

The Confessor's Tongue for August 11, A. D. 2013

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost: Hieromartyr Euplus

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 11: Martyr Euplus

The Holy Martyr and Archdeacon Euplus suffered for the Christian faith in the year 304. He lived in the city of Catania (in Sicily) during the persecution of Christians under Diocletian. Being a deacon, Euplus fearlessly preached the Gospel, gathered the people around him and enlightened them by the light of the Christian faith. "Having mighty wisdom and unshakable thought", he "armed with faith" destroyed "the temple of idols" and converted many to Christ. The Christian physicians seized him in one hut during the time when he read the Gospel there. With the strength of convictions and severe tortures they tried to defeat the inflexibility of the deacon, but he, rejoicing, suffered "wounds and illnesses and all kinds of torment". Then he was led off to prison, tormented there with hunger and thirst and, finally, condemned to death. The good Euplus carried his Gospel hung around his neck, which he began to read at the place of execution. Praying to God, the martyr joyfully bent his head under the sword.

Treasurer's Report to DOS Assembly 2013

Four full calendar years have passed since the 2009 Assembly of the Diocese of the South passed a daring resolution: the parishes and missions of the diocese who were tithing to the diocese would no longer be required to remit on top of the tithe the OCA membership assessment (also known as "the headtax", then set at \$105 per head). This meant that, each year, the parishes and missions would annually keep an extra quarter of a million dollars (\$250,000) to fund their local ministries, but that the diocese would have to pay the OCA assessment out of its tithe income. The treasurer anticipated that the diocese's growing income from the tithe within three to four years would offset the loss from not collecting the assessment from the parishes and missions. And this is what has, in fact, happened: the combined tithe and assessment income of the DOS totalled \$701,880 in 2008; in 2012, the diocese received \$710,282 in income from the tithe alone.

The treasurer also anticipated that the cash flow from the newly inaugurated Church Savings Deposit Program would cover the shortfall in funding projected for three to four years following the liberation of the parishes and missions from paying the OCA Assessment. He was wrong—for no such shortfall in funding occurred! The diocese realized a positive cash flow from general fund operations throughout the period. (Refer to Sources & Uses of Funds Statement). This assembly should recognize, however, that HAD NOT the assessment been lifted from the parishes and missions and HAD NOT the Managed Debt Program (see below) been aggressively implemented, the growth in Tithe income that DID

occur within these economically depressed years would NOT have occurred.

The increase in Tithe income, then, made it possible for the cash flow from the Church Savings Deposit and Church Friendly Loans programs to be utilized fully to support church building programs, either in the form of direct loans or of assistance in making mortgage payments by way of the Managed Debt Program (MDP). What has happened is that every parish and mission in the Diocese that needed help with its mortgage payments was enrolled in this program by the end of 2011—a total of 14 parishes and missions. If you will look again at the Sources & Uses of Funds Statement, you will see that the mortgage creditors of the parishes and missions in the Managed Debt Program have been paid ahead of schedule to the tune of \$879,606 since the program began. What this means is that more parishes and missions can be enrolled in the program, funded either by cash flow from loans, deposits, and borrowings, or by cutting back on discretionary prepayments of existing debt.

There is only one hitch: for a parish or mission to enroll in the Managed Debt program, it must first be able to obtain outside financing, usually from a bank. Yet obtaining this outside financing has become increasingly difficult. Due to the growing number of church loan defaults across the country, bank lending standards for churches have been set at levels that few of our parishes and missions can meet. A banker recently said that the prevailing standard for church loans is a minimum of one hundred supporting households, which will qualify a church for a loan of up to \$400,000. Even the diocese's offer to guarantee the debt and help with payments has not been enough to persuade banks to make loans in some cases; it was enough in others, but even those victories were hard-won. Because the prevailing trend among the banks right now does not look favorable for churches, the need for the Church to fund more of its projects will increase beyond the \$853,323 that the DOS has loaned to its parishes and missions over the past five years to cover cost overruns and bank funding shortfalls. More such internal funding will be needed to meet the needs of the many small but growing missions and parishes of the DOS who do not own property or who occupy facilities which inhibit their development. Through its tried and proven Church Savings Deposit and Church Friendly Loan programs, the Diocese of the South of the Orthodox Church in America can look ahead with confidence that this particular challenge will be met, just as those of the past have always been met. *This report of the treasurer Milos Konjevich was re-written by a priest of the diocese with Milos's approval for better communication. All the reports referenced here may be found at dosoca.org under the 'DOS Conferences' tab.*

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Annual Meeting

The parish annual meeting will be held the last Sunday of September (29th). Adult members, age 18 and older, who are in good standing (have gone to Confession and Communion in the past year and have fulfilled their financial obligation to the parish—see Fr. Justin if you have any questions) are eligible to participate.

The main purpose of the meeting is to hear reports, ask questions, consider and pass an annual budget, and resolve any questions about the acquisition of property or the construction of buildings. The Uniform Parish Bylaws of the Diocese of the South describe all this. They may be found on the diocesan website, dosoca.org under the 'parish resources' tab.

If there is some item that you think should be discussed and acted upon at the annual meeting, please submit it this month to Fr. Justin, Subdeacon Anthony, or any member of the Mission Council: Mike Rehmet, George Rovny, Anna Stokes, Pam Ward, and Jordan Rovny. Any such items should be submitted before September 1.

From St. Ignatius Brianchaninov

For Success with the Jesus Prayer

An indispensable, essential condition of success in the prayer of Jesus is the keeping of His commandments. *Continue ye in My love* (John 15:9), He said to His disciples. What does it mean to remain in love for the Lord? It means to remember Him unceasingly, to remain unceasingly in union with Him in spirit. The former without the latter is dead, and it cannot even exist. *If ye keep my commandments ye shall abide in My love* (John 15:10). If we constantly observe the Lord's commandments, then by our spirit we shall be united with Him. Direct your actions, all your conduct, by the commandments of the Lord Jesus, direct your words by them, direct your thoughts and feelings by them, and you will get to know the virtues of Jesus. When you feel within yourself these virtues by the action of divine grace, and when you acquire through these feelings an experimental knowledge of them, you will be ravished by the incorruptible sweetness which is not of this world or age, a gentle but powerful sweetness that annihilates the heart's inclination for all earthly enjoyments and pleasures. Having been ravished by the virtues of Jesus, you will love Him, and you will yearn for Him to dwell in you completely. Without Him, you will regard yourself as perishing and lost. Then you will cry incessantly, cry from the fullness of conviction, with all your soul: *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner*. The prayer of Jesus will replace all other prayers for you. And all of them—what thought can they contain and express more comprehensive than the thought of the pardon of sinners by Jesus? Make your one aim in life the doing of the will of Jesus in every circumstance, however

important or trifling it may seem. *On the Prayer of Jesus*, pp. 98

The Dormition of the Theotokos

This feast, celebrated on August 15, is the last Great Feast of the liturgical year, which ends on August 31. The Dormition refers to the "falling asleep" or death of the Theotokos.

According to the ancient tradition of the Church, when it came time for the Theotokos to pass from this life to the Kingdom, an angel appeared to her three days before her death to inform her of this passage. The Virgin made preparations for her death, ascending the Mount of Olives to pray and give thanks to the Lord. Meanwhile, the Holy Apostles were miraculously carried away from where each had been to the house of the Theotokos. There, they prayed with her, and she committed her soul to her Son and God. The Apostles laid her body to rest in a tomb in the valley of Kedron near Gethsemane. By God's providence, Thomas arrived late, on the third day after her death. He was grieved that he had missed Mary's last moments, and so he wanted to see her one last time and venerate her body. The other Apostles took him to the tomb and had it opened. Inside, they discovered her body missing and the empty grave clothes. In this way, they realized she had already partaken of the Resurrection.

The focus of the Dormition Feast is the glorification of the Holy Theotokos in death and her participation in the Christ's Resurrection before the day of the general resurrection. This shows her to have reached man's goal of perfect life in union with God. The feast is also eschatological in that it points to the victory over death that every faithful believer will gain.

We celebrate the Dormition for 8 days, from August 15 through the Leave-taking August 23. We add the festal troparion and kontakion to our regular morning & evening prayers, in place of our usual prayers before and after meals, and when setting out to travel. It is customary to bless herbs and flowers on this feast.

Dormition Troparion, tone 1

In giving birth, thou didst preserve thy virginity, / in falling asleep thou didst not forsake the world, O Theotokos. Thou wast translated to life, O thou who art the Mother of Life, / and by thy prayers thou dost deliver our souls from death.

Dormition, Kontakion, tone 2

Neither the tomb nor death could hold the Theotokos, / who is constant in prayer and our firm hope in her intercessions. / For being the Mother of Life, she was translated to life / by the One who dwelt in her virginal womb.

Upcoming Events 2012-2013

August 12: St. Maximus

August 15: Dormition of the Theotokos

September 29: Annual Meeting

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!