

The Confessor's Tongue for August 5, A. D. 2012

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost: Martyr Eusignius, Righteous Nonna

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.

August 5: Martyr Eusignius

He was a soldier under the Emperor Maximian, the Emperor Constantine the Great, and Constantine's sons, and was present for the martyrdom of the holy martyr Basiliscus (May 22). He saw many angels and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself as He received the soul of this holy martyr from the angel's hands. Eusignius was a general under Constantine and saw the Cross that appeared to the Emperor. Spending a full sixty years in military service, he withdrew from it in the time of Constantine's sons and went to Antioch, his home town. There he lived a godly life of fasting, prayer, and good works. In the time of Julian the Apostate, two men at variance in the street called him to judge between them. He adjudged right to the righteous, at which the one at fault became enraged and went to the Emperor and denounced Eusignius as a Christian. The Emperor summoned him to trial, at which he fiercely denounced the Emperor for his apostasy from the Faith and rebuked him by citing the shining example of the great Constantine. The proud Julian ordered that he be beheaded. Eusignius suffered in great old age (110), in the year 362, and sent to the Kingdom of heaven. *From the Prologue*

August 6: Holy Transfiguration

One of the Twelve Great Feasts, the Transfiguration of Our Lord primarily proclaims and glorifies Christ's Divinity. On the mountain with Peter, James, and John, Christ was transfigured before them, shining brighter than the sun and revealing His divinity so far as His disciples could bear it without being consumed. Because Christ's Divinity is made manifest, the feast has also been called "the second Theophany."

Traditionally, the Transfiguration is considered to have taken place forty days before the Crucifixion. The feast was originally appointed for February, falling during the Great Fast, but since the joyfulness of feast was not in keeping with the lenten spirit of penitence and fasting, it was transferred to August 6 to be observed forty days before the Feast of the Elevation of the Holy Cross.

Jesus Christ was fully God and fully man in one person, but He appeared to men who looked only on the external appearance to be only a man, for His Divinity was veiled except to the eye of faith. On Mt. Tabor, the veil was removed, and His Divine glory shone forth. It is the same at the weekly Eucharist at which Christ comes to us in the transformed bread and wine. We see bread and wine, just as the disciples and the people of Israel saw a man; but an infinitely greater reality is present to be perceived by the eyes of faith, the very Body and Blood of our Lord, which is our true food and our healing, and for us

constitutes "the sacrament of transfiguration." By this mystery, we ourselves are transformed to become partakers of the Divine Nature.

Thus this Feast not only reveals Christ's Divinity, wrapped in humanity, it also reveals divinized human nature. Christ took our full human nature to transform it, to make us by grace what He is by nature. The Transfiguration reveals what we shall be when we no longer fall short of the glory of God, when we are glorified, or as St. John says, "When we see Him, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

The Kontakion of the Feast makes another point: by seeing Christ for who He truly was, the disciples would have no doubt when Jesus was crucified that He died voluntarily, not by compulsion. He chose to lay down His life; it was not taken from Him by force. Without this revelation, they and we might be tempted to think of Jesus as a weak man whose life was unjustly taken from Him by a corrupt state. Jesus Himself is emphatic on this point: "I lay My life down for the sheep . . . I lay down My life that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." (John 10: 15-18)

It is customary to bless summer fruits at the feast. You are encouraged to bring fresh fruits to be blessed at the end of Vigil and Liturgy.

The Feast is celebrated for eight days through its Leavetaking August 13. We sing or say the Troparion and Kontakion at meals and during our usual prayers during this time.

Troparion, Tone 7

Thou wast transfigured upon the mountain, O Christ God, / showing Thy glory to Thy disciples as far as they could bear it. / Through the prayers of the Theotokos, / make Thine everlasting light shine also upon us sinners. / O Giver of Light, glory to Thee!

Kontakion, Tone 7

Upon the mountain wast Thou transfigured, O Christ God, / and Thy disciples beheld Thy glory as far as they could see it; / so that when they would behold Thee crucified, / they would understand that Thy suffering was voluntary, / and would proclaim to the world / that Thou art truly the Radiance of the Father.

St. Maximus on Transfiguration

The Lord does not always appear in glory to all who stand before Him. To beginners He appears in the form of a servant; to those able to follow Him as He climbs the mountain of His transfiguration He appears in the form of God, the form in which He existed before the world came to be. It is therefore possible for the same Lord not to appear in the same way to all who stand before Him, but to appear to

some in one way and to others in another way, according to the measure of faith.

Dormition Fast: Abstain from meat, dairy, fish, wine, oil. For modifications see parish calendar.

Prayers After Communion

The prayers before and after Holy Communion teach us much about the Mystery, how we should approach it, and what we should expect from it. We'll offer commentary on some of the prayers to help us be more aware of what we are doing when we partake.

“Let thy holy Body, O Lord Jesus Christ, our God, be unto me for eternal life, and Thy precious Blood unto forgiveness of sins. And let this Eucharist be unto me for joy, health, and gladness. And in thy fearful second coming, make me, a sinner, worthy to stand at the right hand of Thy glory, through the intercessions of Thine immaculate Mother and of all Thy saints. Amen.”

This fourth prayer of thanksgiving after Holy Communion is the shortest, so we'll begin with it. In it, we ask that our partaking of Christ's Body may be a means of eternal life for us. Partaking of man's true food, Christ's Body, the Bread which comes down from Heaven, imparts true life to man. Partaking of Christ's blood, man's true drink, is the ultimate means of the forgiveness of man's sins. As it is written, “Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins.” Through Holy Communion, Christ's precious Blood is applied to our life to cleanse of from sin. Thus in Communion is fulfilled and completed what takes place in Confession.

Partaking of the Holy Mysteries brings man three things: joy, health, and gladness. Being ill and diseased from the fall and from wrong choices, man needs healing and restoration to health. The early Fathers referred to the Eucharist as the ‘medicine of immortality’, the cure to death and the remedy that restores man to health. Joy and gladness are close to being synonyms. Joy is “an emotion excited by the acquisition of good, the gratification or possessing of what we love or desire.” Gladness may be defined as “wearing and appearance of joy, the condition of being affected with pleasure or moderate joy”. Joy and gladness are found together in Psalm 50 in the context of confession and repentance: “Thou shalt make me to hear joy and gladness”; here David also prays “restore unto me the joy of my salvation.” Joy and gladness should result from restoration to health. They also naturally flow from perceiving Christ's coming to the soul in the Holy Mysteries and taking up His abode in the temple within. In Nehemiah (8:10) it is said, “The joy of the Lord is your strength.” Joy and gladness are the proper condition of the Christian experiencing forgiveness and the presence of God in the midst of the sorrows of life, and through partaking of the Holy Mysteries, he expects

God to restore to him the joy of his salvation of which he has compromised by his sins.

The prayer keeps man's end in sight, the coming of judgment. It recognizes that when Christ comes in glory, every eye shall see Him as He is—the veil will be removed, and that glory will either burn or bring joy. Man needs to be changed from his sinful condition and prepared to enter the fire of God's glory without being burned. Such is the condition of those on “the right hand”, those numbered with the sheep and not with the goats on the left.

The prayer shows that these results of communing are not automatic. It is possible to commune without receiving these benefits. To receive these benefits and to discern Christ's Body and Blood in the Holy Mysteries requires attentive preparation. A good, thorough, compunctionate Confession cleanses the heart from its accumulation of defiling sin and renders it again sensitive to spiritual reality. Fasting from midnight from food and drink establishes the property priority of spiritual food before physical and creates hunger for righteousness. Attentive prayer with feeling lays essential requests before God and sets the proper hope-filled expectations for participation in the Mysteries. And to help, the Christian has the prayers of the Theotokos and all the saints. *Fr. Justin*

Psalter Prayer after the 19th Kathisma

O Master Christ God, who hast healed my passions by Thy Passion and hast cured my wounds by Thy Wounds, grant tears of remorse unto me who have sinned greatly against Thee. Prepare for my body some of the fragrance of Thy life-creating Body, and sweeten the bitterness of my soul by Thy precious Blood, wherewith vouchsafe me, who doth resist Thee, to drink. Raise aloft to Thee my mind which is drawn downwards, and lead it up from the depths of destruction, for I have no repentance, I have no remorse, I have no tears of comfort which lead children to their inheritance. I have been darkened in mind amid the passions of life, and am unable to lift up mine eyes to Thee in my pain; I cannot warm myself with tears of love for Thee. Yet, O Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, Treasury of blessings, grant me complete repentance and a heart diligent in searching for Thee. Grant me Thy grace, and renew in me the lineaments of Thine image. I have forsaken Thee; do not forsake me! Come Thou in search of me, and lead me up to Thy green pasture, and number me among the sheep of Thy chosen flock. Feed me with them on the grass of Thy divine mysteries, through the prayers of Thy most pure Mother and of all Thy saints. *Amen.*

Upcoming Events 2012

1-14 August: Dormition Fast
6 August: Holy Transfiguration
3 September: Labor Day Picnic
30 September: St. Maximus Annual Meeting

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!