

The Confessor's Tongue for June 19, A. D. 2016

8th Sunday of Pascha; Pentcost, Holy Trinity, Apostle Jude

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 Commandments of Christ

"If ye love Me, keep My commandments." (John 14:15)

Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.
Matthew 6:31-33

Two correlated commands are combined here, a negative and a positive.

First, the negative command "take no thought" does not mean "don't think about food, drink, and clothes" but means "don't be anxious or concerned" about such things. As Jesus says earlier (v.25) "Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?" Our life does not consist in such things, though living in the fallen world, we are tempted to think that it does. Most of the world lives as though life consists of food, drink, clothing, and other such possessions and pleasures and spends all its time, though, and energy in trying to acquire them.

Jesus speaks about how God feeds the birds and clothes the flowers of the field and then challenges our faith: if He does this for birds and grass, will He not care much more for man made in His image out of love for whom He became man and died? Of course He will. It is our little faith that blinds us to His love and providential care for us. And Jesus adds: "your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things." Christians do not deny the legitimate needs of the body. God the Father knows those needs and will provide them. Salvation does not consist in escaping the body and its needs. Rather, it is connected with the deification of the whole man and the proper subjection of the body to the soul and spirit of man illumined by Christ.

Then comes the positive command conjoined with a promise: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you." Here is a classic case of saying no to something so that we can say yes to something much better. The good is often the enemy of the best and if we would secure the best we have to reject the good. But here, worrying and being anxious (impassioned) about the material side of life cannot be said to be good at all, and this worry about what is material and immediate blinds us to what is more precious but less visible. So we must banish the worry driving us to seek material things first and seek first Christ and His Kingdom instead. If we do this, He offers promise in return that He will give us all the things our body needs.

Lest we seek Christ for mercenary reasons, we should notice that what God gives us is all the things the Father knows we have *need* of. This does not mean

we get everything we might *want*. The modern world excels and creating new wants in man and then transforming those wants into needs and rights. These leaves us so obsessed with the material world and its goods that we can scarcely glimpse the things of God. No, we are not to worry, but are to seek God first and be grateful for what He provides for us to meet our physical needs.

What does it mean to "seek the Kingdom of God"? The Kingdom is that over which God reigns. All of creation obeys God but man and the fallen angels. Man must actively work to submit himself to his true King. We do this in prayer and in directing our lives according to God's will as revealed in Christ's commandments.

We seek the kingdom, Christ's full reign over all our lives, as our first priority. This search, this desire, this need lies at the center of our lives. Other pursuits pale in comparison and occupy a secondary place. Hence, as the beginning of the Divine Liturgy, the Church proclaims the kingdom we see: "Blessed is the Kingdom".

God gives His kingdom to us willingly. In Luke, this command is put thus: "But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32).

The kingdom we seek is connected to the Holy Spirit in whom we seek to be renewed on this day of Pentecost. "The Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:17). To experience the fullness of the kingdom, the Holy Spirit is required. Fortunately, Christ says: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" (Luke 11:13). May God grant us an increased portion of His Spirit as we ask and seek.

Fr. Justin Frederick

The Virtue of Hatred

Abhor that which is evil, cleave to what is good. Romans 12:9

The word "hate" has a certain prominence in the news in our time, finding its way with ever-growing frequency into public discourse on political and social themes. Typically, it is inferred as the unworthy motivation for unflattering views expressed about a certain group of people. The group is criticized, doesn't like it, and rejects the criticism on the basis that it is motivated by hate towards the group. As no one wants to be accused of being hateful, the accusation works effectively either to discredit or to generate apologies, suppressing honest discourse.

Yet what if there were a place for hate in a person's life? What if one needs hate? Some might be surprised that Bible commands us to hate, and that

command is not found in the Old Testament, but in the New! This hatred is both a virtue and a necessity for us if we are to live a Christian life.

We generally think of hatred as a sin, and, when directed against man made in God's image, it is. Yet hatred is not something that has to be completely rooted out of our souls; it merely needs to be directed against the proper object.

In Romans chapter 12, St. Paul commands us to "abhor that which is evil." The Greek word *apostugeo* contains the root verb "to hate" with a prefix which adds intensity to that hatred. This hatred, properly translated as 'abhor', is not a passive dislike; it is an active, violent hatred and detestation. The Latin word from which we get 'abhor' means 'to shudder' a violent, involuntary reaction to something with which we desire no close contact, for example, the sound of fingernails on a slate blackboard.

This violent reaction of intense hatred is to be directed against that which is evil. The Greek word for translated as 'evil', *poneros*, used 80 times in the NT, is translated as "evil or wicked" in all but five occurrences in the King James. Satan, the devil, is "the evil one" from whom we ask deliverance in the Lord's Prayer. Things that are evil harm and oppress us and others and corrupt our souls and faculties so that they do not work as they were created to work. God is good, *kalos*, and makes us such while our enemy is evil and seeks to make us like himself.

Thus we are to hate both the devil and his evil works; we are to hate the corruption that the devil works in human lives through sin and death. We are to hate sin, not merely hating it but abhorring it.

But all too often we do not abhor sin; rather we like it or even love it. Rather than shuddering before it in revulsion and fleeing from involvement with it, we toy with it, play with it, entertain ourselves with it, and as a result, we live lives far short of the potential God has given us—simply due to failure to abhor evil.

While on vacation a few years ago, I had the misfortune of being exposed to two episodes of *The Bachelorette* on television. It was repulsive to see a young woman set up with first four then three young men, to 'date' them in exotic, romantic locations far removed from the reality of day to day life, to kiss them, to sleep with them—all on national television, all in the name of finding 'true love' and the man she should pick to marry. The woman had no clue as to the real nature of love or on what basis she might make a wise, rational decision about what man would be good to marry and so could offer no guidance in the matter to a viewer. Such unseemly material is offered to us as 'entertainment' and consumed ravenously by millions!

Such 'entertainment' is unworthy of a Christian. If there is anything of Christ's life in us, such things must cause our souls to shudder and turn away. To hate and despise such things is both virtuous and necessary for Christians to protect us from what will harm us. And if we find our hearts sinfully drawn to

such things, let us ask God to strengthen us in the virtue of hatred of evil! *Fr. Justin Frederick*

Soul-Profiting Instructions of the Elder Vicent of Secu Monastery, Romania (+1945)

Two Kinds of Prayer: There are two kinds of prayer: one of glorification of God, with humbleness of mind, and the second of requesting from God needful things. When you pray, do not come right away to requests. Put aside yourself and your needs at the beginning of prayer. Leave the earth and rise up towards the heavens. When you pray, do not let your mind wander here and there, but admit your insignificance and weakness, and the narrowness of your understanding.

The Holy Bible: There does not exist under the sun a thing more grievous than a Christian who knows how to read but doesn't have a Bible in his house and doesn't read it daily in order to gain grace and strength.

Frequent Confession weakens the power of the devils.

Preparing for Confession: Before going to Confession, search your conscience for a long time and see if there are small sins, which are often able to become more harmful than big ones. Then write on paper everything in which you have sinned...If [the priest] gives you permission to have Holy Communion, still don't be in a hurry, since it is fire and burns. But search your conscience some more, and then, with great fear take Communion.

Talking in Church: Talking and laughter in church are sins against the Holy Spirit, that is to say, against the divine power, since through this the holiness of the Church is scorned and an occasion for the temptation of people arises.

About Putting Off Spiritual Things: This is the most sure snare of the devil. He says, "You'll have time later to pray and make prostrations, and to fast tonight or tomorrow!" And you put off everything spiritually profitable until death. Behold, in this way a man loses himself, by his own will, unrepentant. Whose fault is it?

Concerning Perseverance: Without good deeds and perseverance, you will not take the Kingdom of God. Since it is necessary first of all to desire those things that you want to receive and to ask with faith, with patience, and with labors. For everything gained by labors you keep attentively, so as not to lose it, since you know how much you have labored for it. What would the Prophet Solomon have profited if he had received the gift of wisdom without labors?

Upcoming Events 2016

24 June Game Night 6 to 8 p.m.
27-29 June Apostles' Fast
30-31 July, 15-Year Anniversary

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!