents a spiritual healing for all Christians tempted with sorrows, leading to depression. Like the holy women, wounded with fierce grief during the scene of their Lord and Savior, crucified on the cross and buried in a tomb, however searched for unique comfort in that tomb where all their happiness and life were hidden and found this desired comfort, so it is that each Christian soul should seek consolation in the sorrows and grief at the tomb and cross of the Savior.

Together with this, the life and labors of the Holy Myrrhbearing Women themselves represent an example of the true-Christian pursuit of the Christian woman. Her calling on earth is that this is according to privilege a life of the heart in all its lawful displays. An example of the Holy Myrrhbearers and the contemporary Christian woman is likewise called to serve the indigent from their means, to ease the situation of the disabled by their labor, comfort the sorrowful and the sick and, to care "not for the beauty of the body, not for the external braiding of the hair, not about gold finery and elegance in clothes, but

about the secret heart of the person in the incorruptible beauty of the gentle and taciturn spirit, that is precious before God^m (1 Pet. 3:3-4; 1 Tim. 2:9-12), i.e. about the development and improvement in the Christian spirit of internal spiritual qualities, especially of the good and loving heart. *Bulgakov HB*

On a Rule for Beginners

St. Isaac the Syrian, From Homily 17

Written for monks, but still beneficial to us in the world.

This is the rule of life that is chaste and pleasing to God: to refrain from glancing here and there with your eyes, but always to gaze steadily on what lies before you; to refrain from speaking idly and to say only what is necessary; to regard mean attire as sufficient for your body's need and, in like manner, to make use of foods that sustain the body, and not those that satisfy gluttony; to take a little from all foods, and not disdain some and select others and choose to fill your belly with these. Discretion is greater than all the other virtues.

Without companions (when not ill or infirm), do not partake of wine.

Do not interrupt the words of one who is talking, and contradict him like someone uncouth; but like a wise man be patient. And wherever you find yourself, consider yourself the inferior, and the servant of your brethren.

Do not expose any part of your body in front of any man; and do not touch the body of another, except for some necessary reason, nor permit anyone to touch your body without good cause, as I have said. Shun familiarity as death. Acquire a chaste rule for your sleep, lest the power that guards you remove itself far from you. Wherever you sleep, if possible, let no man see you.

Do not spit in front of anyone. If a fit of coughing comes over you while seated at table, turn your face to your back, and cough in this manner. Eat and drink with moderation, as befits the children of God...

O glutton, bent on the worship of your own belly! It is better for you to cast live coal into your stomach than the fried foods of rulers and princes. Pour your mercy out on all, and be moderate in all things.

Keep yourself from much talk, for it is this that extinguishes the noetic movements produced in our heart by God. Flee from discussions of dogma as from an unruly lion; and never embark upon them yourself, either with those raised in the Church or with strangers.

Do not pass through the streets of the hot-tempered and quarrelsome, lest your heart be filled with anger, and the darkness of delusion dominate your soul.

Do not dwell with a proud man, lest the energy of the Holy Spirit be taken from your soul and she become the dwelling of every evil passion. If you keep these observances, O man, and occupy yourself continuously with the study of God, in truth your soul will see the light of Christ in herself, and will never be

darkened unto all eternity. To Him be glory and dominion to the ages. Amen.

Homily: On How the Love of God is Shed into Men's Hearts

St. Nicholas of Zicha (+1956)

"Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us." Romans 5:5

Love is joy, and anoints the human heart with joy. Love is strength, and anoints the human heart with strength. Love is peace, and anoints the heart with peace. And from joy, strength, and peace is born fortitude, and love anoints the human heart with fortitude.

The love of God, like a fragrant oil, is shed upon our hearts in no other way than by the Holy Spirit, the all-good and all-powerful Spirit. Though we are utterly undeserving of it, the Spirit of God pours the divine Law of God into our hearts in the Mystery of Chrismation. But we sometimes neglect this love and estrange ourselves from God by sin, and fall into spiritual weakness. And the Holy Spirit, unable to dwell in an unclean vessel, departs from our hearts. When the Holy Spirit departs from us, joy and strength, peace and fortitude depart at once with Him, and we become miserable, enfeebled, disturbed, and afraid. But the all-good Spirit of God only puts Himself at a distance from us; He does not abandon us completely. He does not abandon us, but rather offers us, as to sick men, medicines through the Mysteries of Repentance and Holy Communion. And when we have cleansed ourselves anew by repentance and Communion, then God the Holy Spirit makes His abode in us again and pours the love of God into our hearts. We fall down and get up; we fall down again and get up again. When we fall, the Spirit of God stands beside us and lifts us up, if we desire to be so lifted. And when we are on our feet, the Spirit of God stands in us until, through our sinfulness and stupidity, we fall again. And so we are by turns a fruitful meadow and a wasteland, sons of repentance and of perdition, of fullness and emptiness, of light and darkness.

O all-good Holy Spirit, our God, do not depart from us either when we need Thee or when we do not feel the need of Thee. Abide with us until our death, and save us for life eternal. To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.

Upcoming Events 2015-16

1 May Holy Pascha, 3:00 p.m. Picnic, Egg Hunt
28 May Baptism of Estefania Dean 3:00 p.m.
30 May Memorial Day Picnic
11 June, Saturday, Installation of Bishop Alexander
30-31 July, 15-Year Anniversary with Bishop Alexander

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!