

The Confessor's Tongue for July 31, A. D. 2016

6th Sunday after Pentecost, Prefeast of the Cross, Ss Eudocimus & Germanus

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.

Pastoral Visit of the Bishop Some Things You'll Want to Know

Parish Protocol

There is a customary way of greeting the Bishop when he arrives to celebrate the Divine Liturgy. One or more young girls greet him outside the church with a bouquet of flowers. When he enters the church building itself, usually some lay "elder" holding bread and salt on a tray meets the Archbishop inside the doors of the Church (after the Archbishop's mantya has been placed on him by his subdeacons), offering an appropriate greeting. The priest meets him with the hand cross on a tray. The procession then begins from the back of the church to the iconostasis as the choir sings "Meet it is in truth..." The deacon will read the entrance prayers for the bishop, who then will enter the altar through the royal doors and venerate the altar table. He will then come back to the center of the church to be vested by his subdeacons while the deacon reads the vesting prayers and the choir sings.

Individual Protocol

When the bishop is present, we take blessings from him instead of the priest in the same way we usually do: we bow, cross our hands with right over left, and say, "Your Grace, bless", or "Vladyka, bless." After he blesses us with the sign of the Cross, we kiss his hand. We stand when he enters the room and do not sit until he indicates. When taking leave of him, we ask his blessing as we did in greeting him. Everyone should make it a point personally to receive his blessing at least once in the course of his visit.

After the Liturgy and coffee hour, you will be given the opportunity to ask Bishop Alexander questions and hear what he has to say. When you ask your questions, be sure to address him as "Your Grace" or "Vladyka".

Several times during the Liturgy, we'll sing "*eis polla eti despota*", which means "Many years, Master."

On The Bishop Timothy Ware

We have called the bishop a ruler and monarch, but these terms are not to be understood in a harsh and impersonal sense; for in exercising his powers the bishop is guided by the Christian law of love. He is not a tyrant but a father to his flock. The Orthodox attitude to the episcopal office is well expressed in the prayer used at [the] consecration [of a bishop]:

O Lord our God, who, forasmuch as it is impossible for the nature of man to endure the Essence of the Godhead, in Thy providence hast instituted for us teach of like nature with ourselves, to maintain Thine Altar, that they may offer unto thee sacrifice and oblation for all Thy people: Do Thou, the same Lord, make this man also, who hath been proclaimed a steward of the episcopal grace, to be an imitator of thee, the true

Shepherd, who didst lay down thy life for thy sheep; to be a leader of the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, a reprover of the unwise, a teacher of the young, a lamp to the world: that having perfected the souls entrusted to him in this present life, he may stand unashamed before Thy throne, and receive the great reward which thou hast prepared for those who have contended valiantly for the preaching of Thy Gospel.

The authority of the bishop is fundamentally the authority of the Church. However great the prerogatives of the bishop may be, he is not someone set up *over* the Church, but the holder of an office *in* the Church. Bishop and people are joined in an organic unity, and neither can properly be thought of apart from the other. Without bishops there can be no Orthodox people, but without Orthodox people, there can be no true bishop. "The Church," said St. Cyprian of Carthage, "is the people united to the bishop, the flock clinging to its shepherd. The bishop is in the Church, and the Church in the bishop."

The relation between the bishop and his flock is a mutual one. The bishop is the divinely appointed *teacher* of the faith, but the *guardian* of the faith is not the episcopate alone, but the whole people of God: bishops, clergy, and laity together. The proclamation of the truth is not the same as the stewardship of the truth: all the people are stewards of the truth, but it is the bishop's particular office to proclaim it. Infallibility belongs to the whole Church, not just to the episcopate in isolation. As the Orthodox Patriarchs said in their Letter of 1848 to Pope Pius IX:

Among us, neither Patriarchs nor Councils could ever introduce new teaching, for the guarding of religion is the very body of the Church, that is, the people (*laos*) itself.

Commenting on this statement, Khomiakov [a famous 19th century Russian lay theologian] wrote:

The Pope is greatly mistaken in supposing that we consider the ecclesiastical hierarchy to be the guardian of dogma. The case is quite differing. The unvarying constancy and the unerring truth of Christian dogma does not depend upon any hierarchical order; it is guarded by the totality, by the whole people of the Church, which is the Body of Christ.

This conception of the laity and their place in the Church must be kept in mind when considering the nature of an Ecumenical Council. The laity are guardians and not teachers; therefore, although they may attend a council and take an active part in the proceedings (as Constantine and other Byzantine Emperors did), yet when the moment comes for the council to make a formal proclamation of the faith, it is the bishops alone who, in virtue of their teaching *charisma*, take the final decision.

from *The Orthodox Church*, pp. 250-251.

What Is Secularism?

At the Assembly of the Diocese of the South in 2004, Archbishop Dmitri of blessed memory spoke about our task of proclaiming Jesus Christ in an evil time, taking as his text the Gospel reading of the day: "For this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent" (John 17:3). The Church is called to preach Christ as the only source of life in a world that resists Him. Indeed, the Church has always labored in evil times, but now, in our so-called "Post-Christian era" with secularism rampant, our task is even more difficult.

His Eminence defined "secularism" in a most perceptive way: "the treating of this world as an end in itself."

What does it mean to treat the world as an end in itself? It means essentially that we allow our goals, our vision, our aspirations to be limited to this life. We may believe in God and go to church, but the focus of our life is getting an education, securing a good job, buying a house, driving better cars, enjoying good food, having fun, deriving pleasure from relationships, seeing the next movie, playing the latest video game, storing up funds for retirement, building a business, advancing a career, promoting an ideology hoping to better the world, and so forth. Our thinking about things is defined by the conventional wisdom we acquire in school and in the media (if that can truly be called wisdom at all). We think about all these things without relation to God and His ultimate will for us. Rarely is our life guided by thoughts of the kingdom of God, death, judgment, or the life to come.

"Treating the world as an end in itself" is what we do when we live to eat rather than eating to live. We can make a god of food and the pleasure we derive from of eating, and many do. St. Paul describes them: "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things" (Phil 3:18-19).

"Treating the world as an end in itself" is what we do when we center our lives around pleasure, whether it be sex, entertainment, food, possessions, or the power to control others. St. Paul describes this as "worshipping the creature rather than the Creator" (Romans 1:25).

"Treating the world as an end" is what we do when we live to consume, thinking that by acquiring things we will be happy, especially when we go into debt to purchase things other than the necessities of life and then say we don't have the money to help someone in need. St. John Chrysostom refers to this frequently as "luxurious living."

"Treating the world as an end" is what we do when we labor to build our own kingdom—whether it be a business, an estate, a career, or a name—to the point of sacrificing faith, family, and friends to achieve our end. Jesus speaks of the lack of profit for

one who gains "the whole world but loses his soul" (Matt 16:26).

"Treating the world as an end" is what we do when we devote ourselves to the hope of making the world a better place by political action, giving our time and energy to promoting the right ideology, passing the right laws, and electing the right candidates (do such actually exist?), placing our hope in man while forgetting God, His rule over the nations, and His judgment. Christ did not establish this sort of kingdom.

If God is a part of this secular world view, it is merely as an addition to make life in the world better somehow. Faith in God is reduced to an ingredient to make our marriages stronger, our children to turn out better, our land more prosperous. God is a good luck charm, a way of securing blessing on our lives and avoiding a curse.

Secularism: "The treating of this world as an end in itself."

To counteract secularism, the Archbishop called upon us to deepen our faith and our bond of love with one another.

In contrast with a secular outlook that treats the world as an end in itself, the Orthodox Christian clearly sees Christ and His Kingdom as his true end, and this world and all it contains at best as a means to that end and at worst a deadly obstacle. He knows God made the world, that it reflects God's wisdom, power, and goodness, and that it is good. He knows that by studying the creature, he may come to know more of the Creator. He also knows that the world is fallen with man under a curse and is not transparent to God. He knows that the fallen world of man is defined by the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, and that attachment to these things precludes attachment to the Kingdom.

To overcome our attachment to the world as an end in itself, Christ commands us to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. He promises that if we do this, He will give us all the things we need to sustain our lives in this world that most people spend their whole lives and energy pursuing.

To overcome secularism, we are called to live in the Church, to live pious 'churchly' lives; the Russians use the term *tserkovny* to describe this, but the English 'churchly' doesn't quite have the same positive connotation. This means that we let the Church, where we participate in the Kingdom of God already, be the center of our lives. We live from Pascha to Pascha, from Sunday to Sunday; we always consider the Church calendar when planning other activities. We delight to come to the house of the Lord to present ourselves before Him and sing His praises.

But in order to overcome secularism, we also must live life in Christ outside of the Church's services. We cultivate the home church, bringing the family together to pray and study the things of God.

Moreover, moving outside the family, we reject the false visions of community offered in the media and commit ourselves to building the only possible true community—the one in Christ—in the place we live. “What life have you if you have not life together?” asks T.S. Eliot. “There is no life that is not in community, and no community not lived in praise of God.” The Church is the community that lives in praise of God. We build it by committing ourselves to loving and serving the people of God in our parish in all the practical, inconvenient ways love calls us to serve that we may demonstrate to the world that we are Christ’s disciples by our love for one another—and being ready to welcome into our midst the thirsty souls God sends our way.

To overcome secularism, we embrace fasting, almsgiving, and prayer. Fasting teaches us that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. It frees us from making a god of our stomach and from living to eat. It restores to us a proper relationship with food (along with drink and sex) which man misused when he fell. It helps provide the means by which all of us may give alms.

Almsgiving helps fulfill the command of Christ to love one another as He has loved us. Love requires practical action to meet the needs of those God puts in our lives. Love will not allow a brother to go hungry, or thirsty, or unsheltered or unclothed. The practice of almsgiving effectively limits our over-consumption that so often leads to enslaving debt. Recognizing our obligation to our brother, we will choose not to live extravagantly or carelessly.

Fasting and Almsgiving work to make our prayer more effective. Prayer to the living God in the name of Jesus Christ is an action by which we demonstrate daily that we do not believe that this world is our end. By it, we look beyond the creation to the Creator who made us for Himself. Our effective prayer unites us with God, our true end.

If we are to be Christians, if we are to be true disciples of Christ, we cannot allow ourselves to treat this world as an end in itself, even if everyone else around us seems to be doing so. As we enter the Dormition Fast for two weeks, the Church gives us an opportunity and the means to labor spiritually together at uprooting the secularism in ourselves and gives ourselves more fully to Christ our true God.

Fr. Justin Frederick

August 6: Holy Transfiguration

We celebrate the Transfiguration of our Lord through the Feast’s Leavetaking on August 13th. We use the troparion and kontakion of the Feast in our daily prayers and at meals.

It is customary to bless summer fruits at the feast. You are encouraged to bring fresh fruits to be blessed either at Vigil or Liturgy.

Transfiguration, Troparion, Tone 7

Thou wast transfigured upon the mountain, O Christ God, / showing Thy glory to Thy disciples as far as they could bear it. / Through the prayers of the Theotokos, / make Thine everlasting light shine also upon us sinners. / O Giver of Light, glory to Thee!

Transfiguration Kontakion, tone 7

Upon the mountain wast Thou transfigured, O Christ God, / and Thy disciples beheld Thy glory as far as they could see it; / so that when they would behold Thee crucified, / they would understand that Thy suffering was voluntary, / and would proclaim to the world / that Thou art truly the Radiance of the Father.

On the Episcopacy

Clergy Guidelines of the OCA

1. The hierarch determines the assignment of clergy in his own diocese.
2. The hierarch’s official representative in a parish of his diocese is the assigned priest or rector.
3. The hierarch has direct supervision over all matters in his diocese involving canon law and the spiritual function, rights, and duties of the clergy.
4. The hierarch alone may judge the merits of the transfer of clergy from one assignment in his diocese to another. A clergyman who would like to transfer from the parish to which he has been assigned must submit a written petition to his hierarch.
5. The hierarch alone has the right to invite another hierarch to serve in one of his own parishes. Should a parish wish to have the presence of another hierarch for a particular occasion, that request must be made in writing to its own hierarch.

On the Dormition Fast

The Dormition Fast, especially in a year when the job from the Julian calendar to the Gregorian cut out almost all of the Apostles’ Fast, is a time given to us to recalibrate our life in Christ by increasing our prayer, fasting, giving alms, spiritual reading, and serving others. Our prayer rule should be lengthened, the number of prostrations increased, our attention heightened, and our attendance at services more frequent. We fast, abstaining from meat, dairy products (including eggs), fish, wine (alcohol), and olive oil (unless otherwise indicated on the wall calendar), to reinforce our prayer and to strengthen the control of the soul over the body. We abstain from secular entertainments and distractions so that we may be at peace, more focused on Christ, and may give ourselves to reading the Scriptures and other spiritual works that will nourish our souls and fan our fervor. Instead of doing our own will to please ourselves, we embrace opportunities to serve our neighbors.

This year at St. Maximus there is ample opportunity to keep the fast by attending the Church’s services. Not only will there be daily services with opportunities for Confession, there will also be six vigils, one of them all-night, offered between the start and the end of the Fast. These help us to stand attentively before God, seeking Him, waiting upon

Him to visit us with His grace and presence and strengthen us. Just to make the effort and attend a couple more services each week will do much to make the Fast of spiritual profit to you, to strengthen your prayer, to purify your heart, and to renew you in Christ.

Take advantage of these two precious weeks, for your priest will then be on vacation until September, and the service schedule here will be light.

The Dormition Fast According to the Typicon

For those interested, the following text from the Typicon gives the full strictness of the Dormition Fast and provides us with something to aspire to. The Dormition Fast is the second strictest fast after Great Lent.

Concerning the Fast of the Most Holy Theotokos it should be known:

In the fast of the Dormition of Our Holy Lady Theotokos, 14 days except the Transfiguration of Christ, we fast until the ninth hour in the day [3 p.m. Monday-Friday]:

Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, we eat dry [see note following].

On Tuesday and Thursday, cooked food without oil.

On Saturday and Sunday, cooked food with oil, and we drink wine: we don't eat fish, until the Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos: but only on the Transfiguration of Christ, we eat fish, twice a day.

"Dry Easting" means that we eat only vegetables cooked with water and salt, and also such things as fruit, nuts, bread, and honey. In practice, octopus and shellfish are also allowed on days of xerophagy; likewise vegetable margarine and corn or other vegetable oil not made from olives.

The Paraclesis Service

The Paraclesis is a service of supplication for the welfare of the living. It is addressed to the Most Holy Theotokos or a Saint whose intercessions are sought through the chanting of a supplicatory canon and other hymns. The most popular Paraclesis Service is that in which the supplicatory canon and other hymns are addressed to the Most Holy Theotokos.

The Small Supplicatory Canon to the Most Holy Theotokos was authored by Theosterictus the Monk (9th century), and the Great Supplicatory Canon to the Most Holy Theotokos was authored by Emperor Theodore I Ducas Lascaris (13th century).

Though it may be celebrated at other times during the year (in time of particular need, at the request of one of the faithful, or, as in some parish churches, every Wednesday or Friday evening), it is traditional [in the Byzantine traditions as opposed to the Slavic] that the Paraclesis Service, with the chanting of either the Small or Great Supplicatory Canon to the Most Holy Theotokos, be celebrated each evening during the Dormition Fast (August 1st through 14th) except on Saturday evenings, on the eve of the Transfiguration (August 5th), and on the eve of the Dormition (August 14th) when no Paraclesis is

celebrated. The service may be served alone by itself, or it may be combined with Vespers during the Dormition Fast.

In the Slavic tradition, a Paraclesis is usually called a "Supplicatory Canon" (Molebnyj Kanon). Unfortunately, in the Russian Church it has become somewhat rare to serve a full "Supplicatory Canon." What is much more common (and more popular) is to serve a "Moleben," which is in reality a very abbreviated version of the "Supplicatory Canon." The primary abbreviation consists in omitting the canon and chanting only the short refrains that would normally precede each troparion.

In the Greek Church, the Paraclesis is a popular service, and many have been composed to various saints. I remember being present at one in Thessalonica several years ago for St. Demetrios in his church there, where it was served regularly. It is customary in Greek churches to serve a Paraclesis to the Mother of God every day during the Dormition Fast as a way of preparing for the feast. This service is usually well-attended.

While the service of the Supplicatory Canon is rare in the Russian Church, it is not unheard of. There is an excellent recording of this service available that was made in Russia. In the diaspora, St. John Maximovich used to serve the Supplicatory Canon to the Mother of God during the Dormition Fast, and I have seen this practice kept elsewhere in the Russian Church Abroad.

The "Supplicatory Canon" to the Mother of God that is most commonly used in the Russian Church, is called the "Little Paraclesis" among the Greeks. There is also a "Great Paraclesis." These two are often used in an alternating fashion during the Dormition Fast. The canon of the "Great Paraclesis" also exists in Slavonic and is found as an appendix to the Octoechos. Unfortunately, it seems that it is rarely used.

This Dormition Fast, we will use the Paraclesis as part of the Fast for the first time, serving it attached to the latter part of Vespers after the Aposticha.

Materials combined from Reader Daniel Olson & Diocese of Wichita

Soul-Profiting Instructions of the Elder Vicent of Secu Monastery, Romania (+1945)

About Putting Off Spiritual Things: This is the most sure snare of the devil. He says, "You'll have time later to pray and make prostrations, and to fast tonight or tomorrow!" And you put off everything spiritually profitable until death. Behold, in this way a man loses himself, by his own will, unrepentant. Whose fault is it?

Upcoming Events 2016

1-14 August Dormition Fast
12 August All-Night Vigil for St. Maximus

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!