

# The Confessor's Tongue for December 11, A. D. 2011

Twenty-Sixth Sunday After Pentecost: Sunday of the Forefathers

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.

## December 11: Sunday of the Forefathers

The Sunday of the Holy Forefathers occurs between the 11th and the 17th of December. This Sunday commemorates all the ancestors of the people of God, the holy patriarchs living up to the law, given on Sinai, and under the law, - from Adam to Joseph the Betrothed; together with them are commemorated «those who preached Christ» the holy prophets - from Samuel to Zechariah and to John the Baptist, and all the Old Testament righteous men, who were righteous in the faith in the coming of the Messiah. Especially in the service for this day are praised "the pious youths" Ananias, Azarias, and Misael, who "in faith were thrown into the fiery furnace" and "who in the middle of the flames were cooled by the dew of the Spirit and who walked about rejoicing, are mystically a prototype of the Trinity and the incarnation of Christ" from the Virgin, who after giving birth remained a virgin. With these holy youths are commemorated also "the righteous Daniel and the wonderful prophets", who, clearly revealing the divine second coming, saw Christ, "coming to all nations as Judge", and who, "your mind illumined by divine radiance", "that clearly the Virgin would give birth represented in mystical images".

"Today as we celebrate the Forefathers' memory", the holy Church exclaims: "let us offer praise to the fathers, who shone forth before and during the law, with righteous minds they served the Lord and Master who shone forth from the Virgin, now they delight in the unending light." "Let us offer songs of praise to the prophets of God". "Let us honor the holy youths, for they quenched the flaming furnace, together with the prophet Daniel, and all the righteous ones who shone forth before the law, together with those who served the Master under the law." By accomplishing "now the honor of the memory of the forefathers", the holy Church edifies us, that we, in the expectation of the great and light-bearing day of the Nativity of Christ, is reflected by the faith and life of the holy Forefathers and, through them, has prepared ourselves, by their example, to the worthy meeting of the Lord Who came from Heaven, who has adorned their soul with virtues beforehand to be ready for the great and light-bearing day of the Nativity of our Savior worthily to meet Him with the lamp of faith and with the oil of charitable deeds, with the firm hope of life everlasting, with the light of both the joyful face of cleanliness and purity.

On this day, the holy Church appoints the Gospel reading about those invited to a lord's supper but then at the last minute declined to come, warning us, that we can be distracted from worthily meeting the Lord by permitting the predominance of flesh over spirit, the attachment to the terrestrial, the blinding by gleam of worldly goods, the predilection  
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for vanity, the unwillingness to deny one's self-love and pride everyday, the enslavement to passions and covetousness. The Epistle reading directly commands us to destroy our earthly members: fornication, impurity, passion, evil lust and cupidity, to lay aside anger, evil, blaspheming, slander, lies, and in general to take off the old man and put on the new in the image of the Creator (Col. 3:4-11).

*V. Bulgakov, Handbook for Church Servers. Translated by Archpriest Eugene D. Tarris © All rights reserved.*

## The Commandments of Christ

*"If you love Me, you will keep my commandments."*

*"Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."  
Matthew 4:19*

Christ follows up His command to us to repent with a call to follow Him. On the shore of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus put Peter and Andrew on the spot. They had met Him at Jordan when John had baptized Christ, and they had initially followed Him then. But here is the decisive decision: to lay aside their nets, their boats, and their miraculous catch (Luke 5) to follow Jesus, to be with Him, to do what He did and to go where He went. Both Peter and Andrew followed Christ even to death by crucifixion.

Have we truly become followers of Christ? Are we present where He is present? Do we love to spend time with Him? Do we strive to follow His will and program for the life that He gave us rather than one we have devised or dreamed for ourselves? Do we love His house and its beauty and frequent it? Do we seek to know Him, not just know about Him, with all our heart?

Following Christ has a result: He makes us fishers of men. Too often we think that we are the ones who have to make ourselves fishers of men. But becoming one who can catch souls for Christ is accomplished by following Christ, not by seminars and special classes. As we spend time with Him, as we put off the old man and put on Christ, as we seek to do His will as we come to know it, and as we make ourselves available to Him to use for His purposes, He will make us winners of souls. As we get to know Him and grow to love him more deeply, as we experience His presence in our lives, we shall become more capable of drawing others to Him through the power and presence of His Spirit in us. This is why St. Seraphim said, "Acquire a [truly] peaceful spirit, and a thousand others around you will be saved."

To follow Christ means to leave behind what we were before we met Him and to become a new creation in accordance with His purpose and will by the power of His Spirit operating in us. The simple fishermen became powerful Apostles and shakers of the world through following Christ.

Jesus said, "If any man will come after me, let him

deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." To follow him requires the daily effort to reject all sinful desires, so say 'no' to that which is in us which is not of God, to carry the cross we undertook at baptism, and to follow Him in the path of His commandments that we may learn to be guided and governed by His Spirit. May we all become true followers of Christ. *Fr. Justin Frederick*

### On the Profit in Reading the Scriptures

*St. John Chrysostom*

For, tell me, who of you that stand here, if he were required, could repeat one Psalm, or any other portion of the Divine Scriptures? There is not one.

And it is not this only that is the grievous thing, but that while ye are become so backward with respect to things spiritual, yet in regard of what belongs to Satan ye are more vehement than fire. Thus should any one be minded to ask of you songs of devils and impure effeminate melodies, he will find many that know these perfectly, and repeat them with much pleasure.

But what is the answer to these charges? "I am not," you will say, "one of the monks, but I have both a wife and children, and the care of a household." Why, this is what hath ruined all, your supposing that the reading of the divine Scriptures appertains to [monks] only, when ye need it much more than they. For the that dwell in the world, and each day receive wounds, these have the most need of medicines. So that it is far worse than not reading, to account the thing even "superfluous:" for these are the words of diabolical invention. Hear ye not Paul saying, "that all these things are written for our admonition?"....

For if thou wouldest learn how great is the profit of the Scriptures, examine thyself, what thou becomest by hearing Psalms, and what by listening to a song of Satan; and how thou art disposed when standing in a Church, and how when sitting in a theatre; and thou wilt see that great is the difference between this soul and that, although both be one. Therefore Paul said, "Evil communications corrupt good manners." For this cause we have need continually of those songs, which serve as charms from the Spirit. Yes, for this it is whereby we excel the irrational creatures, since with respect to all other things, we are even exceedingly inferior to them.

### Something New: Before Our Services

One of our challenges in our private prayer is to make it more than the mere recitation of words. One of our challenges in public worship is to keep our minds from wandering. Both of these challenges may be overcome by the use of the Jesus Prayer, the point of which to get our prayer and worship out of our heads and into our hearts.

At St. John of San Francisco Monastery in Manton, California, the Jesus Prayer is practiced communally before services start. About ten minutes before the service, the brothers gather in the church

and sit (or stand). One person starts everyone off by saying the Jesus Prayer aloud unhurriedly about twenty times. Then each person continues silently on his own, seeking to enter into his heart to find the Kingdom of God that is within each baptized person.

I'd like to try this here at St. Maximus beginning this week. If you arrive and the service has not started, come in, venerate the icons, take a seat, and pray the Jesus Prayer silently until the service begins. Whenever possible, I or someone I designate, will start the session by praying the prayer aloud a few times. Otherwise, just start it on your own.

What this means, of course, that conversation before services should be kept to the narthex, the hall, and the front porch and not brought into the church.

### Special Offering

Several years ago, the mission council, thinking that the priest was not adequately compensated, appointed that a special collection be taken once a month as a gift and love offering for the priest.

Since then, then need that occasioned this motion has declined, and that special offering has ceased with this fiscal year.

The priest and his family thank you for the love and generosity you have expressed to us through that special offering over the past few years!

### December Namedays

6 Aleksandr Nicholas Sancer (St. Nicholas)

13 Lucia Lydia Sancer

11-17 Sunday of Holy Forefathers Adam Betz (Adam the First Created) Reader Benjamin (Patriarch Benjamin), Joseph (Derek) Sancer (Righteous Joseph the Comely)

31 Melanie Betz (Ven Melania of Rome)

### December Birthdays

5 Alexander Sancer

7 Nancy Saito

11 Lydia Sancer

16 Emmauel Lyda (05)

28 Nathan Brouillette

31 Leah Cole

### Upcoming Events 2011-2012

20 December: Tuesday, 7:00 p.m. Unction.

25 December: Nativity of our Lord in the Flesh

20-21 January: Feast of St. Maximus: Vigil 7:00 p.m., Liturgy 9:00 a.m., meal to follow.

26 February: Forgiveness Sunday (all parishioners are expected to attend) Great Lent Begins

15 April: Pascha

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!