

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

Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Pentecost; Martyrs Gurias, Salmonas, Abibas; Ven. Paisius Velichkovsky
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 30

Some say of St. Anthony that he was 'Spirit-borne', that is, carried along by the Holy Spirit, but he would never speak of this to men. Such men see what is happening in the world, as well as knowing what is going to happen.

Saying 30 Sayings of the Desert Fathers

Commentary: As St. Seraphim of Sarov expressed it, the goal of the Christian life is to acquire the Holy Spirit. Though all receive the Holy Spirit at Baptism, here we speak of something else: one who has submitted himself to God, who has become a clean temple where the Holy Spirit may dwell fully without being offended by one's life. Here is one who does not quench the Spirit by his carelessness and inattention or grieve the Spirit by sins. Here is one who is constantly aware of God's presence, who perceives the promptings of the Holy Spirit, and is guided by Him in all that he does and says.

We read in the Scriptures of revelations given to John when he was "in the Spirit" and caught up into heaven on the Lord's day and of prophets and apostles being caught up by the Spirit and taken to another place. Christ speaks of the Spirit to Nicodemus (John 3): "The wind bloweth where it listeth [desires], and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" Being in the Spirit, one is moved not by the world but by God Himself. Such a person sees the world as God sees it and interacts with it as God prompts him.

The acquisition of the Spirit and being carried along by the Spirit are other ways of expressing the goal of the Christian life: deification, being conformed to the image of Christ, partaking of the Divine Nature. It is a level of perfection in which God and man are joined and man willingly conforms his will fully to God's. St. Silouan of Athos describes to the Monk Father Stratonikos how the perfect speak: "The perfect never say anything of themselves. . . They only say what the Spirit inspires them to say." Thus, this being 'spirit borne' speaks of a high level of spiritual attainment.

There are many things we have yet to experience in God. "Mind hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man the things the Lord hath in store for those who love Him." Those who enter deeply into the life of God experience great and wonderful things that most of us cannot imagine. And they are reticent to speak of it. A sign of a true saint is that there is no self-promotion, no calling of attention to himself. And one never speaks of the treasures one has received from God lest one lose them. Speaking too freely to others of the gifts and experiences one has received from God opens one to the temptation of vainglory and one's listeners to the temptation of envy.

St. John the Theologian was "in the Spirit" on the Lord's day when he was caught up into heaven and the Apocalypse was revealed to him. The lives of the saints bear witness to many things that a naturalistic view of the world considers miraculous and likely fabulous, but one who is in the Spirit sees and moves in ways that transcend the natural world—naturally, in accordance with the nature God made him to have. May God grant us to hunger to go further into Him. *Fr. Justin Frederick*

An Example of What It Means Not To Judge From the Life of St. John the Almsgiver (Nov 12)

The blessed John took great care to judge no one as a sinner, especially if he was a monk, because once he fell into sin by judging a monk, under the following circumstances. A youthful monk came to Alexandria in the company of a young and very beautiful maiden, spending several days there. Certain persons noticed them and were scandalized, supposing them to be guilty of fornication, and told the holy Patriarch John of this. He ordered that the strangers be seized, beaten severely, and locked in prison apart from one another. When night fell, the monk appeared to the Patriarch in a dream, showed him the wounds he bore upon his shoulders from the merciless flogging he had suffered, and said to him, "Does the sight of this please you, Master? Is it thus that you have learned to 'feed the flock of Christ, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly,' as the Apostle says? Believe me: you, as a man, have been led astray.

After saying this, the monk disappeared. The Patriarch awoke from sleep and began to ponder the vision. He understood that he had sinned, and sat upon his bed, grieving and lamenting. The next morning, he commanded that the monk be brought before him. With great difficulty the monk came, for he could scarcely move on account of his many stripes. When the Patriarch laid eyes on him, he fell at once into a stupor. After about an hour, he came to himself and asked the monk to remove his garment to show him his shoulders, so that he could see whether his wounds were like those of the monk he beheld in his dream. He did so, and by chance exposed his private parts. All those present saw that he was a eunuch, but because he was young no one had recognized him as such until then. The Patriarch saw that his body was covered with wounds and was very sorry for what had occurred. He sent for those who had slandered the monk and excommunicated them for three years. Then he asked the monk for forgiveness, saying to him, "Forgive me, my brother, for what I have done to you out of ignorance. I have sinned both before you and God. Nevertheless, it is not proper that you should go about the city with a

maiden, scandalizing the laity, for you war the monastic schema.”

The monk answered him humbly, “Believe me, Master; I do not lie but speak the truth. Some time ago, while I was still in Gaza, I went to venerate the sepulcher of the holy martyrs Cyrus and John. It was evening when I met the maiden, who fell at my feet and begged me with tears to permit her to accompany me. I turned and fled, but she ran after me, saying, ‘I entreat you by the God of Abraham, Who came down to save sinners and who shall judge both the living and the dead, not to forsake me!’

“Hearing this, I said to her, ‘Why do you speak thus, O maiden?’

“With tears in her eyes she replied, ‘I am a Jewess, and wish to abandon the evil faith of my forefathers and become a Christian. Therefore, I beseech you, Father, not to forsake me; but save the soul of one who wishes to believe in Christ.’

“At this, I feared God’s judgment, so I took her with me and instructed her in the holy faith. When we reached the sepulcher of the holy martyrs, I baptized her in the church there, and have since continued to travel with her in simplicity of heart. It is my intent to take her to a convent for virgins.”

The Patriarch sighed and said, “How many are the hidden servants of God, of whom we, the wretched ones, know nothing!”

The saint then told those present about the dream he beheld the night before and took one hundred pieces of gold with the intention of giving them to the monk. But the monk did not wish to take even a single coin, saying, “If a monk has faith that God cares for him, he has not need for gold; and if he loves gold, he does not believe in God.”

So saying, he bowed down before the Patriarch and departed. From that time forth, the blessed John began to revere all monks greatly, both the good and those who seemed to live an evil life. He built a monastery which served as a guest house for travelling monks and carefully guarded himself from judging others.

Comment: Notice how severely the Patriarch of Alexandria judges those who saw the monk and girl, drew a conclusion that they were committing fornication, and brought that accusation to the Patriarch. They lacked proof of the charge, but brought it anyway, and the Patriarch judged the monk and girl as though the charge were established and the witnesses true. As it was, they judged the situation wrongly and brought slander to the Patriarch, upon which he unwisely acted, and so the Patriarch excommunicated them for three years. Bearing false witness, truly or accidentally, is a serious offense. In the Old Testament, the penalty for bearing false witness against someone, i.e. accusing someone before a judge that he had committed an offense of which he was, in fact, innocent, carried the same penalty for the false witness as the crime of which he accused the innocent. A most serious matter this is. How much better our legal system would function if perjury were taken this seriously!

Notice, too, in what his sinful judgment consists: in receiving unsubstantiated charges and acting upon them as though they were true. He judged the monk and the girl guilty without adequate evidence.

Finally, notice that he did have the authority to judge and punish wrongdoers when their wrongdoing was admitted or clearly established.

In another case, a youth ran off with a young nun, and everyone condemned him for bringing about his own damnation and that of the nun and for scandalizing the faithful by his behavior. Saint John told his flock, “Children, do not judge him, for, doing this, you make yourselves guilty of two sins. Your first sin is that you transgress God’s commandment by condemning your brother, for it is written: ‘Judge nothing before the time.’ Your second sin is that you slander your brother, for you do not know whether he still continues to sin or if he has already repented.

In this case, notice the judgment consists in concluding that the two are going to hell for their sin and in not allowing for the possibility of repentance.

Reading During the Fast

This fast, if you need some guidance in what or how to read, consider this. Read the General Epistles: James, First and Second Peter, First, Second, and Third John, and Jude. They contain only twenty-one short chapters. One may easily read any of these books in one sitting.

During the Fast, on Monday read James, on Tuesday First Peter, and Wednesday Second Peter, on Thursday First John, on Friday Second and Third John and Jude. Saturday and Sunday you may read anything you missed during the week. If you do this, you will read each epistle six times during the course of the fast, become much more thoroughly acquainted with their contents, and have opportunity to acquire deeper wisdom from your reading. May the Lord illumine those who undertake to apply themselves to His Word!

15 November St. Paisius Velichkovsky

St. Paisius of Moldavia translated the *Philokalia* into Slavonic and restored the practice of spiritual eldership among the Slavs. This transmission continues to bear fruit unto the present.

Upcoming Events 2015

- 15 November Nativity Fast begins.
- 21 November Great Feast Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple
- 6 December Feast of St. Nicholas
- 17 December Thursday, 7:00 p.m. Holy Unction
- 26 December Feast Day at Nativity of our Lord Monastery
- 31 December All-Night Vigil for St. Basil

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!