

The Confessor's Tongue for June 18, A. D. 2017

Second Sunday after Pascha: All Saints of North America

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 All Saints of North America

This second Sunday after Pentecost, we remember all the Saints who have blossomed in our land just as the Russian Church remembers all the Saints of the Russian land on this day.

We remember St. Herman, the monk who came as one of the original missionaries in 1794 and lived their until his repose in 1837. We remember St. Innocent, who first came as a married priest to Alaska in 1824, was made the first bishop of the area in 1840 after the death of his wife, and served their as a tireless missionary and translator of the Scriptures and services of the Church into the native tongues until he was called back to Moscow in 1868 to become Metropolitan of Moscow and all Russia.

We remember the first martyrs of our land, St. Peter the Aleut, and Aleut lad who was tortured to death for his faith by Jesuits wanting him to convert in San Francisco in 1815, and St. Juvenaly, a Russian priest-monk and missionary who was martyred by natives near Lake Illiamna in Alaska in 1796.

We remember St. Tikhon, who served as bishop in America from 1898 to 1907 and was instrumental in seeing the services of the Church translated into English to make her worship and faith accessible to the English speakers of America, and who as Patriarch of Moscow from 1917 until his death in 1925, stood firm against the atheist Bolsheviks who sought to destroy the Church.

We remember St. Jacob Netsvetov of Alaska, the first native priest to be ordained to serve the Alaskan peoples, who labored as a missionary priest from 1828 until his repose in 1864.

We remember St. Alexis of Wilkes-Barre, an Eastern-rite Roman Catholic Priest (Uniate), who returned to the Orthodox Church in 1891 bringing 361 others with him, and who from then until his repose in 1909 labored tirelessly to reconcile Uniate Catholics with the Orthodox Church, himself personally bringing in about 15,000.

We remember St. Raphael, the first Arab-speaking bishop to labor in North America as an auxiliary to St. Tikhon in 1904, and, who established more than 30 Syrian and Lebanese parishes, and who founded *The Word* journal in Arabic (which continues to be published to this day, in English now) before his repose in 1915.

We remember two priests, Alexander Hotovitsky and John Kochurov who labored in America for a time and who both were martyred back in Russia by the Bolsheviks, St. John being the first of many priest-martyrs under communism in 1918; St. Alexander died in the Solovki labor camp in 1930.

Finally, we remember two beloved hierarchs, St. Nikolai of Zicha and St. John of San Francisco. St. Nikolai was a Serbian bishop, known as a second

Chrystosm for his powerful preaching and inspired writings. After suffering during the Second World War at the hands of the Nazis in the Dachau death camp, he came to America and taught at St. Tikhon's seminary until his repose in 1956. St. John of Shanghai and San Francisco was a Russian bishop who escaped the Bolsheviks, for a time was in Serbia, and who later served the Russian emigre community in Shanghai, China with special care for orphans until Mao's communists drove them out; he brought his orphans to the United States and ended his life as Bishop in California. He is much beloved and is known as a wonderworker.

These are but the Saints known to us. Doubtless there are others who are known to God. O all ye Saints of North America, pray to Christ God for us!

Pilgrimage On Foot

Fr. Justin Frederick

Our recent trip to Mt. Athos provided us with good reasons for why the traditional Orthodox Christian pilgrimage is made on foot—and by boat when necessary.

But why should a Christian make a pilgrimage at all? St. Gregory of Nyssa, in the fourth century after Christ, objected to the notion that Christians should make pilgrimages to Jerusalem to view the memorials there of the Lord's life in the flesh. The higher life calls us to fix our attention on Christ's commands in the Gospel; which of them directs us to go to Jerusalem? Does a change of place make us nearer to God? Is there a greater presence of the Holy Spirit in Jerusalem to necessitate our travel there to obtain it? No command in the Gospel compels us to go on pilgrimage to Jerusalem. God is "everywhere, filling all things", so a mere change of place does not make us nearer to God. The Holy Spirit since His initial outpouring in Jerusalem at Pentecost is available to anyone who believes irrespective of where he lives. For Gregory, we are better staying at home, focusing on the Gospel without distraction, avoiding the dangers and temptations of the road. Those who are perfect or have begun to live the stricter, more spiritual life, are not benefited by a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, in St. Gregory's view. Rather, he says, "Change of place does not effect any drawing nearer unto God, but wherever thou mayest be, God will come to thee, if the chambers of thy soul be found of such a sort that He can dwell in thee and walk in thee."

Gregory's points are well taken. A pilgrimage of itself will not make us holier, better, or nearer to God. God and His abundant mercy and grace are everywhere available to those able and desiring to receive them, and we may carry out Christ's commands in whatever land and circumstances we live—nothing may hinder this. God's manifest presence in our lives is limited not by our location but only by the condition of our hearts.

In practice, Christians have not heeded St. Gregory's admonition. They have, instead, made frequent pilgrimages. Though a pilgrimage is not a necessity for Christian life, pilgrims have found spiritual good in them, even if a benefit is not automatically assured. If we liken pilgrimage to the concept of a spiritual retreat—when a

person leaves off his usual duties and occupations to attend more exclusively to his spiritual life for a limited time, we may begin to see the potential of pilgrimage. Moreover, by visiting places sanctified by the prayers of holy men and women who have preceded us, we may be moved to deeper piety by perceiving their faith made manifest in their works and touching their sanctity retained in their relics. Furthermore, the sight of monks and nuns who have left the world wholly to devote themselves to Christ inspires us to live a holier, more spiritual life, and the encounter with fellow believers from other lands expands our vision of the Church. Often, the focus of a pilgrimage is not just a place, but a person of exceptional spiritual experience and accomplishment from whom we desire to derive spiritual good.

Mount Athos offers a unique pilgrimage for Orthodox Christians. There alone in the world is found an Orthodox territory governed by Orthodox monks and by Orthodox principles. You will not find this in the Holy Land. You will not find it in any modern Orthodox country. Only here, where the peninsula of Mount Athos is cordoned off from the outside world and only men given permission to enter do so -- only here you will find a territory fully given over to the Christian way of life. Just to see that and experience that is worth the effort to get there. We who know nothing other than a secular order where commercial and political interests dominate life may gain a vision, if only in a glimpse, of how life might be different if it were ordered on different principles.

Mount Athos has been the center of Orthodox monasticism for 1054 years. Countless men have labored there to repent, to pray, to acquire the Holy Spirit. To support that spiritual work, they have built twenty monasteries and many sketes, kelli, and hermitages. Sanctified by prayer and protected by the Theotokos as her garden, this place is like no other. As a worker at St. Paul's Monastery said, "Once you drink the water here..." He trailed off, but his failure to complete his sentence was pregnant with meaning. "If you drink the water here, you will be changed."

Spiritual benefit is clearly possible from a pilgrimage to such a place, but it is not guaranteed; for, after all, what we call 'pilgrimage' could in practice be or become nothing more than a tourist junket: a chance to see hoary antiquities in an exotic location, to take photographs and come home to talk about them to our families and friends. How can we be more assured of making a pilgrimage with spiritual benefit and avoid St. Gregory of Nyssa's censure? How can we avoid taking a mere exotic vacation?

Here, our leading idea of making a pilgrimage on foot comes into play—but that idea must await the next installment for development.

The Ranks of the Saints

The Orthodox Church honors various men and women pleasing to God who appropriated various names, corresponding to their various ascetic acts of virtuous life on earth.

Patriarchs are the Old Testament Saints who followed God before the Law was given to Moses.

Forefathers are all the righteous ones who lived under the Law from Moses to John the Baptist.

Fathers are the Old Testament Saints from whose family our Lord Jesus Christ is descended.

Prophets are those of the Old Testament who were selected by God Himself and to call His people to repentance and declare the coming of Christ, the Savior of

the world, to earth.

Apostles are the great men of the New Testament, the people closest to Christ the Savior, His worthiest disciples and companions, who were sent by Him to various countries for the preaching of the Divine Gospel to the people.

Hierarchs and Fathers ("our Fathers among the saints") are the Eastern Patriarchs, the pious Popes of Rome, the Patriarchs, Archbishops, heirs to the Holy Apostles in the Christian Church and their great co-workers in preaching the Gospel and in their labor of true piety.

Holy Equal to the Apostles and Enlighteners are the men and women of royal or princely origin, but sometimes also of simple calling, who by their own preaching turned entire countries and peoples to Christ.

Hieromartyrs are Christian bishops and presbyters who died from torture for their belief in Christ.

Great martyrs are the pious men and women of various worldly ranks and positions, who courageously and with great patience thoroughly underwent various persecutions, tortures, and torments by their torturers for their holy Christian faith.

Venerable Martyrs are the pious and true ascetic men and women, included in the monastic calling, who suffered from the pagans and heterodox believers for their faith in Christ.

Martyrs are those men and women of various callings and positions, who without confusion, but sometimes even with joy, went one by one or in groups into the presence of their torturers, and there were tortured to death for their firm and unshakable confession of their faith in Christ.

Confessors and Passion-bearers are those great men of virtuous life of the Christian Church, courageously and fearlessly everywhere and always confessed their deep faith in Christ, who openly recognized themselves as true Christians, who endured torments and torture for this, but did not receive a martyr's death; some of them are called *branded*, because during torture special brands were put on the person.

Venerable Ones is the title of those sanctified in the monastic calling.

Righteous Ones are the great men and women, who were glorified for their virtuous and pious life, zealous for the fulfillment of the commandments of God and for their unbowed observance of the truths of the Gospel teaching, not shirking their family or public obligations and living in the world.

Unmercenaries are men well pleasing to God who through their unmercenary (not taking payment) labor for the benefit of their neighbors served the suffering and healed the sick.

Blessed Ones are the men and women of various callings and positions, who in carrying out their mortal life, both in the world and in the desert, with unusual reserve, with extreme deprivation and denial of every possible worldly good, but sometimes even with many varieties of foolishness, all this "for the sake of Christ". They are often called 'fools for Christ' or 'holy fools'.

From S. V. Bulgakov, *Handbook for Church Servers*, 2 ed., 1274 pp. (Kharkov, 1900), pp. 0586-0589. Translated by Archpriest Eugene D. Tarris © all rights reserved.

Upcoming Events 2017

12 – 28 June Apostles' Fast
29 June Feast of SS Peter & Paul

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!