

The Confessor's Tongue for April 5, A. D. 2015

Entry of Our Lord into Jerusalem; Palm Sunday

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.

A Prayer of St. Thalassios

From the Philokalia, vol. 2

O Christ, Master of all, free us from all the destructive passions and the thoughts born of them. For Thy sake we came into being, so that we might delight in the paradise which Thou hast planted and in which Thou hast placed us. We brought our present disgrace upon ourselves, preferring destruction to the delights of blessedness. We have paid for this, for we have exchanged eternal life for death. O Master, as once Thou hast looked on us, look on us now; as thou becamest man, save all of us. For thou camest to save us who were lost. Do not exclude us from the company of those who are being saved. Raise up our souls and save our bodies, cleansing us from all impurity. Break the fetters of the passions that constrain us, as once Thou hast broken the ranks of the impure demons. Free us from their tyranny, so that we may worship Thee alone, the eternal Light, having risen from the dead and dancing with the angels in the blessed, eternal, and indissoluble dance. Amen.

The Sayings of St. Anthony the Great 12

Some brothers came to find Abba Anthony to tell him about the visions they were having, and to find out from him if they were true or if they came from the demons. They had a donkey which died on the way. When they reached the place where the old man was, he said to them before they could ask him anything, 'How was it that the little donkey died on the way here?' They said, 'How do you know about that, Father?' And he told them, 'The demons showed me what happened.' So they said, 'That was what we came to question you about, for fear we were being deceived, for we have visions which often turn out to be true.' Thus the old man convinced them, by the example of the donkey that their visions came from the demons. Saying 12 in The Sayings of the Desert Fathers

Commentary: The devil is a "liar and the father of lies", but he and his demons will often mislead men, setting them up for greater deception by telling them the truth to get them to put initial trust in him and by appealing to their vanity. His program for man is nothing "but to kill, to steal, and destroy". That a vision turns out to be true is no guarantee that it is from God. Because of the danger of deception, we are instructed to disregard dreams and visions. We are to seek God, not visions. Sometimes the demons even foretell the future, which is generally a matter of curiosity to men. St. Anthony explains that they do not know the things that do not yet exist; rather, they see things beginning to happen and run on ahead to tell it to those who have not yet seen, thus appearing to tell the future. Sometimes even those 'predictions' fail as things turn out differently from the initial indication.

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In his *Life of Anthony*, St. Athanasius reports much of St. Anthony's experience with the demons, of which he had much. In short, Christians are not to fear the demons. Christ has conquered them, rendering them powerless against us. Oh, they may rage and scream and threaten, but they have no power. Their only device is to lie and get man to believe their lie, which then gives them a measure of power over man. When they appear to us or rage at us, they are attempting to get us to believe that they can harm us. St. Anthony correctly understood this when a crowd of demons appeared to him. He said, If you could hurt me, it would be enough for one of you to come. Nor would you all stand hear roaring and making noise, but would simply get on with harming me. That so many of you appear and make such noise proves your utter weakness.

In contending with the enemy, we put our faith in Christ, make the sign of the Cross, invoke the name of Jesus, and watchfully guard ourselves against lies. Here we are called to stand firm in the full armor of God. We are called to "resist the devil, and he will flee from you." We are to resist that lion who prowls about seeking whom he may devour standing firm in our faith. We do not dwell on the enemy, but we are aware of his devices. We fear God, not him, but we remain watchful and ready to resist his lies and suggestions, which he insinuates into our minds as thoughts. Thus the primary theatre of spiritual warfare is in the thoughts.

We should recognize that there are those in our time who do not believe that demons exist, considering them the attempt of primitive man to explain certain phenomena, such as mental illness, which they then did not understand. Now we supposedly know better and can dispense with such primitive explanations. We may best understand the references to demons and the devil in the Scriptures as a literary device personifying evil. Yet from Christ down to our time, we have a long record of personal encounters with personal but non-human rational powers of evil. One may choose whom to believe: the reasonings of the sceptics or the reports of Savior, the Scriptures, and the Saints. (*For contemporary reports of Saints, see St. Silouan of Athos, the Life of Elder Joseph the Hesychast, and The Gurus, the Young Man, and Elder Paisios for starters.*) Fr. Justin Frederick

Holy Week Notes

During Holy Week, we accompany Christ to His Passion and death. We stand in awe before the sight of the eternal Son of God who made the world being rejected, condemned, mistreated, and put to death by His own creature. At this time more than any other during the year, we contemplate what Christ our God has done for us. Thus, all the faithful are strongly

encouraged to make the services of Holy Week their priority out of love and respect for the One who gave His life for each of them.

The lenten melodies and the Prayer of St. Ephrem are used through the last Presanctified Liturgy of the week, on Holy Wednesday.

At Matins, candles are placed unlit in the candlestands before the service. They will be lit during the Alleluia after the Great Litany. Prostrations are made during Matins at the Troparion "Behold, the Bridegroom comes at midnight," the Exapostilarion "Thy bridal chamber I see adorned..." at the Prayer of St. Ephrem, and during the First Hour when the Priest comes out after the psalms for the troparion of the hour and again during the prayer of St. Ephrem.

Holy Week is the most solemn week of the entire year, celebrating the events of our salvation. The Holy Services should be our primary task each day. Children should be regular participants. A blessed silence should reign in our homes with no television or radio, etc. Lipstick should not be worn when venerating holy objects: Cross, Winding-sheet, Chalice, Icons.

Paschal Greetings in Various Languages

English: Christ is risen! Indeed, He is risen!

Greek: Christos anesti! Alethos anesti!

Russian: Khristos Voskresye! Bo istinu voskresye!

Romanian: Hristos a inviat! Adeverat a inviat!

Arabic: El Messieh kahm! Hakken kahm!

Spanish: Cristo ha resucitado! En verdad ha resucitado!

Serbian: Cristos vaskres! Vaistinu vaskres!

German: Christus ist auferstanden! Wahrlich er ist erstanden!

Latin: Christus resurrexit! Vere resurrexit!

Japanese: Christos fukkatsu! Jitsu ni fukkatsu!

French: Christ est ressuscité! En vérité il est ressuscité!

Norwegian: Kristus er oppstanden! Han er sannelig oppstanden!

Italian: Cristo e' risorto! Veramente e' risorto!

Eritrean-Tigre: Christos tensiou! Bahake tensiou!

Swahili: Kristo amefufukka! Kweli Amefufukka!

Georgian: Kriste aghsda! Cheshdmaritad aghsda!

Holy Week Needs

You may volunteer or be recruited for these (and other) tasks!

1. Bake artos (bread) for Paschal Vigil
2. Boil and dye eggs for Paschal Vigil (we need 8 dozen for sure).
3. Take home lamb to prepare for the picnic.
4. Clean & decorate church on Holy Friday.
5. Prepare egg hunt for children (candy into eggs).
6. Remove tomb during the Paschal procession, light all candles, reposition flowers.
7. Greet at Paschal Vigil and help guests.

8. Men and boys for processions on Holy Friday (to carry cross, winding sheet, etc.) and Pascha night.

9. Put out lights to mark the procession path.

10. People to read the Paschal Gospel from John chapter 1 (1:1-14, but we usually read 1:1-5, 14) in various languages at the paschal liturgy.

Holy Friday Fast

The Typicon calls for a total Fast on Holy Friday, not eating or drinking at all in honor of Christ's death because of our sins. Strictly, this fast would not be broken until after the Liturgy on Holy Saturday. Those who cannot do this are permitted to eat after the Burial Vespers Friday afternoon.

We have traditionally put food out during the church cleaning and decorating on Holy Friday morning. I have never been comfortable with that, and I think the time has come for us to strengthen our observance of Holy Friday. We don't put out meat and dairy at church functions during the fasts. Neither should we put out food on Holy Friday. We may feed our children as needed, even during the work time at church, but I'd ask that adults not put out food for general consumption. Water, coffee, and tea are blessed for partaking of, and we'll make coffee (don't think most of us are ready for abstaining from liquids on this day), but those adults who cannot or will not observe the Holy Friday Fast are asked to eat before they come or after they leave so that we may all properly and lovingly support one another in the fast on the day of the Lord's death for us.

The Tradition of the Pascha Basket

On the Great Feast of Pascha, many Orthodox Christians bring to the church a basket containing those foods that they have abstained from during the Fast—both meat and dairy products.

The rich Paschal Bread (kulich, full of eggs and butter) symbolizes Christ, the living bread (John 6:51) who came down from Heaven to give life to the world. The meat products symbolize the sacrificial animals of the Old Testament, which foreshadow the true sacrifice of our Savior. The dairy products remind us of the prosperity of peace of the Messianic times which had been foretold by the Prophets. Eggs were always considered a symbol of resurrection—the emergence of new life. Our Savior came forth from the tomb as chick from its egg at birth.

The Pascha basket is usually covered with a decorated scarf or white cover. The baskets are blessed following the Paschal Liturgy. After the baskets have been blessed, our custom is to break the fast together. As we endure the struggle of the Fast together, it is fitting that we share together the joy of Christ's Resurrection and the Feast it brings to us.

Upcoming Events 2015

5-11 April: Great & Holy Week

12 April: Holy Pascha, Feast of Feasts, Picnic

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!