

The Confessor's Tongue for February 2, A. D. 2014

32nd Sunday After Pentecost: Meeting of the Lord in the Temple

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.

February 2: New Martyr Jordan of Trebizond

Jordan, the blessed new-martyr, was from Trebizond, Pontus. He was a forty-year-old married coppersmith, from the Galata district of Constantinople. On the eve of the Feast of the Meeting of our Lord, Jordan was playing cards with some Hagarenes who were companions and fellow artisans. They were sporting and jesting in his workshop. One of the Moslems scoffed in Greek, saying, "O mangy Saint Nicholas, help me to win!" Jordan countered this remark by jokingly calling upon their Muslim prophet, Mohammed, in the same fashion. At this point, each one of his dissipated companions went off on his own. The following morning, however, one of them took steps to bring an action against Jordan, complaining that he had insulted their prophet and therefore merited death.

Now when Jordan heard news of this accusation, he stole away. He hid away in the house of a prominent Hagarene. But the Turks promulgated another *feftan* (order) stating that "should any Turk offer refuge to any Christian who speaks evilly of Mohammed, that Turk would be liable to punishment as an infidel." On account of this decree, Jordan's sympathizers were compelled to surrender him to the vizier and to testify that he had reviled Mohammed. The vizier questioned Jordan: "Man, according to their testimony, thou must either lose thy head or become a Moslem. If thou shouldst become Moslem, I shall greatly esteem thee." The vizier spoke such words to Jordan because he had known him prior to the charge.

Then Jordan cried aloud in a resounding voice, "I am not going to deny my sweetest Jesus Christ; for I believe and confess Him to be the true God. I only request from thee on concessions: that thou grantest me leave to go to my shop and close my accounts, because I have to pay and collect some debts. After I have concluded my affairs, let thy will prevail."

Thereupon the vizier commanded the prefect to accompany Jordan to his shop, according to his request, and then to strike off his head. Jordan went and settled his accounts with his associates. Then he received the final forgiveness from the Christians. For the sake of his soul, he also bequeathed his possessions to the Church, monasteries, and orphans. He was then taken to be beheaded. Jordan ran joyfully down the street, even as the Prophet David's "hart panting after the fountains of water." Jordan also gave thanks to God who granted this longed-for martyrdom. The martyr once more then asked forgiveness of young and old alike, of all whom he chanced to meet on his path.

All were amazed upon beholding the blessed Jordan. He neither feared, nor shrank back, nor

altered his facial expression in the least. In fact, he proceeded on the path rather cheerfully.

When they arrived at the place of execution, the prefect leaned over to strike off Jordan's head. Then suddenly, a sergeant of the vizier arrived and whispered to the martyr: "The vizier sends this message: he has taken pity on thy life. If thou shouldst only utter a word now, to make it appear as if thou hast become a Moslem, afterward thou wouldest be free to go wherever thou wilt, and even resume thy life as a Christian."

The martyr replied, "Indeed, I thank the vizier; but what he proposes I will never do. "With this statement, the blessed Jordan bowed his head, upon which the executioner brought down his sword. After the execution, that same evening, Jordan's relatives and friends, who were in that district, took up his holy relics. This, of course, was only achieved after paying the Moslem authorities an exorbitant sum. The Christians, thereupon, with honor reverently buried the relics of St. Jordan with honor, to the glory of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen. These events took place in 1650. *From the Synaxarion*

February 2: Meeting of Christ in the Temple

We celebrate the Feast of the Meeting of Our Lord has a post-feast through it Leavetaking February 9th, using the Troparian and Kontakion is place of our usual prayers before and after meals.

Meeting of the Lord, Troparion, tone 1

Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos full of grace, / for from thee hath shone forth the Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God, / who doth illumine those in darkness. / Be glad also, thou righteous elder, / for thou hast received in thine arms the Deliverer of our souls, // who bestoweth upon us Resurrection.

Meeting of the Lord, Kontakion, tone 1

Thou who hast sanctified by Thy birth a virgin womb / and fittingly blessed the hands of Simeon, / art come, O Christ our God, and on this day hast saved us. / Give peace to thy commonwealth in time of battle / and strengthen the Orthodox people whom Thou hast loved, // O Thou who alone lovest mankind.

Opening of the Triodion

Next Sunday, with the reading of the Gospel lesson concerning the Publican and the Pharisee, marks the opening of the *Triodion*, the liturgical book of hymns used during the Great Fast, as the Church enters the period of preparation leading up to the Fast.

We do well not only to attend services during this period, but to take heed to our lives, to tighten up

loose spiritual ends, and to gain spiritual momentum that we may enter the Fast ready for spiritual labor.

Forgiveness Sunday will be upon us in four weeks. Everyone who attends St. Maximus regularly or who considers this his church home should plan on coming to begin the Fast Liturgically and to ask forgiveness of one another.

From Discourse IV: On Tears of Penitence

St. Symeon the New Theologian

Thus it is not, as some think, by nature but by will that every man becomes either humble and apt for compunction, or hard-hearted, hardened, and insensitive. When, tell me, will he be contrite in soul and shed a tear from his eyes who passes almost all the day aimlessly, without paying heed either to silence of lips, or prayer, or reading, or recollection, but at times talks to his neighbors at the services (thus depriving of profit both himself and those to whom he talks), at other times disparages and reproaches the devout brethren and sometimes even the superior himself? When will he acquire compunction who meddles in all the affairs [of the parish], and not of the [parish] alone, but of everyone's life? One at such times says to some of the brethren, "Yesterday, I heard such and such," and again, "Do you know what happened to poor so-and-so? and, "Did you hear of such a one's misfortune?" Will such a person ever be mindful of his own vices and be so distressed that he will shed a tear from his eyes? One who leaves the services at the time of the reading of the divine Scriptures to sit somewhere near some and converse with some of the others, one after the other, as they retail unprofitable events in such terms as these, "Have you heard how the abbot [the priest] treated brother so-and-so?" and the other, "But what will you say if I tell you how he treated that poor fellow?"—he who occupies himself and others with such conversations and worst than these, and with such nonsense, when will he attain to the perception of his own faults and bewail himself?

What of a man who does not heed the inspired oracles and does not "set a watch about his lips", nor turn away his ear from hearing vanity? One who is not mindful of the final defense before Christ and His awesome judgment seat, where we must all stand before Him naked and exposed to view and give account of the lives that we have lived? Even if he has lived more than a hundred years in the monastic habit [parish], how will he find a tear that he may fervently mourn over himself? How will he who seeks for the front place in the church and the first seat at table and is always fighting and grieved for such things ever grieve for his own soul and weep bitterly before God? He who "makes excuses for his sins" and pleads his weakness even though he is strong and vigorous and young? One who stands in the church and compares himself with the more devout brethren who have labored much and spent a long time in asceticism and says, "Surely I am not inferior to this

man or that man? He has a place where he can lean at prayer and stands there when he comes back." If he put himself on a level with them (thou he may be unworthy of even the lowest place!), will he ever become conscious of his own weakness, so that he may groan in his soul, be contrite of heart, and weep with his eyes?

The vainglory that enslaves him to *accidie* {sloth, listlessness} will never permit him to persevere in anything with patience. Anyone who is in this state will thenceforth waste his time in idleness and carelessness at every service as he constantly tells vain and silly stories to those of his neighbors who endure listening to him. So when he joins with spiritual and God-fearing men for the divine Services, he does so without feeling, or, rather, without pain. He goes out thence without any benefit and perceives no change whatever for the better coming on him. Such a change is given by God to those who strive through compunction. He thinks that it is enough for him that he merely does not miss the compulsory Services, that is, Matins and Vespers and the Hours that are sung in common, and that by simply doing this he will attain to perfect virtue and to the perfection of those who have achieved it, to "the full stature of Christ". I have known some who were under such a delusion and who most zealously avoided any fall into carnal sin, in the sense of union with the bodies of others, and who were yet not at all concerned to avoid sins committed in secret or meditated in the hidden depth of the heart. They thought that they would be saved without any further effort, without prayer, silence, vigil, abstinence, poverty of spirit, humility, or love, but merely by attending the Services in the way mentioned above. But this is not so! God does not look on the appearance nor on the mere sobriety of conduct, nor on our cries, brethren! He looks on the "contrite and humbled heart", the heart that is quiet and clothed with the fear of God. "on whom," says He, "will I look, but on the man that is humble and quiet, and who trembles at My word?"

February Namedays

- 1 Jessica Northam (St. Brigid of Ireland)
- 1 Rose Lydon (Martyr Perpetua)
- 3 Pam Northam (St. Anna the Prophetess)
- 3 Eliana Lyda (St. Anna the Prophetess)

February Birthdays

- 6 Louise Newcomb
- 15 Rick Joines

Upcoming Events 2014

- 17-20 February Diocese of the South Pastoral Conference at St. Maximus
- 2 March Forgiveness Sunday, Vespers, 6:00 p.m.
Everyone should plan on attending this service.
- 20 April Great and Holy Pascha

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!