

The Confessor's Tongue for October 9, A. D. 2016

16th Sunday after Pentecost, St. Tikhon of North America & Moscow

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.

On Ritual Observances

St. Theophan the Recluse

The holy apostles at their council abolished all the ritual observances of the Old Testament and freed Christians from that yoke, which had burdened their fathers and grandfathers.

For this cause, some clever folk lodge a question: "Why do we [Orthodox] have so many diverse, complicated ritual observances?" Then, not knowing who to answer this, they come to the rash conclusion that this is a return to Judaism.

But you know when the apostles set this law, they had in mind only the service of the Old Testament and not all in general, and when they wrote a letter to the church in Antioch, they mentioned only that they were not laying on the members the same yoke of the law which lay upon the Jews and not that they were forbidding the institution of ritual observances in the spirit of the new faith. As thought demands words, and intention—deeds, so the spirit of faith demands external ceremony. This ritual observance began to be conducted from the first days after the descent of the Holy Spirit, who laid the foundations of the Church of God. In its main and essential characteristics, it was founded by the Apostles themselves: from them was the form of the accomplishment of the mysteries, from them the prayer meetings and their order, from them the beginning of ecclesial ritual, from them the command to set aside places and times for divine service, from them fasts and prayers at home, from them the *podvigs* of general abstinence and the various forms of pious Christian habit. Those who desire it may find directives for all this in the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles. From this comes the conclusion: the holy apostles abolished one ceremony and established another. How is it possible to see Judaism in this?

Faith cannot be left bare. It is repugnant to our nature and to the nature of the faith itself. Can anyone really complain that our spiritual faith is excessively burdened with external ceremonies? Take a look, and you will see that it is not excessive. Indeed, is it not needed in every situation to have but one ceremony? This is what we have. Every ceremony on the one hand satisfies the needs of the believing heart and, on the other, exists in full harmony with the spirit of faith. If one looks at our church ceremonies in their totality, then it appears they are many; but lay them out according to the diverse needs of believers, and you will see that they are very few and are all very simple.

It may be some will still say, "Why are they locked in immovable form? In the time of the Apostles much was done spontaneously: the spirit searched and either prayer or song or a word of edification was born, but now all is prepared ahead of

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time, and how!" Well, is not all this the same? Then the spirit searched and gave prayer, but now, understand, how you should with already established prayer enter into this very same spirit. The matter is in the spirit. If someone remains in the mere words of prayer and external actions, he departs from the apostolic ceremony, and he who each time in the external ceremony will enter into the spirit, beings to do the same things done in apostolic times. To leave the whole external ritual to the arbitrariness of movements of spirit of well-known persons or of every believer scarcely anyone will consider reasonable. Is it not better to submit to an existing order, praying to the Lord, and let Him order all in His Church as pleases His holy will? The goal of the Church's ritual is the building up of the spirit and how much of what is holy is built up in our grand rite! It turns out ritual does not distract from the purpose but rather enables its attainment. Have reason and all will be well.

translated by Fr. Justin Frederick

October 9: St. Tikhon of North America

St Tikhon, Patriarch of Moscow and Apostle to America was born as Vasily Ivanovich Belavin on January 19, 1865 into the family of Ioann Belavin, a rural priest of the Toropetz district of the Pskov diocese. His childhood and adolescence were spent in the village in direct contact with peasants and their labor. From his early years he displayed a particular religious disposition, love for the Church as well as rare meekness and humility.

When Vasily was still a boy, his father had a revelation about each of his children. One night, when he and his three sons slept in the hayloft, he suddenly woke up and roused them. He had seen his dead mother in a dream, who foretold to him his imminent death, and the fate of his three sons. She said that one would be unfortunate throughout his entire life, another would die young, while the third, Vasily, would be a great man. The prophecy of the dead woman proved to be entirely accurate in regard to all three brothers.

From 1878 to 1883, Vasily studied at the Pskov Theological Seminary. The modest seminarian was tender and affectionate by nature. He was fair-haired and tall of stature. His fellow students liked and respected him for his piety, brilliant progress in studies, and constant readiness to help comrades, who often turned to him for explanations of lessons, especially for help in drawing up and correcting numerous compositions. Vasily was called "bishop" and "patriarch" by his classmates.

In 1888, at the age of 23, Vasily Belavin graduated from the St Petersburg Theological Academy as a layman, and returned to the Pskov Seminary as an instructor of Moral and Dogmatic Theology. The whole seminary and the town of Pskov became very fond of him. He led an austere and chaste life, and in 1891, when he turned 26, he took monastic vows. Nearly the whole town gathered for the ceremony. He embarked on this new way of life consciously and deliberately, desiring to dedicate himself entirely to the service of the Church. The meek and humble young man was given the name Tikhon in honor of St Tikhon of Zadonsk.

He was transferred from the Pskov Seminary to the Kholm Theological Seminary in 1892, and was raised to the rank of archimandrite. Archimandrite Tikhon was consecrated Bishop of Lublin on October 19, 1897, and returned to Kholm for a year as Vicar Bishop of the Kholm Diocese. Bishop Tikhon zealously devoted his energy to the establishment of the new vicariate. His attractive moral make-up won the general affection, of not only the Russian population, but also of the Lithuanians and Poles. On September 14, 1898, Bishop Tikhon was made Bishop of the Aleutians and Alaska. As head of the Orthodox Church in America, Bishop Tikhon was a zealous laborer in the Lord's vineyard.

He did much to promote the spread of Orthodoxy, and to improve his vast diocese. He reorganized the diocesan structure, and changed its name from "Diocese of the Aleutians and Alaska" to "Diocese of the Aleutians and North America" in 1900. Both clergy and laity loved their archpastor, and held him in such esteem that the Americans made Archbishop Tikhon an honorary citizen of the United States.

On May 22, 1901, he blessed the cornerstone for St Nicholas Cathedral in New York, and was also involved in establishing other churches. On November 9, 1902, he consecrated the church of St Nicholas in Brooklyn for the Syrian Orthodox immigrants. Two weeks later, he consecrated St Nicholas Cathedral in NY.

In 1905, the American Mission was made an Archdiocese, and St Tikhon was elevated to the rank of Archbishop. He had two vicar bishops: Bishop Innocent (Pustynsky) in Alaska, and St Raphael (Hawaweeny) in Brooklyn to assist him in administering his large, ethnically diverse diocese. In June of 1905, St Tikhon gave his blessing for the establishment of St Tikhon's Monastery.

In 1907, he returned to Russia, and was appointed to Yaroslavl, where he quickly won the affection of his flock. They came to love him as a friendly, communicative, and wise archpastor. He spoke simply to his subordinates, never resorting to a peremptory or overbearing tone. When he had to reprimand someone, he did so in a good-natured, sometimes joking manner, which encouraged the person to correct his mistakes.

When St Tikhon was transferred to Lithuania on December 22, 1913, the people of Yaroslavl voted him an honorary citizen of their town. After his transfer to Vilna, he did much in terms of material support for various charitable institutions. There too, his generous soul and love of people clearly manifested themselves. World War I broke out when His Eminence was in Vilna. He spared no effort to help the poor residents of the Vilna region who were left without a roof over their heads or means of subsistence as a result of the war with the Germans, and who flocked to their archpastor in droves.

After the February Revolution and formation of a new Synod, St Tikhon became one of its members. On June 21, 1917, the Moscow Diocesan Congress of clergy and laity elected him as their ruling bishop. He was a zealous and educated archpastor, widely known even outside his country.

On August 15, 1917, a local council was opened in Moscow, and Archbishop Tikhon was raised to the dignity of Metropolitan, and then elected as chairman of the council. The council had as its aim to restore the life of Russian Orthodox Church on strictly canonical principles, and its primary concern was the restoration of the Patriarchate. All council members would select three candidates, and then a lot would reveal the will of God. The council members chose three candidates: Archbishop Anthony of Kharkov, the wisest, Archbishop Arseny of Novgorod, the strictest, and Metropolitan Tikhon of Moscow, the kindest of the Russian hierarchs.

On November 5, following the Divine Liturgy and a Molieben in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, a monk removed one of the three ballots from the ballot box, which stood before the Vladimir Icon of the Mother of God. Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev announced Metropolitan Tikhon as the newly elected Patriarch. St Tikhon did not change after becoming the primate of the Russian Orthodox Church. In accepting the will of the council, Patriarch Tikhon referred to the scroll that the Prophet Ezekiel had to eat, on which was written, "Lamentations, mourning, and woe." He foresaw that his ministry would be filled with affliction and tears, but through all his suffering, he remained the same accessible, unassuming, and kindly person.

All who met St Tikhon were surprised by his accessibility, simplicity and modesty. His gentle disposition did not prevent him from showing firmness in Church matters, however, particularly when he had to defend the Church from her enemies. He bore a very heavy cross. He had to administer and direct the Church amidst wholesale church disorganization, without auxiliary administrative bodies, in conditions of internal schisms and upheavals by various adherents of the Living Church, renovationists, and autocephalists.

The situation was complicated by external circumstances: the change of the political system, by the accession to power of the godless regime, by hunger, and civil war. This was a time when Church

property was being confiscated, when clergy were subjected to court trials and persecutions, and Christ's Church endured repression. News of this came to the Patriarch from all ends of Russia. His exceptionally high moral and religious authority helped him to unite the scattered and enfeebled flock. At a crucial time for the church, his unblemished name was a bright beacon pointing the way to the truth of Orthodoxy. In his messages, he called on people to fulfill the commandments of Christ, and to attain spiritual rebirth through repentance. His irreproachable life was an example to all.

In order to save thousands of lives and to improve the general position of the church, the Patriarch took measures to prevent clergy from making purely political statements. On September 25, 1919, when the civil war was at its height, he issued a message to the clergy urging them to stay away from political struggle.

The summer of 1921 brought a severe famine to the Volga region. In August, Patriarch Tikhon issued a message to the Russian people and to the people of the world, calling them to help famine victims. He gave his blessing for voluntary donations of church valuables, which were not directly used in liturgical services. However, on February 23, 1922, the All-Russian Central Executive Committee published a decree making all valuables subject to confiscation.

According to the 73rd Apostolic Canon, such actions were regarded as sacrilege, and the Patriarch could not approve such total confiscation, especially since many doubted that the valuables would be used to combat famine. This forcible confiscation aroused popular indignation everywhere. Nearly two thousand trials were staged all over Russia, and more than ten thousand believers were shot. The Patriarch's message was viewed as sabotage, for which he was imprisoned from April 1922 until June 1923.

His Holiness, Patriarch Tikhon did much on behalf of the Russian Orthodox Church during the crucial time of the so-called Renovationist schism. He showed himself to be a faithful servant and custodian of the undistorted precepts of the true Orthodox Church. He was the living embodiment of Orthodoxy, which was unconsciously recognized even by enemies of the church, who called its members "Tikhonites."

When Renovationist priests and hierarchs repented and returned to the church, they were met with tenderness and love by St Tikhon. This, however, did not represent any deviation from his strictly Orthodox policy. "I ask you to believe me that I will not come to agreement or make concessions which could lead to the loss of the purity and strength of Orthodoxy," the Patriarch said in 1924.

Being a good pastor, who devoted himself entirely to the church's cause, he called upon the clergy to do the same: "Devote all your energy to preaching the word of God and the truth of Christ, especially today, when unbelief and atheism are audaciously attacking the Church of Christ. May the God of peace and love be with all of you!"

It was extremely painful and hard for the Patriarch's loving, responsive heart to endure all the Church's misfortunes. Upheavals in and outside the church, the Renovationist schism, his primatial labors, his concern for the organization and tranquility of Church life, sleepless nights and heavy thoughts, his confinement that lasted more than a year, the spiteful and wicked baiting of his enemies, and the unrelenting criticism sometimes even from the Orthodox, combined to undermine his strength and health.

In 1924, Patriarch Tikhon began to feel unwell. He checked into a hospital, but would leave it on Sundays and Feast Days in order to conduct services. On Sunday, April 5, 1925, he served his last Liturgy, and died two days later. On March 25/April 7, 1925 the Patriarch received Metropolitan Peter and had a long talk with him. In the evening, the Patriarch slept a little, then he woke up and asked what time it was. When he was told it was 11:45 P.M., he made the Sign of the Cross twice and said, "Glory to Thee, O Lord, glory to Thee." He did not have time to cross himself a third time.

Almost a million people came to say farewell to the Patriarch. The large cathedral of the Donskoy Monastery in Moscow could not contain the crowd, which overflowed the monastery property into the square and adjacent streets. St Tikhon, the eleventh Patriarch of Moscow, was primate of the Russian Church for seven and a half years.

On September 26/October 9, 1989, the Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church glorified Patriarch Tikhon and numbered him among the saints. For nearly seventy years, St Tikhon's relics were believed lost, but in February 1992, they were discovered in a concealed place in the Donskoy Monastery.

It would be difficult to imagine the Russian Orthodox Church without Patriarch Tikhon during those years. He did so much for the Church and for the strengthening of the Faith itself during those difficult years of trial. Perhaps the saint's own words can best sum up his life: "May God teach every one of us to strive for His truth, and for the good of the Holy Church, rather than something for our own sake." *from OCA.org*

On the Lord's Prayer: A Short Interpretation *St. Maximus the Confessor*

I have, Sir, in receiving your inspiring letters, received you in your own person. Indeed, in spirit you are always present and cannot possibly be absent. But, following God's example, you have in your goodness also taken advantage of the opportunity God has given you to communicate with your servants. I have greatly admired your self-abasement, and have tempered my fear of you with affection, and from both have formed a love based on respect and goodwill. I have combined the two in case fear, stripped of affection, should turn into hatred, or

affection, deprived of fear, should turn into over-familiarity. In this way love becomes an inward law of tenderness, assimilating everything naturally akin to it, mastering hatred through goodwill, and over-familiarity through respect.

David the psalmist says, 'Fear of the Lord is pure, and endures for ever' (Ps. 19:9), because he knows that of all things fear is best able to preserve divine love. Such a fear is, he realizes, very different from the fear of being punished for crimes. This second type of fear is indeed ousted and destroyed by love, as John the Evangelist makes clear when he writes, 'Love casts out fear' (1 John 4:18). But the fear David is talking about is a natural expression of the law of true tenderness; and it is through this fear that the saints always keep intact the rule and practice of love, both for God and for each other.

Thus, as I have said, I too have tempered my fear of you, Sir, with affection and have maintained this law of love until now. Hitherto I have been held back from writing through respect, because I did not want to open the door to over-familiarity; but now I have been impelled to write through goodwill, lest my failure to do so should be construed as hatred. And so, as requested, I write, not what I think - for, as Scripture says, 'men's thoughts are pathetic' (Wisdom 9:14) - but what God wills and grants by grace so that good may come of it; for 'the Lord's counsel stands for ever,' says David, 'and the thoughts of His heart from generation to generation' (Ps. 33:11). Perhaps the counsel of God the Father to which David here refers is the unfathomable self-emptying of the only-begotten Son which He brought about for the deification of our nature, and by which He has set a limit to the ages; and perhaps the thoughts of His heart are the principles of providence and judgment by which He wisely orders our present and future life as if they were separate generations, assigning to each its appropriate mode of activity.

If the purpose of the divine counsel is the deification of our nature, and the aim of divine thoughts is to supply the prerequisites of our life, it follows that we should both know and carry into effect the power of the Lord's Prayer, and write about it in the proper way. And since you, Sir, in writing to me your servant have been inspired by God to mention this prayer in particular, it is necessarily the subject of my own words as well; hence I beseech the Lord, who has taught us this prayer, to open my intellect so that it may grasp the mysteries contained in it, and to give me words equal to the task of elucidating what I have understood. For hidden within a limited compass this prayer contains the whole purpose and aim of which we have just spoken; or, rather, it openly proclaims this purpose and aim to those whose intellects are strong enough to perceive them. The prayer includes petitions for everything that the divine Logos effected through His self-emptying in the incarnation, and it teaches us to strive for those blessings of which the true provider is God the Father alone through the natural mediation

of the Son in the Holy Spirit. For the Lord Jesus is mediator between God and men, as the divine apostle says (cf. 1 Tim; 2:5), since He makes the unknown Father manifest to men through the flesh, and gives those who have been reconciled to Him access to the Father through the Holy Spirit (cf. Eph. 2:18). It was on their behalf and for their sake that without changing He became man, and is now the author and teacher of so many and such great new mysteries as yet beyond our understanding.

Of these mysteries that He has granted to men in His boundless generosity, seven are of more general significance; and it is these whose power, as I have said, lies hidden within the Lord's Prayer. These seven are theology, adoption as sons by grace, equality with the angels, participation in eternal life, the restoration of human nature when it is reconciled dispassionately with itself, the abolition of the law of sin, and the destruction of the tyranny that holds us in its power through the deceit of the evil one.

Let us examine the truth of what we have said. Theology is taught us by the incarnate Logos of God, since He reveals in Himself the Father and the Holy Spirit. For the whole of the Father and the whole of the Holy Spirit were present essentially and perfectly in the whole of the incarnate Son. They themselves did not become incarnate, but the Father approved and the Spirit co-operated when the Son Himself effected His incarnation. At the incarnation the Logos preserved His intellect and His life unimpaired: except by the Father and the Spirit He was not comprehended in essence by any other being whatsoever, but in His love for men was united hypostatically with the flesh.

The Logos bestows adoption on us when He grants us that birth and deification which, transcending nature, comes by grace from above through the Spirit. The guarding and preservation of this in God depends on the resolve of those thus born: on their sincere acceptance of the grace bestowed on them and, through the practice of the commandments, on their cultivation of the beauty given to them by grace. Moreover, by emptying themselves of the passions they lay hold of the divine to the same degree as that to which, deliberately emptying Himself of His own sublime glory, the Logos of God truly became man. *to be continued*

Upcoming Events 2016

31 October All-Saints Festival
7-8 November Feast Day at Holy Archangels Monastery
13 November Parish Thanksgiving Day & Picnic

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!