

The Confessor's Tongue for July 3, A. D. 2016

2nd Sunday after Pentecost, All Saints of N. America, Martyr Hyacinth, St. Philip of Moscow
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.

Sunday of All Saints of North America

This second Sunday after Pentecost, we remember all the Saints who have blossomed in our land.

We remember St. Herman, the monk who came to Alaska as one of the original missionaries in 1794 and lived there on Spruce Island until his repose in 1837, teaching the Christian Faith to the native Alaskans. We remember St. Innocent, who first came as a married priest to Alaska in 1824, was made the first bishop of the area in 1840 after the death of his wife, and served there as a tireless missionary and translator of the Scriptures and services of the Church into the native tongues until he was called back to Moscow in 1868 to become Metropolitan of Moscow and all Russia.

We remember the first martyrs of our land, St. Peter the Aleut, an Aleut lad who was tortured to death for his faith by Jesuits wanting him to convert in San Francisco in 1815, and St. Juvenaly, a Russian priest-monk and missionary who was martyred by natives near Lake Iliamna in Alaska in 1796.

We remember St. Tikhon, who served as bishop in America from 1898 to 1907 and was instrumental in seeing the services of the Church translated into English to make her worship and faith accessible to the English speakers of America, and who as Patriarch of Moscow from 1917 until his death in 1925, stood firm against the atheist Bolsheviks who sought to destroy the Church.

We remember St. Jacob Netsvetov of Alaska, the first native priest to be ordained to serve the Alaskan peoples, who labored as a missionary priest from 1828 until his repose in 1864.

We remember St. Alexis of Wilkes-Barre, an Eastern-rite Roman Catholic Priest (Uniate), who returned to the Orthodox Church in 1891 bringing 361 others with him, and who from then until his repose in 1909 labored tirelessly to reconcile Uniate Catholics with the Orthodox Church, himself personally bringing in about 15,000.

We remember St. Raphael, the first Arabic speaking bishop to labor in North America as an auxiliary to St. Tikhon in 1904, and, who established more than 30 Syrian and Lebanese parishes, and who founded *The Word* journal in Arabic (which continues to be published to this day, in English now) before his repose in 1915.

We remember two priests, Alexander Hotovitsky and John Kochurov who labored in America for a time and who both were martyred back in Russia by the Bolsheviks, St. John being the first of many priest-martyrs under communism in 1918; St. Alexander died in the Solovki labor camp in 1930.

Finally, we remember two beloved hierarchs, St. Nikolai of Zicha and St. John of San Francisco. St. Nikolai was a Serbian bishop, known as a second

Chrystosm for his powerful preaching and inspired writings. After suffering during the Second World War at the hands of the Nazis in the Dachau death camp, he came to America and taught at St. Tikhon's seminary until his repose in 1956. St. John of Shanghai and San Francisco was a Russian bishop who escaped the Bolsheviks, for a time was in Serbia, and who later served the Russian emigre community in Shanghai, China with special care for orphans until Mao's communists drove them out; he brought his orphans to the United States and ended his life as Bishop in California. He is much beloved and is known as a wonderworker.

These are but the Saints known to us who labored in North America. Doubtless there are others known to God. O all ye Saints of North America, pray to Christ God for us! May we all embrace our vocation to be saints and pursue it diligently as we ponder the lives of the saints and are inspired thereby. *Fr. Justin*

On the Profit in Reading the Scriptures

St. John Chrysostom

For, tell me, who of you that stand here, if he were required, could repeat one Psalm, or any other portion of the Divine Scriptures? There is not one.

And it is not this only that is the grievous thing, but that while ye are become so backward with respect to things spiritual, yet in regard of what belongs to Satan ye are more vehement than fire. Thus should any one be minded to ask of you songs of devils and impure effeminate melodies, he will find many that know these perfectly, and repeat them with much pleasure.

But what is the answer to these charges? "I am not," you will say, "one of the monks, but I have both a wife and children, and the care of a household." Why, this is what hath ruined all, your supposing that the reading of the divine Scriptures appertains to [monks] only, when ye need it much more than they. For they that dwell in the world, and each day receive wounds, these have the most need of medicines. So that it is far worse than not reading, to account the thing even "superfluous;" for these are the words of diabolical invention. Hear ye not Paul saying, "that all these things are written for our admonition?"....

For if thou wouldest learn how great is the profit of the Scriptures, examine thyself, what thou becomest by hearing Psalms, and what by listening to a song of Satan; and how thou art disposed when standing in a Church, and how when sitting in a theatre; and thou wilt see that great is the difference between this soul and that, although both be one. Therefore Paul said, "Evil communications corrupt good manners." For this cause we have need continually of those songs, which serve as charms from the Spirit. Yes, for this it is whereby we excel the irrational creatures, since with respect to all other things, we are even exceedingly inferior to them.

Reading the Scriptures

The Word of God gives light and life to those who read it and seek to do it. Here are some suggestions for reading the Scriptures regularly.

1. Read what is given on the church wall calendar each day. Those are the lessons appointed to be read at Liturgy on that day. It is not much, but it is better than nothing.
2. Read the chapter of Proverbs corresponding to the day of the month. There are 31 chapters. Keep reading for a year or so, take a break, and come back to it. The reading and contemplating of Proverbs will save us from much grief in youth (and later)—if we will give heed.
3. Read a chapter from the Psalter as part of your daily prayers in addition to Psalm 50. You can read the entire Psalter twice in a year this way.
4. Like the Optina Elders, starting with Matthew and going through to John, read one chapter from the Gospels each day; and starting with Acts and reading through to Revelation, read two chapters from the Epistles each day. That will take you through the entire New Testament in 90 days, four times a year.
5. Try to read through the Old Testament once a year. One can go about it various ways: straight through (Genesis to Malachi), chronologically, by genre (law, prophets writings); just make a checklist with all the OT books listed and check them off as you read them. You'll need to read only three chapters a day if you read the Psalter as part of your prayers. Splitting reading by genre to read a chapter at least from each type listed above each day helps maintain interest and keeps one from getting bogged down in difficult patches.
6. Identify key verses and whole chapters and memorize them. Read them aloud to yourself repeatedly for a week or two, then start to memorize. Hiding God's Word in your heart in this way will bear much good fruit.
7. See your priest if you need further help or suggestions. *Fr. Justin Frederick*

The Commandments of Christ

From that time, Jesus began to preach, and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Matthew 4:17"

The first commandment Christ gives in His earthly ministry is the command to repent. This is the same message that John the Baptist had preached (Matthew 4:2). What is it to repent? The Greek verb, *metanoeo*, means "to change one's *nous*." The *nous* is not to be confused with the faculty of reason, though it affects and informs it. Rather it is the 'eye of the soul,' the innermost aspect of the heart, the center of man, the organ of the soul that apprehends spiritual realities directly when it is functioning properly after purification. It understands divine truth and the inner essence of created things by means of immediate experience, but its ability to do this is hindered by sin, which obscures and blinds this eye of the soul. Repentance is the process of turning away from all that hinders its function and obscures its sight. This necessarily involves the thoughts of the mind, the desires of the heart, and the actions of the body. As St. Gregory Palamas describes it, the essence of repentance "is never again to touch forbidden things."

Christ gives His hearers the reason to repent: "the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Christ has entered the world as a man, forever joining Himself to the human race. He is not a distant God handing down edicts from above; rather He brings His divinity down to us in order to raise us up into His divine life. "Prior to

the incarnation of the Logos of God, the kingdom of heaven was as far from us as the sky is from the earth; but when the King of heaven came to dwell amongst us and chose to unite Himself with us, the kingdom of heaven drew near to us all," Palamas says. Since the kingdom of heaven has been brought close to us, "let us not distance ourselves from it by leading an unrepentant heart." Christ's membership in the human race changes everything, and man's logical response to being confronted with the God-man, Emmanuel, "God with us", is to purify his spiritual sight that he may perceive God, the world, and himself in the light of truth and turn from his own deluded ways and submit himself to Christ. "God is with us, understand all ye nations and submit yourselves, for God is with us."

Our Christian life thus begins in repentance; without repentance, it does not begin. We hear the Gospel proclaimed, the good news that God and man are joined in the person of Christ and the kingdom is near. Confronted with Christ, we have to begin to change our perception of everything. Baptism is the culmination of man's obedience to Christ's command to repent, the completion of the process of changing his *nous* so that it may be illumined in the Mystery of Baptism. No longer do we try to live on our own without God, but we have been joined to Christ's body the Church and made a member of His household.

The Church in her daily services also asks God that we may "end our lives in repentance." Though the grace of salvation comes to us in Holy Baptism and Chrismation, we can still sin against it, we can quench and grieve the Holy Spirit given to us, we can still turn our backs on God. Thus we cultivate repentance throughout our lives. As we notice thoughts, words, desires, and actions in our lives that are contrary to God's will for us, we repent, turning away from them and seeking to be conformed to Christ and His example. We see that as Christians we cannot be dominated by anger, lust, pride, gluttony, hatred, and the like, and we change our minds about tolerating these things in our lives. We seek to end our lives in repentance, knowing that it is the condition God finds our soul in at the end of our lives that will determine our eternal destiny. If Christ finds us with hard, sinful hearts at the end after a lifetime of opportunity to put on Christ, the final judgment will not go well for us. As we have no guarantee that we shall be able to effect a last minute, sincere deathbed repentance, or even have the opportunity for one, we "live as though dying daily", living in repentance ready to meet our Lord at any time. May none of us fall short in fulfilling this first command of Christ! *Fr. Justin Frederick*

Upcoming Events 2016

30-31 July, 15-Year Anniversary w/ Bishop Alexander
1-14 August Dormition Fast
12 August All-Night Vigil

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!