

The Confessor's Tongue for January 26, A. D. 2014

31st Sunday After Pentecost: Holy New Martyrs of Russia; Ven. Xenophon, Mary & Sons
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.

Holy New Martyrs of Russia

St. Lydia the New Martyr of Russia and Her Companions Alexis and Cyril (Feast Day - July 20)

The Russian New Martyr Lydia was born in Russia on March 20, 1901. Her father was a Priest in the city of Ufa. From her youth, she was distinguished for her sensitivity, her loving tenderness, and her abhorrence of evil, which is why everyone loved her.

After high school, at nineteen years of age, she was married, but soon lost her husband in the civil war.

In 1922, against his will, her Priest-father joined the "Living Church" schism, which had been organized by the Bolsheviks. The young widow wished to join the martyric Catacomb Church. Falling at the feet of her father, she begged him: "Give me your blessing to depart, father, that my salvation not be impeded."

The elderly Priest was conscious of sinning by belonging to the "Living Church." Thus, he tearfully gave her his blessing to live independently, prophetically saying: "My daughter, when you win your crown, tell the Lord that, although I myself proved too weak for battle [*podvig*], nevertheless I did not hinder you, but blessed you."

Lydia managed to find work as a clerk in the Forestry Department. In this way, she came into contact with the simple Russian people, whom she loved dearly. And the unsophisticated people loved and respected her in turn. The lumberman and drivers, who worked under difficult conditions, recounted with wonder that, when encountering Lydia at the office, they felt something similar to what they had sensed when they went to venerate a wonderworking Icon of the Theotokos near their village, before the 1917 Revolution.

At the office, obscenities, insults, and quarrels were no longer to be heard. Everyone noticed this, and naturally so did the Party leaders. They followed Lydia, but could find nothing suspect. The blessed Lydia never attended the Churches that were legalized by the Bolsheviks, and only rarely and with many precautions did she attend the services at the Catacomb Church.

The secret police knew that there was a network of Catacomb Churches in that region and, in order to discover it, they recalled Bishop Andrew (Ukhtomsky)—who was greatly revered by the people—from exile. By secret order of Bishop Andrew, however, only one Church in Ufa received him officially, whereas all of the inhabitants of the Diocese came into contact with him secretly. The police understood that their plan had failed, and arrested and exiled him anew. Bishop Andrew was martyred on 26 December 1937.

Lydia had the opportunity to speak with the Holy Hieromartyr Andrew for one hour. What was said between them remains unknown; but when a young and zealous Priest criticized Lydia's father before Bishop Andrew, he replied: "That Priest has a great intercessor before God: Saint Lydia," and he brought the conversation to a close.

The Grace-filled Lydia was finally arrested on 9 July 1928, when the secret police discovered that she was behind the circulation of typed booklets containing lives of Saints, prayers, and homilies and teachings of old and new Bishops. They had noticed that the typewriter on which the booklets were typed had a defective letter K, and were thereby able to track her down.

The police understood that she held a key in her hand to the discovery of the entire Catacomb Church in the region. For ten days they continually pressured her to confess, but she completely refused to speak. On 20 July 1928, the interrogator lost his patience and sent her to the "special command," located in a basement cell.

Exhausted, the blessed Lydia did not have the strength to go down the steps. The order was then given to the guard on duty in the hallway, Cyril Ataev (23 years old), to help her descend. "May Christ save you!" said Lydia in thanks.

These words and her eyes, filled with grief and helplessness, profoundly moved Cyril. He therefore could not listen indifferently to the uninterrupted screams and crying coming from the cell where they were torturing Lydia for over an hour and a half.

"Don't you hurt?" asked the exhausted torturers. "You scream and cry. That means it is painful."

"Painful, Lord, how painful!" groaned Lydia.

"Then why do you not confess? The tortures will become even more painful!"

"I cannot confess... I cannot.... He will not permit it..." she replied.

"Who will not permit it?"

"God will not permit it."

The torturers finally decided to rape her, and they called in the young guard, Cyril Ataev, to help them. When Cyril entered, he immediately understood their intentions. Overcome by holy indignation, he killed the two torturers on the spot. While he was grabbing a third torturer by the neck, a fourth shot him.

Cyril fell down near Lydia, who was bound by a rope, and, looking her straight in her eyes, he said: "Saint, take me with you!" Then something astonishing happened: a Divine radiance streamed forth from the Holy Martyr Lydia; with a heavenly smile, she answered: "I will take you."

These words filled the two surviving torturers with horror, and they were overcome by tremendous fear. With frantic screams, they shot all of their

bullets on the two helpless Martyrs. Those who had come to assist led them out, while they were still screaming like madmen. In the end, they all left, conquered by an indefinable fear.

One of the two torturers went completely out of his mind. A short while later, the other died of nervous shock. Before his death, he recounted everything that had happened to his friend, Sergeant Alexey Ikonnikov. The latter was brought to God and, for his zealous propagation of this wondrous story, was also arrested and suffered a Martyr's death.

All three — Lydia, Cyril, and Alexey — have always been Saints in the conscience of the Catacomb Church.

February 2: Meeting of Christ in the Temple

The Nativity cycle of feasts concludes with the Great Feast of the Meeting of Christ in the Temple on February 2nd, the fortieth day after the Nativity of our Lord. This feast is closely connected with the Nativity, for just as Christ's divinity was revealed at His Nativity and His Baptism, so it is also manifested at His meeting in the temple with Simeon and Anna.

According to the Law of Moses, all Hebrew parents were to bring their first-born son and a sacrifice in thanksgiving on the fortieth day after birth to the temple to be consecrated to God. The law was established in remembrance of the exodus of the Hebrews from Egypt—freedom from slavery, when the first-born Hebrews were spared from death.

In fulfillment of this law, the Theotokos with Joseph brought the infant Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem, and for their sacrifice brought two doves—the sacrifice of a poor family. At that time, the Elder Simeon by the Holy Spirit recognized the infant Jesus as the Christ, the anointed one of God, as did the Prophetess Anna. Thus these two joined the company of shepherds and magi as being among the first to recognize Him for who He was.

The spirit of the festal service is the same as that of the Nativity and Theophany: to glorify the manifestation of God on earth, to extol Christ's divinity, and to give honor to the most pure Virgin Mary as the Mother of God. St. Cyril of Alexandria speaks beautifully of the profound content and significance of this feast in his sermon for the day:

The Eternal, is both a small Child and the 'Ancient of Days' (i.e. God). A child at the breast and, at the same time, the Creator of ages. I behold a Child and recognize God. The Child is nourished, and, at the same time, he gives life and joy to the world. The Child is in swaddling clothes, and, at the same time, he delivers me from the bonds of sin... This Child—the angels glorify him, the archangels bow before him. The Principalities tremble in his presence, the Powers praise him, the Cherubim minister to him, the Seraphim bless him, fountains and seas yield to him... This Child conquered death, overcame the devil, abolished Adam's curse, ...washed away all sins, condemned all heresy, adorned all creation, saved Adam, renewed Eve, summoned all the nations, and

sanctified the universe...Therefore, let us brighten this day with candles, as befits the children of light, and let us bring to Christ the Light of spiritual illumination. (Prologue 1)

The Feast of the Meeting of Our Lord has a post-feast until February 9th.

On the Icon of the Theotokos & Prayer

Elder Cleopa of Romanina (+1998)

When you see the icon of the Mother of God with the Christ Child in her arms, do you know what you are seeing? Heaven and earth! Heaven is Christ, He who is higher than the heavens, the Maker of heaven and earth. And the Mother of God represents the earth, because she is of our descent. She is from the royal and priestly lineage.

Prayer is the nourishment and life of the soul. Just as the body dies without food and drink, so also the soul dies without prayer.

How to Be as Children to Be the Sons of God

St. Nicholas of Zicha (+1956)

"Verily I say unto you; except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven" (Mt. 18:3).

Thus speaks the Lord, and His word is holy and true. What sort of primacy do children have over adults? They have a threefold primacy: in faith, in obedience, and in purity. Children question their parents about everything, and believe whatever reply their parents give. A child is obedient to his parents and easily subjects his will to theirs. A child is pure and, although he quickly becomes angry, he quickly forgives. The Lord demands these three things of all men: faith, obedience, and purity. He seeks that men should believe in Him unconditionally, that they should be pure in their bearing towards another, not remember evil and not returning evil for evil.

Faith, obedience, and purity are the chief characteristics of a child's soul. Added to these are also passionlessness and joy. A child is not greedy, nor lascivious, nor ambitious; he has an eye untroubled by vice and a joy undisturbed by cares.

O my brethren! Who can make us children again? None but the one Christ. He is able to make us children once more, and to aid our rebirth by His example, His wisdom, and the power of His Holy Spirit.

O Lord Jesus, perfect in obedience and purity, the eternal Child of the heavenly Father: help us to be as infants by faith in Thee, by obedience to Thee, and by purity towards one another. To Thee be glory and praise for ever. Amen.

Upcoming Events 2014

- 2 February Great Feast of the Meeting of the Lord in the Temple.
- 17-20 February Diocese of the South Pastoral Conference at St. Maximus
- 2 March Forgiveness Sunday, Vespers, 6:00 p.m.
- 20 April Great and Holy Pascha

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!