

# The Confessor's Tongue for October 25, 2009

20<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost; Martyrs Marcian & Martyrius

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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## October 25: Martyrs Marcian & Martyrius

They suffered for Christ in the 4th century during the reign of Emperor Constantius. St. Marcian was the reader and St. Martyrius the Subdeacon for the Patriarch of Constantinople St. Paul (November 6). Standing by the Patriarch in their posts of notary (stenographer), they wrote the exhortations of the patriarch to the people to turn aside from the apostate Arians, and zealously taught the Christians to firmly hold on to Orthodoxy. Both of them died in 355, being beheaded by the sword by the Arians.

## Blessing of Cars & Prayers for Travel

Today at St. Maximus we shall bless the cars, which, in many parishes, is an annual occurrence and which we shall endeavor to make such. We spend a great deal of time in our cars, and few things we do are more dangerous than driving. Far more people die each year on our roads than have died from the much ballyhooed swine flu. (In 2008, 37,261 people died in car accidents in these United States, 3382 in Texas; in comparison, swine flue is credited with 1000 deaths in the USA since April—out of the millions of people who have had it.)

Almost any object can be blessed. In blessing things, we take what God has given and offer it back to Him with thanksgiving, asking His blessing on our use of it.

When we bless cars, we pray:

“O Master, Lord our God, hearken to the prayer which we now address unto thee, and bless this vehicle with thy holy right hand. Send upon it Thy Guardian Angel, that all who desire to journey in it may be preserved safely and shielded from every evil end. And as the Ethiopian man, riding in the chariot and reading of Thy holy prophecy, was granted faith and grace through Thine Apostle, so now do Thou manifest the path of salvation to Thy servants who shall travel by this vehicle, that with Thy helping grace they may be clothed upon with good works, and after the completion of this life, may be vouchsafed everlasting joy in Thy kingdom: for Thine is the might, and the kingdom, and the power, and unto Thee do we ascribe glory, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.”

We shall endeavor to bless cars each year in the parish, but you may have your own car blessed at any time. We do well to bring a car new to us to be blessed without waiting for the annual blessing.

Considering the dangers of travel, especially on the roads, Orthodox Christians pray as they leave their homes and get in their cars. Many pious people make the sign of the cross both upon leaving their house and upon getting into a vehicle. Many

accompany the cross with the prayer (found in the evening prayers in the prayerbook):

“Let God arise, and let His enemies be scattered; let them also that hate Him flee from before Him. Like as the smoke vanisheth, so shalt Thou drive them away; like as wax melteth at the fire, so let the ungodly perish at the presence of God, and let all them that love God sign themselves with the sign of the Cross and say in joyfulness: Rejoice, O most honorable and life-giving Cross of the Lord, put to flight the devils by the power of our Lord Jesus Christ who was crucified on thee, who descended into hell, and over-ruled the power of darkness, and gave us thee, His honorable Cross, to repulse every adversary. O most honorable and life-giving Cross of the Lord: help me, with the holy Virgin, the Mother of the Lord, and with all the saints every more. Amen.”

When travelling any distance, we may also pray the following Troparion & Kontakion.

“O Christ the Way, the Truth and the Life, as Thou didst send Raphael the Archangel as a guide for Tobias, so now send Thine Angel to accompany Thy servant, and may he protect from every evil thing. Bless this journey, that Thy name may be glorified, O Lover of Man, through the Theotokos.”

“O Savior, as Thou didst walk to Emmaus with Luke and Cleopas, now accompany Thy servant in his travels, deliver him from the assaults of the evil one, for in Thy will all things are possible, O Lover of Man.”

We may also use the troparion to St. Nicholas, patron of travellers:

“Thou wast revealed to Thy flock as a rule of faith, an image of humility, and a teacher of abstinence. Because of thy lowliness the heights were opened to thee; because of thy poverty riches were granted to thee. O holy hierarch, father Nicholas, intercede with Christ our God that our souls be saved.”

Every time we leave our home to head into the world, we pray to ask God's blessing and protection, and to put ourselves at His disposal to do His will, to carry out His purposes. We are, after all, His emissaries, His ambassadors to the world.

## IC XC NIKA

This very ancient monogram is widely used in the Church, particularly as a liturgical expression painted on the doors into sacristies and as the stamp for prosphora bread used in Holy Communion.

The expression IC XC is an abbreviation for the name of Jesus Christ using the first and last letters of

those name in Greek. NIKΑ is from the Greek verb "to conquer." Thus we have: "Jesus Christ hath conquered!"

The Holy Apostle Paul teaches us, "God hath given you the victory through His Son Jesus Christ." Let us always cling to that victory and not allow ourselves to be moved off the right path or to be moved away from the victorious Christ. Let us bear in our hearts the seal, IC XC NIKΑ, "Jesus Christ hath conquered!" As this monogram is found on holy things, let us be assured of victory over all enemies by the Name and Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!

### **Prayer Knocks, Fasting Obtains, Almsgiving Receives**

St. Peter Chrysologus, Abp. of Ravenna (+450)

There are three things, my brethren, by which Faith stands firm, devotion remains constant, and virtue endures. They are prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Prayer knocks at the door, fasting obtains, almsgiving receives. Prayer, almsgiving, and fasting: these three are one, and they give life to each other.

Fasting is the soul of prayer; almsgiving is the lifeblood of fasting. Let no one try to separate them; they cannot be separated. If you have only one of them or not all together, you have nothing. So if you pray, fast; if you fast, show mercy; if you want your petition to be heard, hear the petition of others. If you do not close your ear to others, you open God's ear to yourself.

When you fast, see the fasting of others. If you want God to know that you are hungry, know that another is hungry. If you hope for mercy, show mercy. If you look for kindness, show kindness. If you want to receive, give. If you ask for yourself what you deny to others, your asking is a mockery.

Let this be the pattern for all men when they practice almsgiving: who show mercy to others in the same way, with the same generosity, with the same promptness, as you want others to show mercy to you.

Therefore, let prayer, almsgiving (mercy), and fasting be one single plea to God on our behalf, one speech in our behalf, one speech in our defense, a threefold united prayer in our favor.

Let us use fasting to make up for what we have lost by despising others, let us offer our souls in sacrifice by means of fasting. There is nothing more pleasing that we can offer to God, as the Psalmist said in prophecy, "A sacrifice to God is a broken spirit; God does not despise a bruised and humbled heart."

Offer your soul to God, make Him an offering of your fasting, so that your soul may be a pure offering, a holy sacrifice, a living victim, remaining your own and at the same time made over to God. Whoever fails to give this to God will not be excused, for if you are to give Him yourself, you are never without the means of giving.

To make these acceptable, almsgiving must be added. Fasting bears no fruit unless it is watered by mercy. Fasting dries up when mercy dries up. Mercy is to fasting as rain is to the earth. However much you may cultivate your heart, clear the soil of your nature, root out vices, sow virtues; if you do not release the springs of mercy, your fasting will bear no fruit. When you fast, if your mercy is thin, your harvest will be thin; when you fast, what you pour out in mercy overflows into your barn. Therefore, do not lose by saving, but gather in by scattering. Give to the poor, and you give to yourself. You will not be allowed to keep what you have refused to give to others. *Note: the word 'mercy' is used throughout to refer to almsgiving; I have taken the liberty of changing it to almsgiving in a number of places to make the meaning clearer. As we recall, prayer, fasting, and almsgiving are the three pillars of Christian spiritual life. Fr. JBAF*

### **The Value of the Jesus Prayer**

The prayer "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me the sinner", consists of two basic points: the dogmatic one—acknowledgement of the Divinity of Christ—and the suppliant one—supplication for our salvation. That is, the confession of faith in Christ is connected with the confession of our inability to be saved of our own accord. This says everything, and the whole struggle of the Christian is based on these two points: faith in Christ and awareness of our sinfulness. The "Jesus Prayer", therefore, expresses all the effort of the faithful in a few words and summarizes all the dogmatic teaching of our Orthodox Church.

We acquire this double knowledge through the Jesus Prayer. St. Maximus points out that the passion of pride consists of *two ignorances*: the ignorance of the Divine power and the ignorance of human weakness. And this double ignorance creates a "confused mind". Proud, therefore, is the man of ignorance, whereas, on the contrary, humble is the man of *double knowledge*. The latter knows his own weakness and the power of Christ. So, we acknowledge and confess the power of Christ (Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God) as well as our own weakness (have mercy on me the sinner) through the Jesus Prayer. We acquire in this way the blessed state of humility. Where there is humility, there also is the grace of Christ, and this grace is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Can you see, then, the worth of the Jesus Prayer? Can you see that we can obtain the Kingdom of God by its power?

### **Upcoming Events 2009**

25 October, Blessing of Automobiles after Liturgy  
15 November Nativity Fast begins  
13 February 2010 Forgiveness Sunday, Vespers, Great Lent begins  
26-27 February 2010 Metropolitan Jonah visits.

**GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!**