

The Confessor's Tongue for October 21, A. D. 2012

20th Sunday after Pentecost: Venerable Hilarion the Great

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.

Episcopal Search Report

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ: Faithful of the DOS, Christ is in our midst!

The Synod of the OCA did not vet any potential episcopal candidates during its meetings which concluded last week, this obviously includes Fr. Gerasim. Thus we are still in a holding pattern relative to a possible DOS Special Assembly. In further developments, the deans, acting as a nominating group within the Episcopal Search Committee, have received cv's from several additional potential candidates. Two of these potential candidates are being interviewed in the coming week. It is my hope that sometime after the AAC in Parma there will be a vetting of episcopal candidates by the Synod of the OCA, and that this will give us a way forward. Thus it is still possible that we might have a DOS Special Assembly in the context of our 2013 DOS Pastoral Conference in Atlanta, GA, and certainly no later than our regularly scheduled 2013 DOS Assembly in late July.

With this in mind and for your planning more generally for 2013, please mark your calendars with the following dates of our regularly scheduled meetings: 2013 DOS Pastoral Conference, Atlanta, GA, Feb 4 - 8, 2013 and the DOS Assembly, Jacksonville, FL (tentative), July 22 - 26, 2013 (tentative).

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to bring them to my attention. In Christ, Fr. Marcus (Dated October 17, 2012)

The Path to Confession

Fr. Artemy Vladimirov

This is an excerpt from a book written to help children prepare for Confession but which also holds much benefit for adults who peruse it.

Laziness and Despondency

Our work continues, drawing the gaze of the reader further and further into the depths of his heart. How salutary is the field of repentance! Repentance isn't acquired without labor, but it will yield marvelous fruit. Have you heard the saying of the holy Psalter, "He who sows with tears will reap with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him"? The way to confession is thorny and sorrowful, but afterward, God will reward us with relief and peace! Sometimes it is very difficult to examine ourselves, dragging our known and unknown sins into God's light, but if we don't make up our minds to perform this operation now—and there aren't any operations without blood—if, instead, we allow our sins to sink in the Lethe of oblivion, won't time itself cure them? Unfortunately, time only cures bodily wounds. Sore that have wounded the soul bet remain unhealed by

confession eventually become incurable. That is why there is greater joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine men who imagine themselves to be righteous, and in their deceitful vanity think that they have no need to repent.

Friends, let us trample on the tail of self-love, false shame, sneakiness, and cunning. Let us repent deeply, without self-justification. By self-justification I mean making excuses for our sins. Remember that it was self-justification that finally caused Adam and Eve's fall and drove them from Paradise.

If they had repented in the simplicity of their hearts without making excuses, without shifting the blame, the All-merciful Lord would have forgiven them and cured their terrible wound. Let this also be a lesson for us. If we come to confession blaming only ourselves and calling sin 'sin'—God will acquit us. But if we engage in self-justification, slithering like slippery eels to lessen the seriousness of our sins, or laying them on others' shoulders, I'm afraid that the sacrament may condemn, rather than save, us. The Church is a spiritual hospital. Having come to it, don't go away from confession uncured because of your lack of faith, sincerity, and selflessness!

So now we see before us a well-armed citadel—a stronghold of laziness and despondency. Calling on the saving grace of the All-powerful Holy Spirit, let us break open the locks, tear out the bolts and bars, beat down the doors, and seize the fortress, exposing all the secret intrigues and machinations of the demons who plot to imprison us in this terrible dungeon!

Among pious people in old Russia, laziness was purposely called the mother of all vices. The demons call here "Mother Laziness", and seeing an idler or a loafer, they pounce on him by the thousands, while the person who loves to labor is tempted by only one. Laziness is an offense against God's commandment: "Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work," for God also foretold to Adam, "In the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat thy bread."

Forgive us, Merciful Lord, for avoiding diligent labor, for not fulfilling our duties of service and study! We repent: be merciful to us sinners!

Everything is dull and uninspiring to a lazy man. The colors of God's world fade, and he finds his whole life dismal and unsatisfying. The bread he heats isn't to his liking, and the light doesn't suit his mood. Has any of us been forced to retreat before the onslaught of the vice of idleness?

Forgive us, Merciful Lord!

You can't rely on a lazy person: he has no sense of responsibility. He doesn't do anything on time, he is late everywhere. He doesn't fulfill requests as he should; he lets people down and tempts them badly by making them upset.

Forgive us, Merciful Lord!

“Water doesn’t flow under a rock,” says the wise Russian proverb. The lazy person irretrievably loses the minutes, hours, days, months, and years that are given to him for repentance, to struggle with passions, to strive for spiritual perfection, and to do good works. Eternity awaits us, as well as the righteous judgment of Christ the Sovereign Lord, but a lazy man doesn’t remember this.

Forgive us, Merciful Lord!

Truly, on Christ’s fearful day of judgment, each of us will either be crowned by the Lord as a “good and faithful servant” or will fall into eternal disgrace because we exchanged faith, hope, and love for laziness. Will victory or defeat await us there?

Forgive us, Merciful Lord!

The negligent and idle become ill with the contagious disease of despondency, that is, hopelessness, or, as modern people sometimes call it, “depression.” We aren’t speaking here about those unfortunate people who are mentally ill, but about those who self-indulgence has allowed them to needlessly fall into despondency. Life itself slips from the hands of the despondent man. He leaves jobs and duties unfinished and is often sad and moody without reason, making those around him unhappy as well. Despondent people withdraw into themselves and are indifferent to the sorrows and suffering of their neighbors.

Forgive us, Merciful Lord!

Despondent people are unattractive. The downcast gaze, the stooped shoulders, the crestfallen countenance—it’s all a temptation to others!

Forgive us, Merciful Lord!

Unrepented sin often gives rise to despondency. Sins which we haven’t confessed out of shame or forgetfulness can weigh down the heart with sorrow. If any of us has such a burden, let us gather our courage and tell it to Batushka in confession. God Himself awaits our repentance!

Forgive us, Merciful Lord!

The worst thing is that despondent people sin against our Lord, who, being inexpressibly good, almighty, and wise, helps and upholds us in everything, breathing into us the power of hope, trust, patience, and thankfulness. Have we been unfaithful to the Lord and ungrateful for His love for us by being despondent?

Forgive us, Merciful Lord!

Blinded by the self-love that underlies despondency, some people even begin to doubt God’s mercy. They grumble at Providence and fall into an abyss of despair and unbelief.

Forgive us, Merciful Lord!

To tell the truth, I would very much like to end this dismal little page quickly, but duty impels me to tell a little more about these widespread sins.

Lazy children often suffer from terrible impatience while working in class or doing their homework. They lack perseverance and diligence;

they can’t be made to work even five minutes for their own benefit!

Forgive us, Merciful Lord!

Miserable children who yield to the spirit of laziness can’t sit still during class: they incessantly fidget, scratch themselves, and tap their feet on the floor under their desk as if a little demons was poking them with an invisible pin—first from one side, then the other.

Forgive us, Merciful Lord!

Should it surprise us that their studies never come easy to them, that they memorize their lessons poorly and upset their parents with bad grades?

Forgive us, Merciful Lord!

But...as soon as their parents turn their backs, how many silly tricks and senseless pranks the negligent have time to play!

Very often the champion of bad grades also take first place in cheating on exams, and spend as much energy copying other people’s homework as it would take to do their own....

Forgive us, Merciful Lord!

As we finish our mournful recounting of the sins of idleness, let us add that lazy and despondent people have an irresistible desire for amusements.

Forgive us, Merciful Lord!

A terrible laziness and negligence in doing worthwhile things (attending church, fulfilling the prayer rule, doing our homework, practicing music, reading edifying books, cleaning the house, etc.) suddenly change into a suspicious liveliness and excitement when we find an empty and idle way to spend our time. Untimely trips to places of amusement—which are often kept secret from parents—senseless window shopping, hanging out at malls, gazing at everything around you, not to mention watching many hours of TV and video (the TV will catch it from us later!) , , , it’s sheer sin!

Forgive us, Merciful Lord!

While we chase after entertainment and pleasure, our short earthly life passes unnoticed, and laziness and despondency will go with the soul into eternity.

Forgive us, Merciful Lord!

I’ll only mention in passing how some teenagers become inexplicably cruel to people and animals and even step onto the path of crime—all because of idleness!

Lord, correct their lives, save them from even greater evil, turn them to repentance, and save us all from laziness,

Upcoming Events 2012

30 September: St. Maximus Annual Meeting

31 October: All Saints Party

21 January 2013: Feast of St. Maximus and the First Annual St. Maximus Memorial Lecture

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!