

# The Confessor's Tongue for January 22, A. D. 2017

31<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Pentecost, Apostle Timothy, Martyr Anastasius

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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## Commentary on the All-Night Vigil 3

### Parts of the Whole

The Vigil is a combination of certain daily services, but in a more elaborate form than they take by themselves. In order to include within the Vigil the idea that the Vigil represents all of time, the services consist of the beginning service of the liturgical day (Vespers) and the concluding service of the day (Matins). In this way, the Church sanctifies all of time.

The Vigil properly includes Vespers, Matins, and the First Hour. The reading of the Third and Sixth Hours before the Divine Liturgy may be thought of as a continuation of the Vigil. This means that all of Saturday night, the first part of the new week, is considered holy and sanctified. Indeed, in the fullest Saturday evening celebration, the Vigil would last through the night until first light, sanctifying the whole night, the time of darkness, death, sleep, and evil, and keeping watch for the return of the bridegroom and the light He brings.

### The Vigil after the Vigil

After the Saturday "All-Night Vigil" ends, we depart in peace to our homes. Having broken with the cares of our week in the world, we have entered into the blessed and holy Lord's Day. Time has been sanctified through our offering of the first part of the new week to the Lord in keeping Vigil, and we have begun preparing ourselves for the sanctification to come through the Holy Eucharist. Vigil is Preparation. Liturgy is Fulfillment.

Returning home, we continue to keep a vigilant atmosphere. Entertainment, television, parties, movies, etc., while not necessarily wrong in themselves, are incompatible with the activity of preparing for the Divine Liturgy and especially Holy Communion. This is why our church discipline forbids weddings on Saturdays and socials on the eve of the Lord's Day. Likewise, we abstain from marital relations to prepare ourselves for Holy Communion.

At home, we keep a quiet evening of preparation. This is a time for reading the Scriptures and the Lives of the Saints, especially if we have not done so during the week. This is a time to call or write someone who is hurting, in need, or with whom we need to be reconciled. This is a time to examine our consciences and make the resolve to begin the "New Day," the "New Week," with the Lord in all things.

### The Great Censing and Opening Psalm

Once the *trezvon* bell has been rung to mark the beginning of the Vigil, the curtain and Royal Doors are opened, and the illumination of the church is increased. The Vigil begins in silence, silence and the sound of censing. These represent to us the initial movement of the Spirit of God over the void at the

very beginning of the world. Thus the Vigil takes us back to the beginning of time, to the creation of the world before man's rebellion.

The Priest and Deacon both carry candles as the Priest censes the altar table, the sanctuary, the iconostasis, the whole church, and the faithful gathered in the church. The Priest wears his phelonion (the largest and outermost garment worn by the Priest). When the phelonion is worn, it is a sign that that particular part of the service is of the new creation.

The deacon breaks the silence with the exclamation, "Arise, master, bless!" This exclamation is the invitation from God to the only creature who stands upright—man. We pray to God in the distinctive way in which He created us—erect on two feet. We stand in the presence of God our Creator who brought us from nothingness and non-existence into the world He made for us. Man's response to his Creator is to acknowledge Him as God and to give thanks to Him for his very being and for all the good things the Creator has given him. Yet as St. Paul indicates in the first chapter of Romans, man failed to acknowledge God as God and to give Him thanks. Rather, he sought to be god without God, to displace his Creator; and all the evils of the world flow from this basic failure to worship and thank God. Christ has come to call man back to his original vocation, to succeed where Adam failed.

Tracing the sign of the cross with the raised censer before the altar table, the Priest exclaims, "Glory to the Holy, Consubstantial, Life-Creating, and Undivided Trinity..." Thus we praise the One true God in Three Persons who created the world. Immediately, clergy sing the call to worship, "Come let us worship God our King..." Man, having been newly created, arisen from nothingness, is immediately invited to live by worshipping His Creator in humble dependence upon Him. Man was created to glorify and worship God!

The choir and people begin singing Psalm 103, the psalm of creation, which always begins Vespers. The psalm is sung rather than read at Vigil due to the festive nature of the service (though commonly in abbreviated form, though we do sing it in full when we serve an extended Vigil such as last Friday for St. Maximus). The Priest and Deacon continue censing the church during the singing. All the while, the church is brightly illuminated and the Royal Doors are open, representing the light and glory of creation and man's destiny to live in Paradise with the way to God open. The censing of both the icons and the gathered faithful shows there is no separation between the faithful in Heaven and those on earth: all are gathered in God's presence and afforded equal honor according to the indelible image of God in each and the degree to which each acquires the likeness of

God.

At the end of the censing, the Royal Doors are closed and the lights dimmed dramatically. When the Royal Doors are closed during a service, they signify the Church as fast or preparation for the kingdom, for the closed doors indicate the separation of the people living in the fallen world from the Kingdom, which is represented in the architecture of the church by the altar or sanctuary. When the Royal Doors are opened, they signify the Church as feast or fulfillment of the Kingdom. The Vigil is conducted on both these levels: the Church on the level of fallen creation in exile, aliens passing through the world on pilgrimage towards the Kingdom, and the Church restored to the level of the Kingdom.

Once the doors are closed, the priest removes his phelonion and exits the North Deacon's Door (on left facing the iconostasis) to stand bareheaded in humility before the now closed Royal Doors to pray silently on behalf of himself and the people the seven 'Prayers of Light' much as Adam may have cried out to God before the closed gates of Paradise. Once the singing of the Psalm has ended, the deacon will exit and intone the Great Litany. *Fr. Justin Frederick*

### **The Antidoron** *Fr. Justin Frederick*

The bread we generally call *antidoron* used in the Church has two uses and two distributions. Strictly, its use is determined by its name: *antidoron* means "in place of the gifts." In other words, it is to be given to those of the faithful who were present but did not commune (the catechumens and others not baptized having already been dismissed). The *antidoron* is what remains from the *proskomidion* loaf which was blessed during the Proskomide and from which the Lamb was cut (the Lamb is the bread consecrated to be Christ's body and distributed to the prepared faithful in Holy Communion). It is blessed and is treated as a holy thing with all reverence. The singing of Psalm 33 is the time appointed to distribute *antidoron*, when the non-communing faithful come forward to receive what could be called a consolation prize from the hand of the priest. We have begun to restore this practice at weekday liturgies.

At present in our parish on Sundays and many others, this distribution of *antidoron* (and not all the bread distributed is strictly *antidoron* by the definition above but is cut from loaves other than that of the Lamb) comes when we venerate the cross and is not limited to those who did not commune. It has become joined to the other use of the bread in Liturgy immediately after Communion when those who have communed take a piece of bread and a drink of wine to help ensure that they have fully consumed the Mysteries given to them. This bread is not *antidoron* at all—for those who partake of it have just partaken of the Gifts and have no need for *antidoron*—"in place of the Gifts".

A custom related to the post-Communion bread has sprung up and become widespread: communicants

take an extra piece of bread after Communion and give it to someone standing near them who did not commune, and that practice has found its way to our parish. Several things should be understood about this custom that, as always, things may be done decently and in an orderly manner:

1. It is not the norm (i.e. it is not appointed to be done).
2. It is not required that anyone participate in it.
3. It is not required that everyone present receive a piece of bread during Communion (they'll get a piece at the end of Liturgy).
4. It is not desirable that anyone take a handful of pieces to pass out to anyone and everyone who did not commune.
5. It can be distracting.
6. It can be confusing for non-Orthodox visitors.
7. Strictly, those not communing receive *antidoron* later during Psalm 33, not during Communion.
8. Those communing, especially children, should take only one piece for themselves following Communion so that plenty remains for distribution at the end. The *antidoron* is not meant to be a full breakfast.

This practice of taking bread to others may continue for now on Sundays—if restraint and care guided by the points above are observed. If you commune and wish to offer a piece to one or two people near you who did not commune, especially visitors, you may. But don't feel must and, if you choose to do it, please be discreet and discerning in how you do it.

It is a pious custom to keep some holy bread and holy water in one's icon corner—to consume, breaking the night's fast, with one's morning prayers. The following prayer may be said when one partakes: "O Lord my God, may Thy holy gift and Thy Holy Water be unto forgiveness of my sins, unto enlightenment of my mind, unto strengthening of my spiritual and bodily powers, unto health of my soul and body, unto vanquishing of my passions and weaknesses, by Thy boundless merciful kindness, through the prayers of Thy most-pure Mother and all Thy Saints. Amen."

#### Upcoming Events 2017

27-28 January Orthodox Christian Perspectives: The Church as Family, Friday at St. Barbara's, Saturday at St. Sarkis Armenian Church in Carrollton. See [ntom.org](http://ntom.org) for more.  
26 February Forgiveness Vespers, 6:00 p.m.  
16 April: Pascha

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!