

# The Confessor's Tongue for October 3, 2010

19<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost: St. Dionysius the Areopagite

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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## The Sayings of St. Anthony the Great

*They said that a certain old man asked God to let him see the Fathers [in heaven], and he saw them all except Abba Anthony. So he asked his guide, 'Where is Abba Anthony?' He told him in reply that in the place where God is, there Anthony would be.*  
Saying 28 *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*

*Commentary:* Of course God is omnipresent, is everywhere, so what can this mean? How can there be places where God is and is not? God is everywhere, yet we do not everywhere perceive Him. Anthony apparently had reached the place where he could perceive God at all times, in all places; and that perception of God and His glory is so sweet to the soul of man that he desires nothing else, for nothing else compares to it

Let us take another tack towards this matter. There is a 'place' where God's presence and glory are fully manifested, so far as man can bear it, but not all attain that place. Many are saved in the end, though given Christ's words about the "narrow way" that leads to life and "few there be that find it", it seems that they are considerably fewer than those who take the broad path to destruction. But among those saved, the degree of glory, the degree of rewards, and the degree of closeness to God varies, depending on how they prepared ourselves in this life. Anthony prepared himself well and so was granted to be in God's manifest presence always ('in the place where God is'); others were saved but did not fully enjoy what Anthony did.

The matter comes down to how much we love God ("if ye love Me, keep My commandments"). To the degree of our love will be our degree of our experience of Him. *Fr. Justin Frederick*

## Highlights of the Parish Annual Meeting

At the annual meeting this past Sunday, the parish passed a budget for 2010-11, appointed an audit committee to review the parish's financial books over the next year, and, after discussing options for gaining more space for worship and ministry, passed a motion that we develop a plan for a more modest temple in the back yard to take to the city for approval and to repair our existing building for long-term use as our parish hall. Both the new Mission Council and the Strategic Planning Committee will be working on these matters in the months ahead. Please pray that God grant us His wisdom on how to proceed and provision to carry it out, and perhaps you, too, will wish to participate in the meetings, which are generally open to all.

## Parish History: A Call for Memories

We celebrate our ten-year anniversary next July. A part of a good celebration would be to write a

parish history to preserve for posterity. As all of us are part of those first ten years, all of us have something to contribute. Any number of approaches may be fruitful. Write about your first impressions, or what the parish has meant to you. Write about a memorable event, or a memorable person. Record a humorous story. Or perhaps you would be able to serve as an editor to collect materials, or a report who would interview those not inclined or unable to write. Perhaps you have pictures that should be part of the historical record. If this is ever to be done, it needs to be done soon, or we'll begin to lose material. Please see Fr. Justin if you'd like to contribute in any way.

## Keeping the Sabbath Day Holy

*The question of how the Fourth of the Ten Commandments, to keep the Sabbath, applies to Orthodox Christians came up at our Old Testament Class this past Friday. The Sabbath, of course, is not Sunday, but Saturday, the seventh day of the week. Christians have replaced Saturday with Sunday*

*God appointed the Sabbath for two reasons. First, it is part of the order of creation: in six days God created and on the seventh, He rested. The other reason was the remembrance of Israel's deliverance from slavery in Egypt: Israel was to keep the Sabbath, remembering the former slavery (Deuteronomy 5:12-15). In a world that works twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, a day of rest from the slavery of labor is needed. We disregard the command to our own hurt and to the oppression of our fellow man. In the Law, the Sabbath applied not only to the Hebrews, but also to all non-Hebrew slaves and animals, and even the land every seventh year was to rest.*

In his *Catechism* of 1839, St. Philaret, Metropolitan of Moscow treats the fourth commandment to keep the Sabbath.

Q. Is the Sabbath kept in the Christian Church?

A. It is not kept, strictly speaking, as a holy day; but still in memory of the creation of the world, and in continuation of its original observance, it is distinguished from the other days of the week by a relaxation of the rule for fasting.

Q. How, then, does the Christian Church obey the fourth commandment?

A. She still to every six days keeps a seventh, only not on the last of the seven days, which is the Sabbath, but the first day in every week, which is the Day of Resurrection, or Lord's Day.

Q. Is there not yet something more to be understood under the name of seventh day, or Sabbath?

A. As in the Church of the Old Testament, the name Sabbath was understood to include divers other days appointed like the Sabbath for festivals or fasts, as the festival of the Passover, and the Day of Atonement, so likewise are we now in the Christian Church bound to keep, besides the Lord's Day,

certain others also [*Pascha and the 12 Great Feasts*], which have been appointed as festivals to the glory of God and the honor of the Blessed Virgin and other saints, or as days of fasting.

Q. What particular things is it fit to do on holy days?

A. First, to go to church, for the public worship, and for instruction in the Word of God; secondly, when at home, to give ourselves to prayer and reading, or edifying conversation; thirdly, to dedicate to God a portion of our means, expending it on the necessities of the Church and her ministers, and in alms to the poor, to visit the sick and prisoners, and to do other works of Christian charity.

*The following is taken from From How to Live a Holy Life, by Met. Gregory of St. Petersburg (+1860).*

Sundays should be spend differently from other days of the week. Because all of us constantly benefit from God's many and various blessings, and constantly feel the need for new blessings, all of us are obliged by the word of God and the demand of our own consciences to raise our minds and hearts to the Lord God in the deepest reverence toward Him, in complete devotion to Him, and in the most profound gratitude and prayer. The holy King David said, "Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord"; "His praise shall continually be in my mouth"; and the meditation of my heart shall be before Thee for ever."

But just as the greater part of the human race still stands far below this perfection, the Lord God Himself, in order to raise it up little by little to this perfection, willed to set aside one day out of each week so that all of us would dedicate this day exclusively to the Lord God, putting aside on that day all activities that are more or less necessary to maintain our earthly life. In the Old Testament, this day was Saturday, and in the New, Sunday.

The Lord God granted us six days out of every week to carry out business necessary for our earthly life, but the seventh day—only one day—he appointed...not for rest in general, but for *holy* rest, rest for the Lord God, or for the glory of the Lord God.

Now it is in itself obvious how we should spend, or rather dedicate or celebrate, Sunday. St. John Chrysostom says, "It was the Lord's good will to prescribe that we dedicate one day in the weekly cycle to spiritual matters." And in the book of Acts, we see that the original members of the Christ's Church gathered on Sundays for the breaking of bread, and listened to Christ's teachings.

Thus, the *first* obligation that Sunday imposes on each of us is to set aside all the business that we need to engage in during the six days of the week to support our earthly lives. Fulfillment of this obligation is made the easier because the Lord God gave us six days out of every week to obtain what is necessary to maintain our earthly, physical lives. Besides, all works of charity, even though they might only effect maintenance of our earthly lives, are not

prohibited even on the seventh day, Sunday, and are even ordained as an obligation, as we see from the example and teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself (Matthew 12:11-12).

The *second* obligation, which Sunday imposes even more strictly on all of us, is to turn away from all impious acts that drive from our souls remembrance of the Lord God, reverence towards Him, devotion to Him, gratitude and a prayerful disposition of soul toward Him, to wit: all iniquitous works, and also all unedifying reading, all unedifying conversations, unedifying idleness and various games during which our souls often not only lose remembrance of the Lord God, but forget even themselves, give themselves up to a spirit of impiety, and are carried away by delights, of which the undoubted end after death is bitter weeping and wailing (Luke 6:25).

The *third* obligation that the day of Resurrection places on us is, as is apparent from the example of the first Christians, attendance at the Sunday divine services, especially the Divine Liturgy. For among us here is not a single person on whom the Lord God has not bestowed His blessings at every moment and who could live even one minute without His blessings. For all our divine services consist in nothing else but remembrance of God's various blessings and in the expression of our reverence before the Lord God, our devotion to the Lord God, our grateful feelings toward Him, and our fervent prayer that His blessings upon us will continue. Only people with the most hardened, spiritually frozen, and dead hearts can not deeply feel and zealously fulfill the obligation for us to attend the divine services, especially the Liturgy on Sundays. May the Lord God deliver all of us from this vile condition of soul.

The most reliable way to assure that our reverence towards the Lord God, our devotion, our gratitude, and our prayers to Him may become more alive, more sincere, more continuous, and stronger is to examine the causes of the Lord God's establishing the Sabbath in the Old Testament and Sunday in the New Testament. We must examine God's creation, and in it God's almightiness, His wisdom, and His goodness, and even more, God's ineffable love, shown to the human race by the passion and death of Jesus Christ, whereby He freed the human race from sin and death. And this is the *fourth* obligation that the Day of Resurrection, Sunday, imposes on us.

*This is what the Church teaches. I cannot say I have done a good joy in following it; it is an area for growth. In the OT Prophets, it is Israel's sin of not keeping the Sabbath that is mentioned more than any other, except idolatry. As the Sabbath began at sundown, I submit that ours begins at sundown Saturday with Vigil in preparation for Liturgy Sunday morning. If we were to cease our everyday business Saturday evening, attend Vigil, keep a quiet, holy evening, prepare for Liturgy, and keep few holy hours after Liturgy in the ways detailed above, we'd be well on our way to keeping the command and have much greater spiritual health than we do. Fr. Justin*

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!