

The Confessor's Tongue for June 21, A. D. 2015

Third Sunday after Pentecost: All Saints of North America

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.

The Sayings of St. Anthony the Great 21

It happened one day that one of the brethren in the monastery of Abba Elias was tempted. Cast out of the monastery, he went over the mountain to Abba Anthony.

The brother lived near him for a while and then Anthony sent him back to the monastery from which he had been expelled. When the brothers saw him, they cast him out yet again, and he went back to Abba Anthony saying, 'My Father, they will not receive me.' Then the old man sent them a message saying, 'A boat was shipwrecked at sea and lost its cargo; with great difficulty it reached the shore; but you want to throw into the sea that which has found safe harbor on the shore.' When the brothers understood that it was Abba Anthony who had sent them this monk, they received him at once.

Anthony Saying 21 *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*

Commentary: "One rotten apple spoils the whole barrel." This saying, which is certainly true in the physical world and at least partially true in the spiritual world, would seem to be the thought of the monks moving them to cast out their fallen brother. St. Paul says something similar to the Corinthians in the case of the man who had taken his father's wife as his own (I Cor 5). Paul expresses his displeasure over their toleration of this immorality and tells them to "deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." He warns his spiritual children that "a little leaven leavens the whole lump" and calls on them to cast out the old leaven and "put away from yourselves the evil person".

Thus, the brothers seem to have acted on a solid principle. That they did is confirmed by Anthony not reproving them for casting the brother out in the first place. The brother, leaving the monastery, settles near Anthony for a time. Anthony sees his repentance, and, when he deems the time ripe, he sends him back to his monastery healed. But the brothers refuse him entrance, and it is for this refusal to receive the penitent that Anthony reproves them with his parable of the wrecked ship.

The Church is a hospital for those wounded and disfigured by sin, but we must not abuse this image: the Church is a hospital, but only for the sick, wounded person who is repentant. The whole Church is founded upon repentance. Without initial repentance, one may not enter Her, and without continued repentance until life's end, one may not remain in Her. Both St. John the Baptist's and Christ's basic message was "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The Church is a hospital for sinners, sick and wounded by sin, but one must acknowledge one's sin to be admitted for care. To reject the Church's diagnosis, to stubbornly and pridefully insist on acceptance in the Church as an

unrepentant sinner is to exclude oneself from the community of penitent sinners.

While this was initially the case with the man in Corinth, after being excluded from fellowship, he repented, and St. Paul in his second epistle to that church called on them to receive him back into fellowship. The same principle is at work here. The fallen brother repented and demonstrated that repentance in his way of life. Anthony sent him back in that repentant state, but the brothers would not receive him because of his prior sin. Anthony properly but gently chastises them through his parable, and they relent.

A baptized brother who chooses to live in sin without repentance is as pernicious to others in the Church as a rotten apple in a barrel is to the other sound apples. If the Church acts to exclude him from fellowship formally, it merely confirms what the man has already effected spiritually by his choice of sin. Very often, such people simply remove themselves from fellowship, sensing the incompatibility of their willful sin with the life of repentance leading to holiness in the Church. He who does not remove himself and who refuses to repent after private admonition must be removed to protect others from his bad example, to humble him, and to move him to repentance. The goal is always humility and renewed repentance for the sinner.

Because the Church is a hospital, any sinner who is willing to repent and believe may be admitted, and a fallen brother who demonstrates his repentance in deed as well as word must be re-admitted. Of course, the brother who falls and gets up again in repentance is not excluded at all. Depending on his sin, it is possible he will not be re-admitted immediately to the Chalice, but he will not be sent out the door. That measure is reserved for those who sin and will not repent, and so, by their bad example, would cause others to fall.

Fr. Justin

21 June: Martyr Julian

Born in the city of Tarsus, Cilicia and for confession of his faith he was subjected to severe torture during the persecution of Diocletian. He was "lashed with a whip and cruelly beaten up and imprisoned; injured by being moved from place to place, surrounded by wild beasts". These tortures proceeded for an entire year in different cities of Cilicia. Finally, enclosed in sackcloth filled with sand and creeping poisonous snakes, St. Julian was cast into the sea and gained glory by a martyr's death. His relics were borne by the waves "from the depths of the sea" to a shore where "an honorable woman seeing it committed it for burial". They reposed in Antioch during the time of St. John Chrysostom. Because of his manner of death, St. Julian is called on for prayerful help in protection from creeping things

or snakes and from insects harmful to kitchen gardens and fields.

The Value of the Jesus Prayer

The prayer “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me the sinner” makes two basic points: the dogmatic one—acknowledgement of the Divinity of Christ—and the suppliant one—supplication for our salvation. That is, the confession of faith in Christ is connected with the confession of our inability to be saved of our own accord. This says everything, and the whole struggle of the Christian is based on these two points: faith in Christ and awareness of our sinfulness. The “Jesus Prayer”, therefore, expresses all the effort of the faithful in a few words and summarizes all the dogmatic teaching of our Orthodox Church.

We acquire the double knowledge through the Jesus Prayer. St. Maximus points out that the passion of pride consists of two ignorances: the ignorance of the divine power and the ignorance of human weakness. And this double ignorance creates a “confused mind.” Proud, therefore, is the man of ignorance, whereas, on the contrary, humble is the man of *double knowledge*. The latter knows his own weakness and the power of Christ. So, we acknowledge and confess the power of Christ (“Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God”) as well as our own weakness (“have mercy on me the sinner”) through the Jesus Prayer. We acquire in this way the blessed state of humility. Where there is humility, there, also, is the grace of Christ, and this grace is the Kingdom of Heaven. Can you see, then, the worth of the Jesus Prayer? Can you see that we can obtain the Kingdom of Heaven by its power?

IC XC NIKA

This very ancient monogram is widely used in the Church, particularly as a liturgical expression painted on the doors into sacristies and as the stamp for prosphora bread used in Holy Communion.

The expression IC XC is an abbreviation for the name of Jesus Christ using the first and last letters of those name in Greek. NIKA is from the Greek verb “to conquer.” Thus we have: “Jesus Christ hath conquered!”

The Holy Apostle Paul teaches us, “God hath given you the victory through His Son Jesus Christ.” Let us always cling to that victory and not allow ourselves to be moved off the right path or to be moved away from the victorious Christ. Let us bear in our hearts the seal, IC XC NIKA, “Jesus Christ hath conquered!” As this monogram is found on holy things, let us be assured of victory over all enemies by the Name and Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!

The Third and Sixth Hours

The Third and Sixth Hours are read before the Divine Liturgy. The Third Hour commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit at 9:00 a.m. upon the

Apostles at Pentecost. The Sixth Hour holds in memory the Crucifixion of Christ on the Cross at noon. We do well not only to be on time for the Divine Liturgy but even prayerfully attend the reading of the Hours by being present when they begin about 15 minutes before the scheduled Liturgy. Our presence at the Hours enables us to “settle-in” and be prayerfully conditioned for the Divine Liturgy.

Question & Answer

Q. If someone has left the Holy Orthodox Faith, is it possible for him to become Orthodox again?

A. Yes, of course. If an Orthodox Christian has been away from the Faith and has not formally converted to any other religion or Christian church, he can be admitted back into the Church by Confession and Holy Communion. If an Orthodox Christian has joined another church or religion, he is admitted back into Orthodoxy by Confession, Chrismation, and Holy Communion. The most important thing is that he desires to return to the Holy Faith. Any priest will do all he can to make this transition grace-filled. While those returning to the Faith must be aware of the gravity of the sin of apostasy, they must also have the assurance that they will be received back in love and forgiveness. There is no shame for them in coming back to the Church, only joy on the part of the Lord and His Church and a warm embrace from the faithful.

From St. Moses of Optina (+1862)

“We must bear one another’s spiritual infirmities cheerfully, without bitterness. After all, if someone is physically ill, not only are we not offended with him, but we even help him in any way we can. That is how we must treat spiritual illnesses also.”

Abbot Moses counselled everyone to keep what he called St. Dorotheos’s rule for being at peace: “Do not want things to turn out as you would like, but what whatever happens. That way you will be at peace with everyone.... One who does not have his own will always gets his way. Since he has no desire of his own, no matter what happens with him, he is content—and so it turns out that he always fulfills his desires, for he does not want things to turn out as he wishes, but as they do turn out.”

Upcoming Events 2015

8-28 June Apostles' Fast
18 July Baptism of Onesimus Bramlett
1-14 August Dormition Fast
6 September Maeyers-Williams Wedding
7 September Labor Day Picnic

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!