

ST. MAXIMUS CATECHISM CLASS 2010 HANDOUT  
INTRODUCTORY LECTURE 5: THE CHURCH & TRADITION

Let us then glorify Him as we have *received* from our fathers, let us glorify Him both by our faith and by our works; for sound doctrines avail us nothing to salvation, if our life is corrupt. *St. John Chrysostom, Homilies 4 on the Gospel of John*

Metropolitan of Moscow, (St.) Philaret's Catechism 1839

Q17. What is meant by the name holy tradition?

A. By the name holy tradition is meant the doctrine of the faith, the law of God, the sacraments, and the ritual as handed down by the true believers and worshippers of God by word and example from one to another, and from generation to generation.

Q18. Is there any sure repository of holy tradition?

A. All true believers united by the holy tradition of the faith, collectively and successively, by the will of God, compose the Church; and she is the sure repository of holy tradition, or, as St. Paul expresses it, *the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. 1 Tim 3:15*

St. Irenaeus: "We ought not to seek among others the truth, which we may have for the asking from the Church; for in her, as in a rich treasure-house, the Apostles have laid up in its fullness all that pertains to the truth, so that whosoever seeketh may receive from her the food of life." *Against Heresies, 3.100.4*

Q24. Why is tradition necessary even now?

A. As a guide to the right understanding of holy Scripture, for the right ministration of the sacraments, and the preservation of sacred rites and ceremonies in the purity of their original institution. (*i.e., for all these necessities and others not given in Scripture*)

noun *paradosis*

I Corinthians 11:2 "Now I praise you because you remember me in everything, and hold firmly to the *traditions*, just as I *delivered* them to you."

2 Thessalonians 2:15 "So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the *traditions* which you were taught, whether by *word of mouth* or by *letter* from us."

2 Thessalonians 3:6 "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep aloof from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us."

Galatians 1:14 [Paul] "I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral *traditions*."

Colossians 2:8 “See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the *tradition* of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.”

Matthew 15:2-6, Mark 7:3-13; Pharisees invalidating God’s command by man’s *tradition*

verb: *paradidomi*, to hand over, to tradition, to hand down, deliver

Luke 1:1-2 “Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the Word have *handed* them *down* to us...”

I Corinthians 11:2, 23 “For I received from the Lord that which I also *delivered* to you, that the Lord Jesus, in the night in which He was betrayed, took bread...”

I Corinthians 15:3 “For I *delivered* to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures...”

2 Peter 2:21 “For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment *delivered* to them.”

Jude 3 “Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all *delivered* to the saints.”

St. Basil (On the Holy Spirit, Chapter 27, ¶66)

Of the beliefs and practices whether generally accepted or publicly enjoined which are preserved in the Church, some we possess derived from written teaching; others we have received delivered to us “in a mystery” by the tradition of the apostles; and both of these in relation to true religion have the same force. And these no one will gainsay;--no one, at all events, who is even moderately versed in the institutions of the Church...For were we to attempt to reject such customs as have no written authority, on the ground that the importance they possess is small, we should unintentionally injure the Gospel in its very vitals; or, rather, should make our public definition a mere phrase and nothing more. For instance, to take the first and most general example, who is there who has taught us in writing to sign with the sign of the Cross those who have trusted in the name of Jesus Christ? What writing hath taught us to turn to the East at the prayer? Which of the saints has left us in writing the words of the invocation at the displaying of the bread of the Eucharist and the cup of blessing? For we are not, as is well known, content with what the apostle or the Gospel has recorded, but both in preface and conclusion we add other words as being of great

importance to the validity of the ministry, and these we derive from unwritten teaching.

Moreover, we bless the water of baptism and the oil of the Chrism, and besides this the catechumen who is being baptized. On what written authority do we do this? Is not our authority silent and mystical tradition? Nay, by what written word is the anointing of oil itself taught? And whence comes the custom of baptizing thrice? And as to the other customs of baptism, from what Scripture do we derive the renunciation of Satan and his angels? Does not this come from that unpublished and secret teaching which our fathers guarded in a silence out of the reach of curious meddling and inquisitive investigation? Well had they learnt the lesson that the awful dignity of the mysteries is best preserved by silence. What the uninitiated are not even allowed to look at was hardly likely to be publicly paraded about in written documents....

*Irenaeus, Against Heresies, 1.10.1-2*

“The Church, though dispersed throughout the whole world, even to the ends of the earth, has received from the apostles and their disciples this faith: [credal statement]...

“As I have already observed, the church having received this preaching and this faith, although scattered throughout the whole world, yet, as if occupying but one house, carefully preserves it. She also believes these points [of doctrine] just as if she had but one soul, and one and the same heart, and she proclaims them, and teaches them, and hands them down, with perfect harmony, as if she possessed only one mouth. For, although the languages of the world are dissimilar, yet the import of the tradition is one and the same.”

### **Worship, Prayer toward the East**

*St. Basil:* “We all look to the East at our prayers, but few of us know that we are seeking our own old country, Paradise, which God planted in Eden in the East.”

*St. John of Damascus, Bk 4, chapter 12*

“It is not without reason or by chance that we worship towards the East. But seeing that we are composed of a visible and an invisible nature, that is to say, of a nature partly of spirit and partly of sense, we render also a twofold worship to the Creator; just as we sing both with our spirit and our bodily lips, and are baptized with both water and Spirit, and are united with the Lord in a twofold manner, being sharers in the mysteries and in the grace of the Spirit.

Since, therefore, God is spiritual light (I John 1:5), and Christ is called in the Scriptures ‘Sun of Righteousness’ (Malachi 4:2) and ‘Dayspring’ (Zachariah 3:8, 6:12; Luke 1:78), the East is the direction that must be assigned to His worship.

For everything good must be assigned to Him from Whom every good thing arises. Indeed, the divine David also says, *Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth: O sing praises unto the Lord: to Him that rideth upon the Heavens of heavens towards the East.*

Moreover, the Scripture also says, *And God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there He put the man whom He had formed* (Genesis 2:8): and when he had transgressed His command He expelled him and made him to dwell over against the delights of Paradise, which clearly is the West. So, then, we worship God seeking and striving after our old fatherland.

Moreover, the tent of Moses had its veil and mercy seat towards the East. Also the tribe of Judah as the most precious pitched their camp on the East. Also in the celebrated temple of Solomon the Gate of the Lord was placed eastward.

Moreover Christ, when He hung on the Cross, had His face turned towards the West, and so we worship, striving after Him [towards the East]. And when He was received again into Heaven, He was borne towards the East, and thus His apostles worship Him, and thus He will come again in the way in which they beheld Him going towards Heaven; as the Lord Himself said, *As the lightning cometh out of the East and shineth even unto the West, so also shall the coming of the Son of Man be* (Mt. 24:27).

So, then, in expectation of His coming we worship towards the East. But this tradition of the apostles is unwritten. For much that has been handed down to us by tradition is unwritten.

*Apostolic Constitutions, Book 2.7*

After this, let us all rise up with one consent, and looking towards the east, after the catechumens and penitents are gone out, pray to God eastward, who ascended up to the heaven of heavens to the east; remembering also the ancient situation of paradise in the east, from whence the first man, when he had yielded to the persuasion of the serpent, and disobeyed the command of God, was expelled.

### **On the Sign of Cross**

“At every forward step and movement, at every going in and out, when we put on our clothes and shoes, when we bathe, when we sit at table, when we light the lamps, on couch, on seat, in all the ordinary actions of daily life, we trace upon the forehead the sign of the Cross.” *Tertullian, De Corona chapter 3*

### **On the Form of Baptism**

*Tertullian* “If no passage of Scripture has prescribed it, assuredly custom, which without doubt flowed from tradition, has confirmed it. For how can

anything come into use, if it has not first been handed down? Even in pleading tradition, written authority, you say, must be demanded. Let us inquire, therefore, whether tradition, unless it be written, should not be admitted. Certainly we shall say that it ought not to be admitted, if no cases of other practices which, without written any written instrument, we maintain on the ground of tradition alone, and the countenance thereafter of custom, affords us any precedent. To deal with this matter briefly, I shall begin with baptism. When we are going to enter the water, but a little before, in the presence of the congregation and under the hand of the president, we solemnly profess that we disown the devil, and his pomp, and his angels. Hereupon we are thrice immersed, making a somewhat ampler pledge than the Lord has appointed in the gospel. ...”, Then gives examples of various unwritten traditions such as the baptismal rite, remembrance of the dead, no kneeling on the Lord’s day, or between Pascha and Pentecost, making the sign of the cross. “If, for these and other such rule, you insist upon having positive Scripture injunction, you will find none. Tradition will be held forth to you as the originator of them, custom as their strengthener, and faith as their observer....”

*Apostolic Constitutions, 3.16-17* “Thou therefore, O bishop, according to that type, shalt anoint the head of those that are to be baptized, whether they be men or women, with the holy oil, for a type of the spiritual baptism. After that, either thou, O bishop, or a presbyter that is under thee, shall in the solemn form name over them the Father, and Son, and Holy Spirit, and shall dip them in the water; and let a deacon receive the man, and a deaconess the woman, that so the conferring of this inviolable seal may take place with a becoming decency. And after that, let the bishop anoint those that are baptized with ointment. This baptism, therefore, is given into the death of Jesus: the water is instead of the burial, and the oil instead of the Holy Spirit; the seal instead of the cross; the ointment is the confirmation of the confession...the descent into the water the dying together with Christ; the ascent out of the water the rising again with Him...

**On Bishops**, Didache 15, St. Ignatius

“Appoint, therefore, for yourselves bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, men meek, and not lovers of money, and truthful and proved; for they also render to you the service of prophets and teachers.” *Didache 15*

*St. Ignatius*

“Se that ye all follow the bishop, even as Jesus Christ does the Father, and the presbytery as ye would the apostles; and reverence the deacons, as being the

institution of God. Let no man do anything connected with the Church without the bishop." (*Smyr 8*)

..let all reverence the deacons as an appointment of Jesus Christ, and the bishop as Jesus Christ, who is the Son of the Father, and the presbyters as the sanhedrin of God, and the assembly of the apostles. Apart from these, there is no Church." (*Trall. 3*)

"Give heed to the bishop, and to the presbytery and deacons....Do nothing without the bishop." (*Phil 7*)

### **Fasting on Wed & Fridays, Didache chapter 8**

But let not your fasts be with the hypocrites; for they fast on the second and fifth day of the week; but do ye fast on the fourth day [Wednesday] and the Preparation (Friday). *Didache chapter 8*

*Apostolic Constitutions, Bk 7, sec 23, 24*

But let not your fasts be with the hypocrites; for they fast on the second and fifth days of the week. But do you either fast the entire five days, or on the fourth day of the week, and on the day of the Preparation, because on the fourth day the condemnation went out against the Lord, Judas then promising to betray Him for money; and you must fast on the day of the Preparation, because on that day the Lord suffered the death of the cross under Pontius Pilate. But keep the Sabbath, and the Lord's day festival; because the former is the memorial of the creation, and the latter of the resurrection. But there is only one Sabbath to be observed by you in the whole year, which is that of our Lord's burial, on which men ought to keep a fast, but not a festival....

### **Meeting on the Lord's Day (where does Christ command it?) Didache, chap 14, Justin 67**

"But every Lord's day do ye gather yourselves together, and break bread, and give thanksgiving after having confessed your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure." *Didache 14*

*St. Ignatius, Magnes 9*: "[Jews have] come to the possession of a new hope, no longer observing the Sabbath, but living in the observance of the Lord's Day, on which also our life has sprung up again by Him and by His death..."

### **Form of Eucharist, St. Justin's *Apology*, 65-67**