

The Confessor's Tongue for April 27, A. D. 2014

Fourth Sunday of Pascha: Sunday of the Paralytic, SS Cyril and Methodius

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.

Midfeast Pentecost

On Wednesday of the fourth week we celebrate the Mid-Feast of Pentecost, i.e. half of the period from Pascha to Pentecost. This day we commemorate that event from the life of the Savior, when He on the Mid-feast of the Tabernacles taught in the temple about His Own Divine ministry and the mystery of water, under which we understand the beneficial teaching of Christ and the beneficial gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Mid-feast of Holy Pentecost is referred to among the ancient Christian feasts. If its beginning cannot be seen in the canons of the Apostolic [37] and Antiochian Councils [20] concerning the assembly of local councils during the fourth week of Pentecost, then in the time of St. John Chrysostom it is already existing and established by the Holy Church. In the fifth century Anatolius of Constantinople, in the seventh the Venerable Andrew of Crete, in the eighth St. John of Damascus, in the ninth the Venerable Theophanes the Confessor wrote church hymns for the Mid-feast, with which the Holy Church even now praises the Lord in the Mid-feast of Pentecost. Standing between the day of Pascha and the day of Descent of the Holy Spirit, the Mid-feast serves as a bond between these two great Christian celebrations: together with the continuing celebration of the first of these the Mid-feast reminds us of the approach of the feast of the Descent of the Holy Spirit, and also the feast of the Ascension of the Lord. "Let us glorify, brethren, - the Holy Church appeals to us, - the resurrection of Christ the Savior, and having reached the middle of the feast of the Master, let us most closely keep the commandments of God, that we may also be worthy to celebrate the Ascension, and the Coming of the Holy Spirit (*The Praises, Verse after Glory, Both now and Ever by Anatolius*)".

Spiritual Understanding of Paralytic

Blessed Theophylact

Now we should understand the Sheep's Pool to represent the grace-filled waters of Baptism, in which the Lord Jesus—the Sheep sacrificed for us—was washed on our behalf by John. This pool has *five porches*, symbolizing the four cardinal virtues [courage, prudence, righteousness, and self-control], plus the divine contemplation of dogma, which are revealed in Baptism. Human nature was paralyzed in all its spiritual powers and lay sick for *thirty and eight years*. It was not sound in its faith in the Holy Trinity [three], nor did it believe firmly in the coming of the eighth age [8], that is, the general resurrection and the judgement of all who have ever lived. It could not be healed, for it had *no man* to put it into the pool: the Son of God, who alone could heal our human nature by Baptism, was not yet made man. But when

He became man, He healed our nature and commanded us to *take up our bed*. This means we must lift up from the earth our body—weighed down by the flesh and earthly cares—and make it light and free. We must rouse it from slothfulness so that I can *walk*, that is to say, be active in doing good. The troubling of the water in the pool denotes the evil spirits stirred up in the waters of Baptism and then crushed and drowned by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Like the paralytic, we too are in need of healing, for we are paralyzed and inert in doing good. We also *have no man*, that is, no rational thought proper to man, that would distinguish us from the irrational beasts and bring us to the pool of tears of repentance. In this pool, the first to enter is healed: if he procrastinates and does not swiftly repent, he obtains no healing. Be quick to enter, lest death overtake you. Again, there is an angel which troubles this pool of repentance—the Angel of Great Counsel of the Father, Christ the Savior. Unless the divine Word touches our heart and troubles it with the thought of torments in the age to come, this pool will not be made active by divine power, and there will be no healing for the paralyzed soul. The pool of repentance may rightly be called the Sheep's Pool; the pool in which the inward parts and thoughts of the saints, like the sheeps' entrails, are washed. Cleansed in it, that is, rendered innocent and guileless, the saints are made ready to become a living sacrifice pleasing to God. May we also obtain healing, and afterwards may the Lord ever find us in the temple, unstained by evil thoughts.

May II: SS. Cyril & Methodius, Missionaries

As brothers they were children of a wealthy Bulgarian Slav Voivode, who lived in Salonika, Macedonia.

When the eldest brother, Methodius, reached maturity he entered military service and soon became the governor of a Slavonic province. After 10 years of military service Methodius, "loving the solitary life", left for Mount Olympus and accepted monasticism there, completely devoting himself to meditation and reading divinely inspired books and "adorning his soul through prayer, vigils and fasting".

The youngest brother, Constantine, from his youth showed brilliant success both in secular and religious-moral formation. He studied together with Emperor Michael and thus received a brilliant education. But having acquired "wisdom with the care of higher philosophy", upon the completion of his education he refused all the benefits of position and left for one of the monasteries on the Black Sea. Soon his residence was revealed. He was almost violently returned to Constantinople and being ordained a priest there, he was appointed librarian at

the St. Sophia Temple and teacher of philosophy in a major Constantinopolitan School. His extensive erudition was to enable him to defeat the iconoclast Patriarch John [Grammaticus] (*text has Annius probably in error*) in scholarly discourse. When the Emir of the militants, a Moslem, addressed a petition to Byzantium (851) asking to send scholars to acquaint him with Christianity, the Emperor and the Patriarch selected the "golden-lettered" Constantine and the *asecretes* George for this mission. After returning Cyril lived for a short time in Constantinople, but then he left to go to his brother Methodius and shared monastic asceticism in the monastery on Olympus with him.

In 858, the Khazars, living on coast of the Don, Volga and Sea of Azov, sent ambassadors to Emperor Michael requesting him to give them a scholar capable of advising them about faith. The Emperor sent Constantine as his brilliant debates with other scholars on faith became known. St. Methodius joyfully agreed to accompany his brother. The holy brothers landed in Chersonese and here found the relics of St. Clement in the sea and carried them into the Temple of the Holy Apostles.

Having come to the Khazars, they soon taught the Christian faith to every last one of them and having confirmed them in Orthodoxy, they returned to Constantinople. Constantine renewed his scholarly occupations, but Methodius received the position of Hegumen in the Polychroniou [Many Years] monastery.

Soon after this at the request of Slavonic princes, the holy brothers went to Moravia and there, first of all translated the Greek divine service books into the Slavonic language (for which purpose they invented the Slavonic alphabet), they began to spread the Orthodox faith. Their preaching had enormous success: over several years Moravia, Bulgaria, Pannonia and other countries were enlightened with the light of Gospel teaching.

In 867, based on the slander of the German bishops, Sts. Methodius and Constantine were summoned by Pope Nicholas I to court in Rome. When they arrived in Rome, Nicholas was no longer alive. His successor Hadrian II found out that they were bringing the relics of St. Clement with them and solemnly met them outside the city. Constantine brought him the Gospel and other books in the Slavonic language and the Pope, having known of their approval, placed them on the altar in the Temple of St. Maria, and later the divine services were performed in several churches of Rome from them.

Here on February 14, 869 St. Cyril died and was buried in the Church of St. Clement. Before his death he said to his brother: "You and I, like two oxen, plowed one furrow. I am exhausted, but don't you think of leaving the labor of teaching or to again leave your mountain".

After the death of Cyril, St. Methodius was absolved by the Pope, installed as the Bishop of

Moravia and Pannonia where he also labored, enlightening his flock and preaching Christ to many other Slavonic people (to the Czechians, Hungarians, Dalmatians, etc.). During this time Methodius had to bear much unpleasantness from heterodox missionaries and he "endured many troubles and exiles".

So, the Latin priests armed the German emperor against him. By the order of the Salzburgian Archbishop and council, Methodius was banished to Swabia where he was imprisoned for about three years, enduring the cruelest torture: he was beaten, thrown out into the cold without clothes and violently dragged along the streets. Pope John VIII in 874 insisted on his release and elevated him to the dignity of Archbishop of Moravia with the rank of Papal Legate.

But soon Ven. Methodius was again summoned to court because he did not believe in the descent of the Holy Spirit "and from the Son [filioque]" and it was as if he did not recognize his hierarchical dependence on the Pope. The Pope forbade him to serve Slavonic divine services, and in 879 once again summoned him to Rome where Methodius was completely absolved of the charges made against him and again received the bull which resolved the issue of Slavonic divine services.

At the invitation of Emperor Basil not long before his death St. Methodius visited Constantinople. He died on April 6, 885

St. Cyril & the Saracens

In the Saracen [Sarcen: Muslim subjects of the Caliph] encampment, they asked St. Cyril: "How can Christians wage war and at the same time keep Christ's commandment to pray to God for their enemies?" To this, St. Cyril replied: "If two commandments were written in one law and given to men for fulfilling, which man would be a better follower of the law: the one who fulfilled one commandment or the one who fulfilled both?" The Saracens replied: "Undoubtedly, he who fulfills both commandments." St. Cyril continued: "Christ our God commands us to pray to God for those who persecute us and even to do good to them, but He also said to us, *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends*. That is why we bear the insults that our enemies cast at us individually and why we pray to God for them. However, as a society, we defend one another and lay down our lives, so that you would not enslave our brethren, would not enslave their souls with the bodies, and would not destroy them in both body and soul."

Upcoming Events 2014

26 May: Memorial Day Picnic

30 June—4 July St. Peter the Aleut Youth Camp

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!