

The Confessor's Tongue for September 19, 2010

17th Sunday After Pentecost: Martyrs Trophimus, Sabbatius, Dorymedon

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 19: Martyrs Trophimus, Sabbatius, & Dorymedon

They suffered for Christ in the year 276. Sts. Trophimus and Sabbatius were arrested for torture during the time of pagan festivals in Antioch of Pisidia, where St. Sabbatius, "underwent much torture" and died during the ordeal. St. Trophimus was fitted with iron boots, and sent for more torture in the Phrygian city of Synada. Here, together with St. Dorymedon, the senator, after severe tortures both were beheaded by the sword.

The Sayings of St. Anthony the Great

The brethren came to Abba Anthony and laid before him a passage from Leviticus. The old man went out into the desert, secretly followed by Abba Ammonas, who knew that this was his custom. Abba Anthony went a long way off and stood there praying, crying in a loud voice, "God, send Moses, to make me understand this saying." Then there came a voice speaking with him. Abba Ammonas said that although he heard the voice speaking with him, he could not understand what it said.

Saying 26 Sayings of the Desert Fathers

Commentary: How many of us even think of prayer when we are confronted by a difficulty in Scripture, let alone other studies? If we are educated, we dig out the commentaries, the Greek and Hebrew dictionaries and lexicons, and other study aids and we immerse ourselves in intellectual study. But is every truth discoverable in this fashion? Suppose that when Pharaoh had asked Joseph to interpret his dreams, Joseph had sat down with all the ancient commentators and learned monographs on the art of interpreting dreams to arrive at some conclusion. Instead, acknowledging that the interpretation of dreams belongs to God, he sought illumination from God. So, too, did Daniel, when he faced with not only interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's dream but also reminding the king, who had forgotten it, what it was.

Now of course, any spiritual charlatan could claim that he used this method as while presenting his own peculiar teaching as God's truth. Yet do we not need to recognize more fully that God the Logos or Word ultimately gives all things their meaning, and their meaning is found only in relation to him who made them for a reason. Modern man with his scientific method has entirely left God out of his search for knowledge. But should not those who believe in God turn to Him as the Giver of knowledge and ask Him to illumine their hearts and minds as they seek knowledge of the truth? Our books and methods are useful; but on their own, they will not bring us to the Truth. Every time we study, every time we seek knowledge, let us ask God to illumine us and to direct our efforts unto fruitfulness.

Fr. Justin Frederick

Thoughts On the Orthodox Vigil Service

Over the years at St. Maximus, we have promoted the Vigil service as an integral part of the Christian's preparation for meeting the Lord on the Lord's Day and a vitally important part of his preparation for the Christian life in this world and the Kingdom to come. Since our first Great Lent in 2002, we have served the Vigil service on Saturday nights.

The All-night Vigil is a "long" service, consisting of Vespers, Matins, and the First Hour (which we omit). In its abbreviated parish form, it typically lasts about two hours. Some may balk at spending this time in church, especially when they will be attending the Divine Liturgy the next morning. But since we spend most of our time in the world caught up in the cares of earthly life, we must concede that it takes us some time "lay aside all earthly cares", to prepare ourselves for an encounter with the Living God in the Holy Mysteries, and to be able come into God's presence with undistracted attention. As we stand during the Vigil on Saturday night, we have a precious opportunity for clearing our minds, cleansing our hearts, and turning our attention to God after all the distractions of the week to help prepare ourselves to discern the Lord's Body and Blood at Liturgy. It takes time to remove the "din" of life from our consciousness so we are able to open ourselves to God and give ourselves fully to corporate worship. The Vigil offers us this possibility.

Like the athlete for his sport, the Christian must train for spiritual life. Athletic success and glory does not happen automatically, and it often involves great struggle and sacrifice. But, for the athlete, the rewards are far greater than any inconveniences or suffering. So it is in the spiritual life: 'no pain, no gain.' To put off the old man and to put on Christ takes some effort on our part as we die to ourselves and learn to submit ourselves to God's will. As St. Paul put it, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us" (Romans 5:18). The small suffering and inconvenience of the Vigil helps to train us for participation in God's glory.

The Vigil typifies the long, watchful waiting of the normal Christian life for the Coming of Christ. The neglect of the Vigil helps explain the spiritual collapse of modern man, who makes no time to be still before his Creator and wants everything *now*. Renewal of Christian life in today's world requires resisting earthly temptations, entertainments, and the world's noise which fills our minds with a constant din of distraction, recovering inner stillness, and rediscovering the life of prayer in the Church. The pagan world reserves Saturday night for its pleasures. The Christian world reserves Saturday night for its Vigil of prayer. There is a sharp distinction between this world as elusive pleasure and

the Kingdom of God as the joyful Presence of the Lord.

If you truly desire to advance in the Christian life, learn to “watch and pray” as part of the Church militant and make the Vigil a regular part of your preparation for meeting Christ the Lord in Holy Communion and when He comes again in glory.

On Standing Reverently in Church

One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in His holy temple. *Psalm 26:4*

In going to church, think that thou art going to the house of the King of Heaven, where with fear and joy one ought to stand as in heaven before the King of Heaven. While standing in church, do not look around to the sides and do not look at how someone is standing and praying, lest thou be condemned with the Pharisee, since thou didst not come to judge others, but to ask for mercy for thyself from God the Judge and Knower of hearts. Gaze with compunction toward the altar alone, where the holy sacrifice is offered. More than anything else, beware of laughter and conversations, for whoever laughs or converses while standing in church does not render honor to the holy place and tempts others and prevents others from praying. *St. Tikhon of Zadonsk*

Stand in church silently, peacefully, quietly, as, for example, the candles lit by you stand before the icons: They do not move from place to place, they do not make noise, they burn with a flame that strives not below, not to the side, but above, to heaven. So should you also stand, striving with hearts aflame with love and prayer toward God.

Bishop Anthony of Smolensk

Imagine that some one, while standing before a king and conversing with him, at the summons of a servant like unto himself leaves the king and begins to converse with that servant; such also is he who engages in conversation and gives himself over to distraction during the divine service. *St. Ephrem Syrian*

From the Parish Bylaws

ARTICLE IV The Parish Meeting

Section 1 Authority

The Parish Meeting is the highest legislative, judicial and administrative authority of the Parish as a corporation. All members (as in Article III, Section 1) who have been members of the Parish for a period of six months and are at least eighteen years old may attend and vote at the Parish Meeting.

Section 2 Place of the Parish Meeting

The Parish Meeting must be held on Parish premises.

Section 3 Periodicity of the Parish Meeting

The Parish Meeting is held annually, on a determined Sunday of the year, following the celebration of the Divine Liturgy.

Section 4 Notice of the Parish Meeting

Notice of the annual Parish Meeting shall be given by the rector or priest-in-charge from the ambon at the Divine Liturgy on the three consecutive Sundays preceding

the date of the meeting. Notice must also be made at least once in written form, in a special circular or in the parish bulletin, mailed to all voting members of the Parish (*See Section 1, Article IV*).

Section 5 Competence of the Parish Meeting

Matters pertaining to the life of the Parish that may be discussed and acted upon at the Parish Meeting include:

a) the approval of the annual operating budget submitted by the Parish Council (Article X) or by a special budget committee;

b) the election of the Parish Council members, the lay delegate to the Diocesan Assembly, and the lay delegate to the All-American Council, if the latter is to be convened in the current year.

c) hearing and approving of annual or special reports by committees and parish organizations.

d) decisions on matters concerning the purchase, improvement or sale of real property, investment of Parish funds (other than in savings accounts), and the use of Parish funds for loans for any purpose;

e) proposal of resolutions to the Diocesan Assembly, these, if any, to be submitted to the bishop six months prior to the date of the Assembly.

Section 6 Special Parish Meetings

In addition to the annual Parish Meeting, Special Parish Meetings may be convoked by the bishop, the rector or priest-in-charge, or by the Parish Council, with the approval of the rector or priest-in-charge. Voting members of the Parish may petition the rector and the Parish Council to convoke a Special Parish Meeting, such petition requiring the signatures of two thirds of the total number of members.

Special Parish Meetings are called to discuss and act upon specific matters, and no other matter may be discussed at such meetings.

Section 7 The Quorum for the Annual Parish Meeting and the Special Parish Meetings

The quorum for the annual Parish Meeting shall be no less than 50% of the number of voting members of the Parish.

Section 8 Voting

A simple majority vote by those voting members in attendance at the Parish Meeting, Annual or Special, shall be decisive on all matters within the competence of the meeting.

Section 9 The Presiding Officer

The rector or the priest-in-charge is the presiding officer of the Parish Meeting, Annual or Special. The warden may also chair parts of the meeting sessions, in accordance with a prior agreement reached between him and the rector and the Parish Council.

Section 10 Confirmation of Minutes

A copy of the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting or of a Special Parish Meeting, signed by the rector or priest-in-charge and the warden, shall be sent to the bishop, through the district dean, for confirmation. All decisions and resolutions in those minutes become effective upon receipt of such confirmation.

Upcoming Events 2010

26 September: Annual Meeting, 11:30 a.m.

15 November: Pan-Orthodox Unction Service at SS. Constantine & Helen, 7:00 p.m.

22 December, Wednesday: Metropolitan Jonah visits at Vespers.

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!