

# The Confessor's Tongue for February 15, A. D. 2015

Sunday of the Last Judgment, Meatfare: Apostle Onesimus

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.

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## **The Sayings of St. Anthony the Great 5**

*Abba Anthony said, "Whoever has not experienced temptation cannot enter into the kingdom of Heaven." He even added, "Without temptation, no one can be saved." Saying 5 in The Sayings of Desert Fathers*

*Commentary:* We don't usually think of temptation as something that assists us on the path of salvation. How can it be? Why do we need temptation and trials to be saved?

The word 'temptations', *peirasmos*, refers both to a temptation or enticement to sin and to tests and trials (which may tempt us to sin by complaining, doubting, grumbling against God, growing angry, taking matters into our own hands, etc.).

The Apostle James tells us how Christians are to respond to temptations: "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let have patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." The Christian suffering temptations can and must rejoice in them because he understands they are a sign that God loves him, has hope for his transformation, and is not finished with him yet. God loves us too much to leave us in our sinful, enfeebled state. He desires to raise us out of the mire of sin and fill us with His life and power. He accomplishes this in part through trials and temptations.

Thus, we are to accept temptations joyfully, knowing that God uses them to perfect us. Moreover, we know from St. Paul that God does not allow us to be tempted beyond what we can bear, always makes of way of escape for us, and that His grace is sufficient for us to patiently endure whatever He permits us to face. Consider the following words from the Desert Fathers on the subject:

'Abba Poemen said of Abba John the Dwarf that he had prayed God to take his passions away from him so he might be free from care. He went and told an old man this: "I find myself in peace, without an enemy." The old man said to him, "Go, beseech God to stir up warfare so that you may regain the affliction and humility that you used to have, for it is by warfare that the soul makes progress." So he besought God, and when warfare came, he no longer prayed that it might be taken away, but said, "Lord, give me strength for the fight."

We must give thanks for the temptations and trials, knowing that God is using them to strengthen our faith and prepare us for His Kingdom.

Now, some are in the habit of grumbling, cursing, complaining, and getting angry in the face of trials and temptations. This reveals a lack of faith in God's promises and a fixation on getting one's own way in life for one's own ends rather than submitting to

God's will for salvation. Here is where the cross taken up at baptism goes to work, to crucify our old man with his passions and desires that the new man made after the image of Christ may be formed in his place. By embracing trials with faith and thanksgiving, we take up our cross and cooperate with God (instead of resisting Him) in His work of conforming us to Christ.

The following words of Abba Poemen should comfort and aid us in temptation: Abba Poemen was asked for whom the saying "Do not be anxious about tomorrow" (Matt 6:34) is suitable. The old man said, "It is said for the man who is tempted and has not much strength, so that he should not be worried, saying to himself, 'How long must I suffer this temptation?' He should rather say every day to himself, 'Today.'"

Looking at temptations in the long term overwhelms us and leads us to despair, especially when we have succumbed to those temptations and sinned again and again. Rather we must learn to see only today's struggle, for today is the only time in which we live, and the only time God gives grace and bread. Today and every day we ask for "our daily bread" which includes the grace we need for today's battles. Yesterday is past, and we can do nothing to change it. Regardless of what happened yesterday, today we have the power to make a beginning of good, as St. Arsenius the Great always prayed: "Lord, even though I've done nothing good before Thee, grant by Thy grace that I may make a beginning of good." Tomorrow has yet to come, and Christ told us not to worry about it. God does not give us grace today to bear tomorrow's struggle (or next year's) ahead of time; He gives grace only for today when we actually need it. Worrying about tomorrow and allowing our mind be filled with 'what ifs' is a recipe for spiritual defeat.

Whatever our struggle, if we face it only 'today', day by day, and each day seek to make a beginning of good, we shall have success against the necessary temptations and trials sent to us to test and refine our faith.

As a final encouragement, St. James says, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried [or proved], he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." Only the fire of temptation and trial reveals the quality of our faith, proves that it is genuine and strong. The Patriarchs Job and Abraham passed through the fire of temptation to have their faith revealed as pure. The Apostles did, the Saints did, and every Christian must. But having passed through it and having our faith refined by it and proven to be pure and true, we receive the crown of life from the Lord. *Fr. Justin Frederick*

### Gladsome Light

The ancient hymn Gladsome light is a distinctive part of the Church's Vespers service (the daily evening corporate prayer of the Church).

The hymn can be difficult to understand clearly, as the first part of the sentence is convoluted in English: "O Gladsome Light of the holy Glory, of the immortal Father, heavenly, holy, blessed, O Jesus Christ..." Who is the "Gladsome Light" and to whom the adjectives "heavenly, holy, blessed" apply?

In the original inflected languages, which have case endings to show which words go together, the matter is clear. Both "Gladsome Light" and "Jesus Christ" are in the vocative case, the case of direct address, which is often rendered in English by the word "O" before words in the vocative. So we have "O Gladsome Light Jesus Christ" as the One to whom our hymn is addressed.

The words "holy glory" go together also and modify "Gladsome Light." "Glory" is a feminine noun in the genitive case, and "holy" modifies it as the case endings show. The Genitive case indicates possession. So we have "O Gladsome Light of the Holy Glory..."

The words of the rest of our phrase "of the immortal Father, heavenly, holy, blessed" go together, as all of them are masculine singular genitive adjectives modifying the masculine singular genitive noun "Father". And "Father" being in the genitive, expresses whose is the "holy Glory"—it is the immortal, heavenly, holy, blessed Father's glory.

So let's see what we have: We address the Gladsome Light Jesus Christ. This Light that is Christ is of (or from) the "holy glory of the immortal, heavenly, holy, blessed Father." Indeed, Christ is the Light of the Word, the Radiance and Glory of the Father, or "Light of Light" as we confess in the Creed. Let us look now at the rest of the hymn.

"Having come to sunset and beholding the evening light..." Vespers is the evening prayer of the Church, appointed to be served at sunset. By the time this hymn is sung, it is dark enough that artificial illumination is required to see. Thus, this is the ancient hymn sung during the lamplighting in the Church. The spiritual significance is clear. Christ is the Light that shines in the darkness of the fallen world. As night falls signifying the fallen world without Christ, the time in which criminals roam and when man is afraid, we look to Christ, the "evening Light."

"We hymn the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit God..." As night falls, we sing the praise of the true God in three Persons who has revealed Himself to us in Christ

"Meet it is at all times that Thou be hymned with fitting voices, O Son of God, Thou Giver of Life..." Because of who the Gladsome Light Christ is, it is proper that we sing His praises at all times. And our voices should be befitting His glory: not all words, not all means of singing are worthy of Him, so we

seek always in our worship to lift "fitting voices" in praise of Him.

"Wherefore the world doth glorify Thee." It is fitting for the creature to glorify the Creator. Indeed, all of creation honors the Creator by doing what it was created to do—except one creature, man, who has rebelled against his Maker thinking to better his lot thereby. Yet even among fallen men there are those who are learning to practice their true vocation of worship and service to the Creator of all, the true God revealed in Jesus Christ, the Gladsome Light of the Father. *Fr. Justin Frederick, from CT 060226*

And being first purified by the fast of forty days, by prayers, and fastings, and discipline, and good works, we shall be able to eat the holy Passover in Jerusalem. *St. Athanasius, Festal Letter 3*

### On Self-Examination

*St. Tikhon of Zadonks*

*Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith, prove your own selves. (2 Corinthians 13:5)*

Glory to God! We are all called Christians; we all confess the one God in Three Persons, the living and immortal God; we were all baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity of One Essence, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; we all believe in Him who was crucified and rose from the dead, Jesus Christ the Son of God, and, as a sign of this, sign ourselves with the Cross; we all enter the holy Church, and we pray and we entreat, we sing and we praise the holy name of God; we all listen to the holy word of God; we all commune in Life and the Heavenly Kingdom, and we say in the holy Symbol of Faith: 'I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the age to come.'

Glory to God for all this and everything else! In truth, my readers, the mysteries of Christianity are most glorious and magnificent! It is great and glorious to be a Christian! But let us examine ourselves—are we truly Christians? As the Apostle exhorts us: *Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith.*

For without the Faith, a Christian cannot exist. We bear the signs of Christianity, as was said above, but do we have true Christianity within us? For all external things are nothing without that which is inside, and outward signs without the actual and true thing itself are a lie and hypocrisy. We all boast of the Faith, but do we do the works which correspond to faith, as the Apostle says to everyone: *Show me thy faith in thy works* (James 2:18)? We have the name "Christians" from Christ; but have we crucified the flesh with its passions and desires, as is proper for Christians who believe in the crucified Christ, as the Apostle says: *Those that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the passions and desires* (Galatians 5:24)? Do we sense within ourselves the spiritual joy of the anointing of oil (John 2:27)?

We believe in the Gospel, but do we live in a way that is worthy of the Gospel? We confess and we call on the true God; but do we please Him with the faith and pure conscience that He requires of us? We listen to the holy Word of God; but do we heed it, and do we correct ourselves according to its rules? We commune of the holy and life-creating Mysteries of the Body and Blood of Christ; but are we renewed by Holy Communion and do we progress towards a new spiritual personality?

Let us examine these things and the rest, and let us look at how we live, how we conduct ourselves, how we think, how we talk, how we act, with what kind of heart we go about before the God who sees all things, how we treat one another.

And after examining ourselves in this way, let us be Christians not in name only but in truth. We became Christians by the grace of God; let us strive to have true Christianity within ourselves. We were baptized into the God-of-Three-Persons, and received the gift of sanctity and righteousness; let us strive to keep this heavenly treasure to the end.

We believe in Jesus Christ crucified; let us strive through faith to follow Him also, and to follow Him after each of us has taken up his cross.

We confess and we call upon the heavenly God; let us strive also to please Him with heavenly ways of life. We listen to the Word of God; let us strive also to *live* as it teaches us. We expect the resurrection of the dead and the life of the age to come. When we have turned away from this vain world, let us strive only for the eternal goods.

We approach the holy and heavenly Table of the Mysteries of Christ; let us strive that this heavenly and life-creating Bread might become for us life, sanctification, illumination, renewal, joy, and spiritual consolation. So, let us demonstrate our faith by our deeds; then we will be Christians not only in name but in reality. *O God!...Be gracious to us and bless us, and make Thy face to shine upon us, and have mercy on us: that we may know Thy way upon the earth, Thy salvation among all the peoples.* (Psm 66:2-3) *Amen.*

### **Paschal Letter III: For A.D. 331** *St. Athanasius the Great of Alexandria*

Again, my beloved brethren, the day of the feast draws near to us, which, above all others, should be devoted to prayer, which the law commands to be observed, and which it would be an unholy thing for us to pass over in silence. For although we have been held under restraint by those who afflict us, that, because of them, we should not announce to you this season; yet thanks be to `God, who comforteth the afflicted [3975],` that we have not been overcome by the wickedness of our accusers and silenced; but obeying the voice of truth, we together with you cry aloud in the day of the feast. For the God of all hath commanded, saying, `Speak [3976], and the children of Israel shall keep the Passover.` And the Spirit exhorts in the Psalm; `Blow the trumpet in the new

moons [3977], in the solemn day of your feast.` And the prophet cries; `Keep thy feasts, O Judah [3978].` I do not send word to you as though you were ignorant; but I publish it to those who know it, that ye may perceive that although men have separated us, yet God having made us companions, we approach the same feast, and worship the same Lord continually. And we do not keep the festival as observers of days, knowing that the Apostle reproves those who do so, in those words which he spake; `Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years [3979].` But rather do we consider the day solemn because of the feast; so that all of us, who serve God in every place, may together in our prayers be well-pleasing to God. For the blessed Paul, announcing the nearness of gladness like this, did not announce days, but the Lord, for whose sake we keep the feast, saying, `Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed [3980];` so that we all, contemplating the eternity of the Word, may draw near to do Him service.

There is, moreover, the apostolic injunction, that the grace given us should not be unprofitable; for those things which he wrote particularly to his disciple, he enforces on us through him, saying, `Neglect not the gift that is in thee. For he who tilleth his land shall be satisfied with bread; but the paths of the slothful are strewn with thorns;` so that the Spirit forewarns a man not to fall into them, saying, `Break up your fallow ground, sow not among thorns.` For when a man despises the grace given him; and forthwith falls into the cares of the world, he delivers himself over to his lusts; and thus in the time of persecution he is offended, and becomes altogether unfruitful.

2. For what else is the feast, but the service of the soul? And what is that service, but prolonged prayer to God, and unceasing thanksgiving [3981]? The unthankful departing far from these are rightly deprived of the joy springing therefrom: for `joy and gladness are taken from their mouth [3982].` Therefore, the [divine] word doth not allow them to have peace; `For there is no peace to the wicked, saith the Lord [3983],` they labour in pain and grief. So, not even to him who owed ten thousand talents did the Gospel grant forgiveness in the sight of the Lord [3984]. For even he, having received forgiveness of great things, was forgetful of kindness in little ones, so that he paid the penalty also of those former things. And justly indeed, for having himself experienced kindness, he was required to be merciful to his fellow servant. He too that received the one talent, and bound it up in a napkin, and hid it in the earth, was in consequence cast out for unthankfulness, hearing the words, `Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed; thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and on my return, I should have received mine own. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it to him that hath ten talents [3985].` For, of

course, when he was required to deliver up to his lord that which belonged to him, he should have acknowledged the kindness of him who gave it, and the value of that which was given. For he who gave was not a hard man, had he been so, he would not have given even in the first instance; neither was that which was given unprofitable and vain, for then he had not found fault. But both he who gave was good, and that which was given was capable of bearing fruit. As therefore 'he who withholdeth corn in seed-time is cursed [3986],' according to the divine proverb, so he who neglects grace, and hides it without culture, is properly cast out as a wicked and unthankful person. On this account, he praises those who increased [their talents], saying, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful in a little, I will place thee over much; enter into the joy of thy Lord [3987].'

...when, as I have said, we have first been purified and prepared by those days, we begin the holy week of the great Easter . . . in which, my beloved brethren, we should use more prolonged prayers, and fastings, and watchings, that we may be enabled to anoint our lintels with precious blood, and to escape the destroyer.

3. This was right and reasonable; for, as the Scripture declares, they had gained as much as they had received. Now, my beloved, our will ought to keep pace with the grace of God, and not fall short; lest while our will remains idle, the grace given us should begin to depart, and the enemy finding us empty and naked, should enter [into us], as was the case with him spoken of in the Gospel, from whom the devil went out; 'for having gone through dry places, he took seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and returning and finding the house empty, he dwelt there, and the last state of that man was worse than the first [3988].' For the departure from virtue gives place for the entrance of the unclean spirit. There is, moreover, the apostolic injunction, that the grace given us should not be unprofitable; for those things which he wrote particularly to his disciple, he enforces on us through him [3989], saying, 'Neglect not the gift that is in thee. For he who tilleth his land shall be satisfied with bread; but the paths of the slothful are strewn with thorns;' so that the Spirit forewarns a man not to fall into them, saying, 'Break up your fallow ground, sow not among thorns [3990].' For when a man despises the grace given him; and forthwith falls into the cares of the world, he delivers himself over to his lusts; and thus in the time of persecution he is offended [3991], and becomes altogether unfruitful. Now the prophet points out the end of such negligence, saying, 'Cursed is he who doeth the work of the Lord carelessly [3992].' For a servant of the Lord should be diligent and careful, yea, moreover, burning like a flame, so that when, by an ardent spirit, he has destroyed all carnal sin, he may be able to draw near to God who,

according to the expression of the saints, is called 'a consuming fire [3993].'

4. Therefore, the God of all, 'Who maketh His angels [spirits],' is a spirit, 'and His ministers a flame of fire [3994].' Wherefore, in the departure from Egypt, He forbade the multitude to touch the mountain, where God was appointing them the law, because they were not of this character. But He called blessed Moses to it, as being fervent in spirit, and possessing unquenchable grace, saying, 'Let Moses alone draw near [3995].' He entered into the cloud also, and when the mountain was smoking, he was not injured; but rather, through 'the words of the Lord, which are choice silver purified in the earth [3996],' he descended purified. Therefore the blessed Paul, when desirous that the grace of the Spirit given to us should not grow cold, exhorts, saying, 'Quench not the Spirit [3997].' For so shall we remain partakers of Christ [3998], if we hold fast to the end the Spirit given at the beginning. For he said, 'Quench not;' not because the Spirit is placed in the power of men, and is able to suffer anything from them; but because bad and unthankful men are such as manifestly wish to quench it, since they, like the impure, persecute the Spirit with unholy deeds. 'For the holy Spirit of discipline will flee deceit, nor dwell in a body that is subject unto sin; but will remove from thoughts that are without understanding [3999].' Now they being without understanding, and deceitful, and lovers of sin, walk still as in darkness, not having that 'Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world [4000].' Now a fire such as this laid hold of Jeremiah the prophet, when the word was in him as a fire, and he said, 'I pass away from every place, and am not able to endure it [4001].' And our Lord Jesus Christ, being good and a lover of men, came that He might cast this upon earth, and said, 'And what? would that it were already kindled [4002]!' For He desired, as He testified in Ezekiel [4003], the repentance of a man rather than his death; so that evil should be entirely consumed in all men, that the soul, being purified, might be able to bring forth fruit; for the word which is sown by Him will be productive, some thirty, some sixty, some an hundred [4004]. Thus, for instance, those who were with Cleopas [4005], although infirm at first from lack of knowledge, yet afterwards were inflamed with the words of the Saviour, and brought forth the fruits of the knowledge of Him. The blessed Paul also, when seized by this fire, revealed it not to flesh and blood, but having experienced the grace, he became a preacher of the Word. But not such were those nine lepers who were cleansed from their leprosy, and yet were unthankful to the Lord who healed them; nor Judas, who obtained the lot of an apostle, and was named a disciple of the Lord, but at last, 'while eating bread with the Saviour, lifted up his heel against Him, and became a traitor [4006].' But such men have the due reward of their folly, since their expectation will be vain through their ingratitude; for there is no hope for the ungrateful, the last fire, prepared for the devil

and his angels, awaits those who have neglected divine light. Such then is the end of the unthankful.

5. But the faithful and true servants of the Lord, knowing that the Lord loves the thankful, never cease to praise Him, ever giving thanks unto the Lord. And whether the time is one of ease or of affliction, they offer up praise to God with thanksgiving, not reckoning these things of time, but worshipping the Lord, the God of times [4007]. Thus of old time, Job, who possessed fortitude above all men, thought of these things when in prosperity; and when in adversity, he patiently endured, and when he suffered, gave thanks. As also the humble David, in the very time of affliction sang praises and said, 'I will bless the Lord at all times [4008].' And the blessed Paul, in all his Epistles, so to say, ceased not to thank God. In times of ease, he failed not, and in afflictions he gloried, knowing that 'tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and that hope maketh not ashamed [4009].' Let us, being followers of such men, pass no season without thanksgiving, but especially now, when the time is one of tribulation, which the heretics excite against us, will we praise the Lord, uttering the words of the saints; 'All these things have come upon us, yet have we not forgotten Thee [4010].' For as the Jews at that time, although suffering an assault from the tabernacles [4011] of the Edomites, and oppressed by the enemies of Jerusalem, did not give themselves up, but all the more sang praises to God; so we, my beloved brethren, though hindered from speaking the word of the Lord, will the more proclaim it, and being afflicted, we will sing Psalms [4012], in that we are accounted worthy to be despised, and to labour anxiously for the truth. Yea, moreover, being grievously vexed, we will give thanks. For the blessed Apostle, who gave thanks at all times, urges us in the same manner to draw near to God saying, 'Let your requests, with thanksgiving, be made known unto God [4013].' And being desirous that we should always continue in this resolution, he says, 'At all times give thanks; pray without ceasing [4014].' For he knew that believers are strong while employed in thanksgiving, and that rejoicing they pass over the walls of the enemy, like those saints who said, 'Through Thee will we pierce through our enemies, and by my God I will leap over a wall [4015].' At all times let us stand firm, but especially now, although many afflictions overtake us, and many heretics are furious against us. Let us then, my beloved brethren, celebrate with thanksgiving the holy feast which now draws near to us, 'girding up the loins of our minds [4016],' like our Saviour Jesus Christ, of Whom it is written, 'Righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins, and faithfulness the girdle of His reins [4017].' Each one of us having in his hand the staff which came out of the root of Jesse, and our feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel [4018], let us keep the feast as Paul saith, 'Not with the old leaven, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth [4019]'; reverently trusting that we are reconciled through

Christ, and not departing from faith in Him, nor do we defile ourselves together with heretics, and strangers to the truth, whose conversation and whose will degrade them. But rejoicing in afflictions, we break through the furnace of iron and darkness, and pass, unharmed, over that terrible Red Sea. Thus also, when we look upon the confusion of heretics, we shall, with Moses, sing that great song of praise, and say, 'We will sing unto the Lord, for He is to be gloriously praised [4020].' Thus, singing praises, and seeing that the sin which is in us has been cast into the sea, we pass over to the wilderness. And being first purified by the fast of forty days, by prayers, and fastings, and discipline, and good works, we shall be able to eat the holy Passover in Jerusalem.

6. The beginning of the fast of forty days is on the fifth of Phamenoth (Mar. 1); and when, as I have said, we have first been purified and prepared by those days, we begin the holy week of the great Easter on the tenth of Pharmuthi (Apr. 5), in which, my beloved brethren, we should use more prolonged prayers, and fastings, and watchings, that we may be enabled to anoint our lintels with precious blood, and to escape the destroyer [4021]. Let us rest then, on the fifteenth of the month Pharmuthi (Apr. 10), for on the evening of that Saturday we hear the angels' message, 'Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is risen [4022].' Immediately afterwards that great Sunday receives us, I mean on the sixteenth of the same month Pharmuthi (April 11), on which our Lord having risen, gave us peace towards our neighbors. When then we have kept the feast according to His will, let us add from that first day in the holy week, the seven weeks of Pentecost, and as we then receive the grace of the Spirit, let us at all times give thanks to the Lord; through Whom to the Father be glory and dominion, in the Holy Ghost, for ever and ever. Amen.

Salute one another with a holy kiss. The brethren who are with me salute you. I pray, brethren beloved and longed for, that ye may have health, and that ye may be mindful of us in the Lord.

#### Endnotes

[3975] 2 Cor. vii. 6. The historical reference is not quite certain, but the Index iii. is clearly right in its statement that Ath. was absent at this time, as well as in 332-

[3976] 'Eipon, kai,' as LXX. not Peshito.

[3977] Cf. S. Cyril. Hom. Pasch. xxx. near the beginning.

[3978] Numb. ix. 2; Ps. lxxx. 3; Nah. i. 15

[3979] Gal. iv. 10.

[3980] 1 Cor. v. 7.

[3981] Cf. Clemens Alex. Strom. 7. 1. adialeiptos agape. Also 1 Thess.

v. 16, 17, both in the Greek and in the Syriac vers. and Letter 11.

[3982] Apparently a quotation from Scripture, perhaps from Jer. vii. the phraseology of v. 28. being transferred to the sentiment of v. 34. The expression has already occurred, Letter 2. 4.

- [3983] Is. xlvi. 22.  
[3984] Matt. xviii. 24.  
[3985] Matt. xxv. 26.  
[3986] Prov. xi. 26.  
[3987] Matt. xxv. 23.  
[3988] Ib. xii. 43-45.  
[3989] Cf. Letter 2, near beginning.  
[3990] 1 Tim. iv. 14; Prov. xii. 11; Ib. xv. 19; Jer. iv. 3.  
[3991] skandalizetai, Matt. xiii. 21.  
[3992] Jer. xlvi. 10.  
[3993] Deut. iv. 24; ix. 3; and Heb. xii. 29.  
[3994] Ps. civ. 4.  
[3995] Exod. xxiv. 2.  
[3996] Ps. xii. 6.  
[3997] 1 Thess. v. 19.  
[3998] Conf. S. Athan. Expos. in Psalmos, t. i. p, 863.  
pur hoper noeton, ten tou hagiou Pneumatos methexin embalon.  
[3999] Wisd. i. 5.  
[4000] John i. 9.  
[4001] Jer. xx. 9, cf. Letter 49. 5.  
[4002] Luke xii. 49.  
[4003] Ezek. xviii. 23, 32.  
[4004] Mark iv. 20.  
[4005] Luke xxiv.  
[4006] Ps. xli. 9; John xiii. 18.  
[4007] Cf. Letter 1. 1, note 12.  
[4008] Ps. xxxiv. 1.  
[4009] Rom. v. 3.  
[4010] Ps. xlv. 17.  
[4011] Compare Ps. lxxxiii. 6.  
[4012] Cf. James v. 13  
[4013] Phil. iv. 6.  
[4014] 1 Thess. v. 17.  
[4015] Ps. xviii. 29.  
[4016] 1 Pet. i. 13.  
[4017] Is. xi. 5.  
[4018] Ib. xi. 1; Eph. vi. 15.  
[4019] 1 Cor. v. 8.  
[4020] Exod. xv. 1.  
[4021] Exod. xii. 7, 23.  
[4022] Luke xxiv. 5.

### Five Paths of Repentance

*St. John Chrysostom*

Would you like me to list also the paths of repentance? They are numerous and quite varied, and all lead to heaven.

A first path of repentance is the condemnation of your own sins: "Be the first to admit your sins and you will be justified." For this reason, too, the prophet wrote: "I said, I will accuse myself of my sins to the Lord, and Thou forgavest the wickedness of my heart." Therefore, you too should condemn your own sins; that will be enough reason for the Lord to forgive you, for a man who condemns his own sins is slower to commit them again. Rouse your conscience to accuse yourself within your own house, lest it become your accuser before the judgment seat of the Lord.

That, then, is one very good path of repentance. Another and less valuable one is to put out of our minds the harm done us by our enemies, in order to master our anger, and to forgive our fellow servants' sins against us. Then our own sins against the Lord

will be forgiven us. Thus you have another way to atone for sin: "For if you forgive your debtors, your heavenly Father will forgive you."

Do you want to know of a third path? It consists of prayer that is fervent and careful and comes from the heart.

If you want to hear of a fourth, I will mention almsgiving, whose power is great and far-reaching.

If, moreover, a man lives a modest, humble life, that, no less than the other things I have mentioned, takes sin away. Proof of this is the tax collector who had no good deeds to mention, but offered his humility instead and was relieved of a heavy burden of sins.

Thus I have shown you five paths of repentance: condemnation of your own sins, forgiveness of our neighbor's sins against us, prayer, almsgiving, and humility.

Do not be idle, then, but walk daily in all these paths; they are easy, and you cannot plead your poverty. For, though you live out your life amid great need, you can always set aside your wrath, be humble, pray diligently, and condemn your own sins; poverty is no hindrance. Poverty is not an obstacle to our carrying out the Lord's bidding, even when it comes to that path of repentance which involves giving money (almsgiving, I mean). The widow proved that when she put her two mites into the box!

Now that we have learned how to heal those wounds of our, let us apply the cures. Then, when we have regained genuine health, we can approach the Holy Table with confidence, go gloriously to meet Christ, the King of Glory, and attain the eternal blessings through the grace, mercy, and kindness of Jesus Christ our Lord.

### From the Optina Elders on Fasting

The Holy Church cries out: fasting is not avoiding food, but putting away all evil, controlling the tongue from idle talking and gossip, forbearing from anger, and abstaining from lust, falsehood, and flattery. Whoever fasts in this way, his fast is pleasing to God.

*St. Anthony*

Fasting is praiseworthy and necessary in its time and place: it is better to keep to a moderate use of food and drink, avoiding satiety, indicated by a slight heaviness, and on the other hand, avoiding excessive and inappropriate abstinence. Moderation, the middle path, makes a person more capable of spiritual activity.

*St. Ambrose*

### Upcoming Events 2015

22 February: Forgiveness Sunday. Forgiveness Vespers, 6:00 p.m., with Beth Marie's Ice Cream to follow. Plan to attend.

23-28 February: Clean Week, first week of the Great Fast, Great Canon of St. Andrew.

12 April: Holy Pascha, Feast of Feasts, Picnic

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!