

The Confessor's Tongue for September 13, 2009

14th Sunday after Pentecost; Forefeast of Cross, Dedication of Church, HM Cornelius
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.

September 13: Dedication of the Church of the Resurrection

Constantine the Great built the magnificent temple of the Resurrection of Christ on Golgotha. On September 13, 335, the fathers of the Tyre Council solemnly consecrated it and at the same time established the annual commemoration of the consecration of the Jerusalem Temple in honor of the Resurrection of the Savior by Christians celebrating on this day. As the Holy Church in its hymnography for this day glorifies the Risen Lord, so the simple people call the same feast differently: the So-called Resurrection Day. "Having accomplished the commemoration of the dedication", we, according to the suggestion of the Holy Church, should "be dedicated anew and putting off the old man, live in the newness of life", "let us turn to the Savior and Lord for He is merciful".

September 13: Martyr Ketevan Queen of Georgia

Having become a young widow early with a juvenile son, Teimuraz, (later he became the famous King of Kakheti), she settled in single lonely place, spending her time in prayer and reading the Holy Scriptures. Then she temporarily ruled Kakheti and as a wise pious guide she received universal love. She cared much about the settlement of the world in the Church of Christ, built many temples, hospitals and was the benefactress to all beggars, widows and orphans. When her son became 16 years old, she transferred power to him. The Persian Shah Abbas the 1st, wishing to take advantage of the troubles and the youth of Teimuraz, gathered a huge army for the conquest of Kakheti and Kartli. Teimuraz wanted to be protected against the terrible enemy, but the cowardly Kakheti princes asked him not to begin war and begged the mother of King Ketevan to be their protector before the cruel khan. Ketevan decided to offer her life for the salvation of Kakheti and with rich gifts went to meet the Shah in Ganca (the present Yelizavetpol (Azerbaijan)). Abbas ordered that Ketevan with her grandsons (Leon and Alexander) be exiled to Shiraz (in Persia), and then invaded Kakheti with a huge army and terribly devastated it. After returning to Persia he sent notable lords to Ketevan, who languished in prison preparing herself for death with fasting and prayer, with the offer to reject her Christian faith. For her refusal to accept Islam, they hung her on a tree, with heated pincers tormented her body, hit her with a heated brazier, beat her with heated canes and drove nails into her. After the long and awful torture, St. Ketevan died in 1624 in the city of Shiraz, Persia, from the heated pot that the torturers forced on her head. Her relics are in Rome. Her head and right hand are in the Alaverdi diocesan cathedral in Georgia.

"Absolute freedom means being able to determine one's being on all levels, independently, without constraint or limit in any form. This is the freedom of God—man does not have it. The temptation with freedom for the creature created in the Divine image is to fashion his own being, to determine himself in all things, become a god himself, and not just take what is given, because that would entail a feeling of dependence." *Archimandrite Sophrony*

September 14: Exaltation of the Cross

On the 14th of September, the Church celebrates the Great Feast of the Exaltation (Elevation) of the Precious Cross. The Feast is the only one of the Great Feasts that does not commemorate some occasion in the life of either Christ or His mother. The day is a strict fast day.

The Feast commemorates two events: the finding of the Cross by St. Helen, mother of the Emperor Constantine, and the return of the Cross and its elevation before the faithful in 629, fifteen years after it was taken from Jerusalem by Persian invaders.

But more than this, the Feast calls us to celebrate Christ's glory and victory won on the Cross. Christ's agonizing death on the Cross was victory over Satan and sin, and the death of death. Thus we find the Cross indeed to be "precious" and "life-creating" for us. Christ's life-giving death on the Cross transformed it from a feared symbol of Roman public execution of criminals to the symbol of Christ's great love for mankind and of His victory over evil and the evil one.

At Vigil, there is a special ceremony of venerating the Cross. During the Praises of Matins, the priest vests fully. During the Great Doxology, he censes around the altar table three times. When the "Holy God" at the end of the Doxology is sung, he bears the Cross out of the altar to before the Royal Doors, and then deposits it on an analogion in the midst of the nave. Everyone sings "Before Thy Cross we bow down in veneration, O Master, and Thy holy Resurrection, we glorify" three times, doing a full prostration each time. Then as special hymns to the cross are sung, each person comes to venerate the cross, prostrating twice, kissing the cross, and prostrating again. Having venerated the Cross, each person comes to be anointed with the blessed festal oil and to receive blessed Litia bread dipped in blessed wine.

The Church also honors Christ's Cross on August 1st, the Third Sunday of Great Lent, and every Friday (and Wednesday).

We celebrate the Feast through its Leave-taking, September 21. We may replace our usual prayers at meals with the Troparion (before) and the Kontakion (after), and use them in our daily prayers as well. All

the faithful should participate in the services celebrating this Great Feast of the Church.

Troparion tone 1

O Lord, save Thy people / and bless Thine inheritance. / Grant victory to Orthodox Christians / over the enemy; / and by Thy Cross / preserve Thine estate.

Kontakion, tone 4

As Thou wast voluntarily crucified for our sake, / so grant mercy to those who are called by Thy name, / make all Orthodox Christians glad by Thy power, / granting them victories over the enemy, // by bestowing on them the invincible trophy, Thy weapon of peace.

On the Ringing of Church Bells

The ringing of church bells is an integral part of Orthodox worship in the Russian tradition. Though we as yet lack proper bells, we are beginning to use what we do have in preparation for the day when we may have proper bells to ring.

The ringing of the bells serves two functions in the Orthodox Church. The first is for calling the faithful to divine services, and the second is to announce the beginning of various parts of the services to those faithful who are absent from the church. The different manners or ways of ringing are:

- 1) Blagovest - literally "Good News." This is the measured striking of one bell for the beginning of a service.
- 2) Zvon - literally "Peal." This is the ringing of all bells.
- 3) Dvuzvon - literally "Double Peal." This is the ringing of all bells then an interval of silence, followed by a second ringing of all bells. Simply put, this is the ringing of all bells twice.
- 4) Trezvon - literally "Treble Peal." This is the ringing of all bells three times.
- 5) Perezvon - "Chain-peal." This is the striking of each bell several times beginning with the largest bell and proceeding to the smallest bell. This chain is repeated as long as necessary. This is used before any Blessing of Water.
- 6) Perebor - "Chain-toll." The slow striking of each bell once beginning from the largest bell and proceeding to the smallest bell. After the chain, all bells are rung together. This is repeated several times. This is also called burial or funeral ringing.

At the All-Night Vigil, the blagovest is rung before the service and is immediately followed by the trezvon. At the beginning of the reading of the Six Psalms or before it, the dvuzvon takes place. Right before the reading of the Gospel, the zvon takes place. During the Magnificat the bell is struck nine times. At the end of the Vigil, the trezvon is rung.

At the Divine Liturgy, the blagovest is rung at the appointed time and ceases at the beginning of the Hours. At the end of the 6th hour the trezvon is rung. At the end of the Creed, which consists of 12 parts, the bell is struck 12 times in a unhurried fashion to inform those Christians who are absent

that the time of the Consecration of the Holy Gifts approaches. After the Liturgy the trezvon is rung.

Homily on How Men Must Be as Children to Be the Sons of God

St. Nicholas of Zicha (+1956)

"Verily I say unto you; except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matt. 18:3).

Thus speaks the Lord, and His word is holy and true. What sort of primacy to children have over adults? They have a threefold primacy: in faith, in obedience, and in purity. Children question their parents about everything, and believe whatever reply their parents give. A child is obedient to his parents and easily subjects his will to theirs. A child is pure and, although he quickly becomes angry, he quickly forgives. The Lord demands these three things of all men: faith, obedience, and purity. He seeks that men should believe in Him unconditionally, that they should be pure in their bearing towards another, not remember evil and not returning evil for evil.

Faith, obedience, and purity are the chief characteristics of a child's soul. Added to these are also passionlessness and joy. A child is not greedy, nor lascivious, nor ambitious; he has an eye untroubled by vice and a joy undisturbed by cares.

O my brethren! Who can make us children again? None but the one Christ. He is able to make us children once more, and to aid our rebirth by His example, His wisdom, and the power of His Holy Spirit.

O Lord Jesus, perfect in obedience and purity, the eternal Child of the heavenly Father: help us to be as infants by faith in Thee, by obedience to Thee, and by purity towards one another. To Thee be glory and praise for ever. Amen.

From St. Innocent, Enlightener of the Aleuts

"...strive to possess and stir up within yourself the desire to do what the Holy Scriptures teach. If you presently lack such desires, fall down in fervent prayer before our Savior Jesus Christ and ask Him to grant you this. And once grace calls you to the way of salvation, never resist it."

In the Domestic Church (Our Homes)

It is customary and beneficial to have established an Icon Corner as a place to pray, light candles, kiss icons, make bows and prostrations, place flowers as an adornment to the icons, and offer up the burning of incense. Icon Corners are meant to be areas of spiritual activity. What kind of Icon Corner do you have? How active is it?

Upcoming Events 2009

- 14 September, Feast of the Elevation of the Cross
Liturgy 9:00 a.m., Vigil on Eve at 7:00 p.m.
- 4 October, Annual Parish Meeting
- 11 October, Blessing of Automobiles after Liturgy

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!