

The Confessor's Tongue for April 5, 2009

5th Sunday of Lent: St. Mary of Egypt

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.

Paschal Letter 2009

Dearly Beloved Parishioners and Friends:

The time once again draws near to keep the Paschal Feast. We invite you to join us for Holy Week when we remember Christ's betrayal, suffering, and death, and for the Paschal services when we celebrate Christ's Resurrection from the dead by which we, too, are raised from death to life.

Holy Week and Pascha are the crown of the Church year. At this time, He who laid down His life for us calls us to lay aside our normal cares and activities to walk with Him through His Passion and death that we may enter into the joy of His Resurrection. We honor Christ who gave His all for us by giving of our time to stand before Him in His Church in prayer and worship during this most blessed time of the year.

If you have not been in church for some time, now is the time to return. We need nothing more in this world than God Himself, though the world has a thousand ways of trying to persuade us that we can get by without Him or that it is enough to believe and pray in our hearts without gathering as the Church to worship. Though only week remains of the Fast before Holy Week, there is yet time to draw near to God and renew our relationship to Him through His Church by repentance and Confession.

If you are Orthodox and have not been to Confession or Communion for a long time, there is still time before Pascha to be reconciled with Christ and His Church. Only Orthodox Christians who have made a Confession during this year's Fast to a priest (including baptized children seven years of age and older) may receive Holy Communion at Pascha (or beyond)—and all of us who are Orthodox should be prepared to partake. Confessions may be made in English or in Russian. Confession is available before or after most services, except Liturgy, or you may call and make an appointment.

Pascha falls this year on Sunday, April 19. The Paschal Vigil begins at 11:30 p.m. Saturday night, April 18. It will conclude about 2:30 a.m. and will be followed by the blessing of Paschal baskets and a festal meal as we break the Fast together. Sunday afternoon at 3:00 p.m., we shall have the festive Paschal Vespers followed by a picnic and an egg hunt for the children. You will find all the scheduled services on the monthly calendar, or see our website, www.stmaximus.org. Please join us! We look forward to seeing you.

Love in Christ,
Fr. Justin Frederick

April 1, 5th Sunday of Lent: St. Mary of Egypt

At twelve years of age she left her parent's home in Alexandria and, being free from parental supervision, young and inexperienced, took great

interest in the dissolute life. There was nobody to stop her on the way to perdition, but much temper and temptation. After 17 years of such a life Mary understood her fall when, being in Jerusalem, could not enter a temple, held back by an invisible power. Having been brought in deep repentance to the Lord, she departed from Jerusalem to the Jordanian desert and there for 48 years she practiced asceticism in full solitude, fasting, prayer and tears. "Having fled the gloom of sin, having enlightened her heart with the light of repentance", "rejoicing that all carnal illnesses are restrained through fasting" and "the flesh is unnerved by much fasting", Ven. Mary found great grace from the Lord through her ascetic repentance. Ven. Zosimas (Apr. 4), having met her in the desert, saw her standing in air during the time of prayer and walking across the waters of the Jordan as if on land. The Venerable One asked the elder to bring her the Holy Mysteries to the desert in a year. The holy elder in due time appeared in the desert and brought the Holy Mysteries to Ven. Mary. But a year later, finding that she died, buried her in the year 521. The memory of Ven. Mary, which shows us by example the "remedy of repentance" and "the way which again leads to a life free from mischief", is done, besides April 1, on Thursday and Sunday of the 5th week of Great Lent. S. V. Bulgakov, **Handbook for Church Servers**, 2 ed., 1274 pp. (Kharkov, 1900) Translated by Archpriest Eugene D. Tarris © All rights reserved.

The Eucharist

Then Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.' John 6:53

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.'

Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. And He said to them, 'This is My blood...' Mark 14:23-24

Instituted by Christ for His Church, the Holy Eucharist is not a peripheral or optional part of our Faith. It is not an ancient rite maintained for sake of nostalgia. It is not a simple remembrance of what Christ has done for us, nor is it a mere symbol of Christian unity as we all partake of one loaf and one cup.

Christ's own words do not allow us to treat the Eucharist with such indifference or condescension. According to Christ, if we do not eat His flesh and drink His blood, we have no life in us. O, we may be physically alive, but at St. Justin of Chelye has expressed it, man without Christ is but a walking corpse who has an appearance of life but not the essence. Though there are other sources of grace, this is the unique source of Christ's Body and Blood which impart life to us. The early Church understood

the uniqueness of the Eucharist by referring to it as the "medicine of immortality."

Christ identifies His Body and Blood with the bread and wine He blessed and then offered to His disciples before His crucifixion, commanding them to "do this in remembrance of Me."

The Eucharist and our partaking is the heart of our relationship with Christ. With it we have life, without it we lack His life. Excommunication is to be cut off from the life of Christ. We excommunicate ourselves when we neglect the Eucharist, can't be bothered to come on time to church and don't prepare ourselves to partake, or simply don't bother to come. If we absent ourselves for three consecutive weeks without a good cause, we have excommunicated ourselves. Serious sin also prevents us from receiving Holy Communion until we have effected a good repentance. To go to Confession and to hear that one may not partake of the Mysteries is not the arbitrary action of the priest to punish you, but is a simple declaration of the reality you have already embraced by choosing sin. In declaring your condition to you, the consequences of your actions, the priest serves as God's messenger to call you to repentance, cleansing, and restoration to fellowship in the Mysteries. Being severed from the Eucharist by choice or by sin is to be cut off from life; it is to abide in spiritual death.

The Eucharist is communal in nature. We gather together to celebrate it, and it cannot be celebrated by the priest alone. It is not something we can do privately in our homes; it is not something we can have without direct connection to the Church. There is no substitute in Bible reading, prayer, or good works or anything else for the Eucharist. Hence we cannot be Christians without attending Church!

The Eucharist is festal in nature. It is a 'giving of thanks' as we remember all that God in Christ through the Spirit has done for us and continues to do. It is taking time away from the demands of life in this world to remember and honor the One who made us and restores us to life through the sacrifice of His Body and Blood. It is for this reason that it is not celebrated on weekdays of Great Lent.

Great is the good gift offered to us in the Eucharist, and great is our error and fault when we disdain it as something optional for spiritual life or when we are too lazy to attend the Liturgy regularly, or when do not make the effort to prepare ourselves regularly through Confession, Prayer, and Fasting to partake. Here is the medicine to what ails us, if we will come with faith and love to partake of our Master's good gifts. With this understanding of the Eucharist, how can we allow ourselves to be content with partaking infrequently? And how shall we answer Christ as to why we neglected the provision He made for us at great cost to Himself?

Fr. Justin Frederick

Work Day and Church Addition

This Saturday, Lazarus Saturday, following the 9 a.m. Liturgy, at 10:30 or so, we shall have a work day to clean inside and out and make ready for Pascha. We'll not only give things a good cleaning but we'll also be tying pussy willows and palm fronds for Palms Sunday and doing some work outside to make ready for Holy Week processions and the picnic. Please give us some time that day and also Holy Friday to get and dust the tomb help decorate it and the church. Father will need some altar servers or men to help clean the altar and sacristy. All those who wish to serve on Pascha should come that day at 11:00 for training for Holy Week and Pascha—and they stay to help clean for a bit.

Also, the addition to our church should be being completed on Saturday and will be usable for Holy Week and Pascha.

Paschal Needs

We need people to do the following:

1. Dye 6 dozen eggs red for Pascha. If anyone can get Greek egg dye for that purpose, please do!
2. Bake an artos. This is the bread that is blessed at Pascha at sits in the church all of Bright Week and is eaten on Bright Saturday (or in our case Sunday).
3. Prepare the egg hunt for the children on Pascha. Oversee getting candy and stuffing plastic eggs and organizing the hunt at the Paschal picnic.
4. Volunteer to man the candle table at Pascha, to direct visitors, etc.

From St. Theophan the Recluse

Prayer is the test of everything; prayer is also the source of everything; prayer is the driving force of everything; prayer is also the director of everything. If prayer is right, everything is right. For prayer will not allow anything to go wrong.

Every prayer must come from the heart, and any other prayer is no prayer at all. Prayer-book prayers, your own prayers, and very short prayers, all must issue forth from the heart to God, seen before you. And still more must this be so with the Jesus Prayer.

The principal thing is to stand with the mind in the heart before God, and to go on standing before Him unceasingly day and night, until the end of life.

You must never regard any spiritual work as firmly established, and this is especially true of prayer; but always pray as if beginning for the first time.

Upcoming Events 2009

- 11 April, Lazarus Saturday Work Day, 10:30 a.m.
- 12 April, Palm Sunday
- 12-18 April, Holy Week
- 19 April, Pascha! Paschal Picnic
- 25 May, Memorial Day Picnic
- 16-19 August, Proposed men's retreat at Holy Archangels Monastery. Let Father know if interested.
- 7 September, Labor Day Picnic

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!