

The Confessor's Tongue for May 8, A. D. 2016

Thomas Sunday; Antipascha; St. John the Theologian

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.

Thomas Sunday & Antipascha

This Sunday commemorates the appearance of the Lord to the Apostles after His resurrection and the touching of His wounds by the Apostle Thomas. The appearance of the risen Lord to the Apostle Thomas and all the eleven is selected for the first Sunday after the Paschal Sunday because the circumstances of this appearance serve as the indisputable proof of the resurrection of the Lord from the tomb, "as from the chamber, with His immaculate flesh". It assures not only believers and the amazed of the joy of all the followers of the Lord, but even the infidel pagans and the enemies of Christ the Savior - the Judeans. It assures that by the power of His Divinity Jesus Christ is risen again from the tomb, that after the resurrection He did not have an imaginary or illusory flesh in which form the bodiless spirits or inhabitants of heaven are vested when they sometimes appear to us or to the holy brethren, but the real immaculate flesh which He has assumed from the womb of the All-holy Theotokos, with which He was nailed to the cross and on which there remained wounds even after the resurrection.

The eighth day after Pascha as the ending of the celebration of Bright Week was a special celebration since ancient times, as if it replaced the very same Day of Pascha and was called Antipascha, which means 'instead of Pascha.' From this day the cycle of Sundays and weeks of the entire year begins. On this day the commemoration of the resurrection of Christ is updated for the first time. This Sunday of the Antipascha was called the New Sunday, i.e. the first day of renewal or simply renewal. The more proper name is the real day, the eighth day after Pascha, that on this eighth day the Lord Himself willed the renewal of the joy of His resurrection with a new appearance to the Holy Apostles.

St. Gregory the Theologian says in his Homily on this Sunday, "With the ancient and good purpose, it is to honor the day of renewal as established law, or better to say, to honor the new benefactions with the day of renewal. But was not the day of renewal also the first Resurrection Day, followed by the blessed and radiant night? Why do you give this name to the present day? That was the day of salvation, but this day is the commemoration of salvation. That day differentiates the burial and the resurrection in itself, but this day is purely of the new birth. It is the first day among those following it and eighth among those coming before it".

Commemorating this day of "renewal" the Holy Church inspires in us the necessity for our beneficial spiritual renewal. "The real renewal", the same Holy Father teaches, "we now celebrate, is the going from death to life. And so we put off ourselves the old man and renewed ourselves; that we too might walk in

newness of life (Rom. 6:4)". "The old has passed away, behold, the new has come" (2 Cor. 5:17).

Radonitsa: Day of Rejoicing

"The Day of Joy" or "Radonitsa" is celebrated by the Church on Tuesday of Thomas week as the paschal commemoration of the departed. The profound meaning of this custom lies in the fact that after the bright days of the Pascha, the Holy Church hurries to share her joy with the departed who also have hope of the Resurrection. This joy was transmitted to the dead by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself who descended into Hell to preach victory over death. "Why did our fathers establish that we gather at the cemetery?" asks St. John Chrysostom. He answers, "Because today Jesus Christ descended into Hell to the dead." It is clear from these words of the great teacher, who lived in the fourth century, how ancient is the custom of commemorating the dead after Pascha.

Though the Typicon does not prescribe this observance, it is a prevalent pious custom of the Russian Church. In Belorussia, it is observed as a national holiday. It likely came to be observed this day because memorial services (pannikhidas) are forbidden from Holy Thursday through Thomas Sunday, and Mondays are usually a fast day for monasteries, so the Tuesday of Thomas week was the first day on which to remember the departed.

"Today, the faithful departed are remembered in Divine Liturgies, 'koliva' is prepared and blessed in the churches in memory of those who have fallen asleep, and the Orthodox graves in cemeteries are blessed by the priests and visited by the faithful. On this day alms are given to the poor. Furthermore, it should be noted that due to the great spiritual joy this jubilant commemoration bears, it is called in the Slavonic tongue, 'Radonitsa,' or Day of Rejoicing."

Commemorations at Proskomide

Many of you fill out the commemoration sheets with the names of those you wish to be remembered before the Lord at the Proskomide (the Liturgy of Preparation) of the Divine Liturgy. The particles taken for those names after Communion are immersed in the chalice with the prayer "Wash away, O Lord, the sins of all those commemorated here, by Thy precious blood." This is a way in which we may pray for others and offer them to God.

Ideally, each person would have a commemoration book to put in the basket each week. Ideally, commemorations would be submitted at Vigil the night before the Liturgy. We offer the commemoration sheets for those who don't have commemoration books (we have not found a good source for suitable books, but we need to try again).

To do this more efficiently, please observe the following guidelines.

1. Please use the baptismal name of each Orthodox Christian you wish to have commemorated: Anthony, not Collin or Tony; Katherine, not Kate, etc.

2. There is no need to include last names or additional details about a person (sick, pregnant, etc.) The Lord knows.

3. Monks and nuns should be recorded on the sheet as "Monk James" or "Nun Mary" or "Priestmonk Patrick".

4. Priests, Deacons, and Bishops should be recorded as "Priest John" (or Archpriest, etc., if you know), "Deacon Thomas", "Bishop Peter", "Archbishop Paul", "Metropolitan Tikhon", etc.

5. Please do not use "Fr. X" or "Matushka Y". Priest's wives do not need a title, just their baptismal name. "Father" is ambiguous as it could equally refer to a priest or a simple monk.

6. Please write neatly and not too small. That facilitates the reading of many names by the priest in a timely manner.

7. Non-Orthodox are to be indicated by an "n.o." in front of the name or placed in the non-Orthodox section. They are commemorated differently.

What To Do During Sleeplessness at Night

If you cannot fall asleep for a long time after you go to bed, then, after lying down, try to imagine the Lord Jesus Christ in His sufferings on the cross and pray to Him in your heart about everything that comes into your heart: pray that the Lord God may deliver you and your family from all sins, from every evil will, and from every sinful impurity, from deadly plague, from hunger, from lightning and storms, from sudden death, and especially from eternal death.

Pray that the Lord God may bring all sinners to heartfelt repentance and correction, that He may give to His Church faithful pastors who will zealously care for its purity, firmness, and glory; that He may subdue the enemies of His Church and persuade everyone of its purity and holiness, and that He may dispose everyone to sincere acceptance of its truth and principles.

Or try to imagine yourself at your death and think something like this: "If I were to die right now, what would become of me...? Now I lie in bed and find it annoying that I have not been able to fall asleep; but how hard will it be to lie in hell if I go there because of my sins. In hell there is never any sleep, not even for a moment."

When you happen to wake up in the night, always turn your thoughts immediately to the Lord God, taking care lest some foolish thought enter your heart, signing yourself with the sign of the Cross.

If you still do not sleep, it is better to get out of bed, stand before the holy icons, and read psalms with full attention, make full prostrations, or do prostrations with the Jesus Prayer until you are tired

and peace enters your soul and you can go to bed. *From "How To Live A Holy Life"*

From Elder Barsanuphius of Optina

In its aspiration for the New Jerusalem, the city of the Lord, the soul at times finds consolation in music. In the world, I loved serious music, like Beethoven and Schubert. I once went to a concert. A friend of mine met me and asked: "Where are you coming from, and why are you so happy and exultant?"

"I've been to a concert. What marvellous music! What delight it leads to soul to!"

"Well, there are even higher delights, different ones. If you would only go off in that direction, it would lead you into another realm, to the realm of the delight of prayer."

And he was not lying to me. I loved to attend church, especially the All-night Vigil in our Resurrection Cathedral. I loved the semi-darkness, the gentle twinkling light of the lampadas. It was exceptionally nice to pray there.

And here you are, going to the Vigil now; pray there. Try to pray properly; try to enter into and be immersed within yourselves. You know, in each person there exists a world of unspeakable beauty, in which are hidden many pure delights and ineffable joys. Go within yourself and they will be revealed to you. However, don't expect only delights from prayer; don't despair when you don't feel any joys. In fact, it even happens that you stand and stand in church and it's as if you don't have a heart inside you, but a chunk of wood, and an unplaneable one at that. Well, what of it? Thank the Lord for the chunk of wood. It means that this was what was needed. You see, another soul, having experienced lofty delights, might get a swelled head. A condition like "stony insensibility" humbles him down. We can't demand prayerful bliss from God. From us is demanded prayerful labor, but joys are sent by God when it's pleasing to God and to our benefit. And so, let us pray to Him and rely in everything on His holy will!

Upcoming Events 2015-16

1 May Holy Pascha, 3:00 p.m. Picnic, Egg Hunt
28 May Baptism of Estefania Dean 2:30 p.m.
30 May Memorial Day Picnic
11 June, Saturday, Installation of Bishop Alexander
30-31 July, 15-Year Anniversary with Bishop Alexander

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!