

# The Confessor's Tongue for November 6, A. D. 2016

21<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Pentecost, St. John Chrysostom

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.

## Increasing Prayer

One way to grow in prayer during the Nativity Fast this year is to cultivate the practice of praying at the canonical hours: at 9:00 in the morning, at noon, and at 3:00 in the afternoon. This helps us refocus on Christ during the day and keeps us from completely forgetting Him and getting caught up in the cares of this life.

We may, of course, do this is by reading the full versions of the Hours, Third, Sixth, Ninth. They are available on our website under the tab "Orthodox Prayers". Each of the Hours takes but ten minutes to read, and the regular reading of them will do much to strengthen our awareness of God and keep us from sin.

Not everyone may read the full Hours due to work and other duties. So instead, one may use an abbreviated order of prayer for each of the hours (also on our website, "Short Hours"). Each of these consists only of the trisagion prayers, the short prayer of each hour said thrice, the longer general prayer of the hours "O Thou who at all times and at every hour...", and a closing sequence. This can easily be memorized and then used wherever one is and whatever one is doing.

While a particular time is fixed for the praying of the Hours, we need not think that if we forget to pray at noon we must omit the Sixth Hour. Rather, pray each hour at any time one remembers in a window appropriate for it: one could pray the Third Hour between 8 and 11, or the Sixth from 11 to 2, and the Ninth from 2 to 5. If you undertake to do this, pray the appropriate hour the first time you remember during the appropriate window rather than putting it off. Responding immediately to divine promptings to pray does much to plant prayer in our hearts. Copies of the short Prayers of the Hour entitled "Prayers During the Day" are available on the candle table or in the bookstore rack.

Another way to increase one's prayer is to add the Psalter during one's prayers and try to read the whole thing during the course of the Fast.

Then there is the Jesus Prayer. While we do well to use it during the day while we work and drive, a great benefit comes to us when we pray it undistractedly, doing nothing else. Standing or sitting before a lit candle and an icon, we say the prayer audibly and briskly, keeping our minds contained in the words of the prayer, lifting and opening our hearts to the Lord. It is good to have the daily use of the Jesus Prayer as part of our prayer rule. Another way to use the Jesus Prayer, to pray the daily services we don't or can't attend (or which aren't offered) is explained in the next article below.

## Praying Services on the Prayer Rope

A custom exists in the Church particularly among Athonite monks of praying services on a prayer rope (*chotki/komboskini*) when one cannot attend services in the church. This custom can be of use to us. For example, if the church is too far for us to travel to more than once a week and we don't have the books needed to read the service at home, we can pray with the Church at Vigil in preparation for the Sunday Liturgy or for a Feast on the prayer rope (2100 or strictly, 2350 knots). If illness, or the care of children hinders our attendance, we may still pray with the Church before God.

We pray with attentive awareness that we stand in the presence of God and lift the prayer "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me" or, if we prefer, the longer version: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me the sinner."

Here is a schedule commonly used:

1 kathisma of the Psalter	300 knots
1 stasis of the Psalter	100 knots
Midnight Service (Nocturnes)	600 knots
Matins	1500 knots
Hours (per Hour)	250 knots
Vespers	600 knots
Small Compline	400 knots
Great Compline	700 knots

We can also use the prayer rope to pray for others. Simply say, "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on N." (*name of person*) as many times as desired. One can effectively lift others up to the Lord in intercession in this way.

If we were to say the daily cycle of services on the prayer rope, our total for the day would be as follows:

Hours	1000
Vespers + Kathisma	900
Matins + 2 Kathismata	2100
Midnight	600
Small Compline	400
	5000 per day

## On the Lord's Prayer: A Short Interpretation 7

*'Thy Will Be Done'*  
St. Maximus the Confessor

If we live in the way we have promised, we will receive, as daily and life-giving bread for the nourishment of our souls and the maintenance of the good state with which we have been blessed, the Logos Himself; for it was He who said, 'I am the bread that came down from heaven and gives life to the world', (cf. John 6:33-35). In proportion to our capacity the Logos will become everything for us who are nourished through virtue and wisdom; and in accordance with His own judgment He will be embodied differently in each recipient of salvation

while we are still living in this age. This is indicated in the phrase of the prayer which says, 'Give us this day our daily bread' (Matt. 6:11).

I believe that the expression 'this day' refers to the present age. It is as if one should say, after a clearer understanding of the context of the prayer, 'Since we are in this present mortal life, give us this day our daily bread which Thou hast originally prepared for human nature so that it might become immortal (cf. Gen. 1:9); for in this way the food of the bread of life and knowledge will triumph over the death that comes through sin.' The transgression of the divine commandment prevented the first man from partaking of this bread (cf. Gen. 3:19). Indeed, had he taken his fill of this divine food, he would not have been made subject to death through sin.

He who prays to receive this daily bread, however, does not automatically receive it all as it is in itself: he receives it in accordance with his receptive capacity. For the Bread of Life in His love gives Himself to all who ask, but He does not give to all in the same way. He gives liberally to those who have done great things, and more sparingly to those who have achieved less. Thus He gives to each person in accordance with the receptive capacity of his or her intellect.

The Savior Himself has led me to this interpretation of the phrase we are considering, because He commands His disciples explicitly not to take any thought at all for sensible food saying, 'Do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will put on. For the heathen seek all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things as well will be given to you' (Matt. 6:25, 32, 33). How then can it be that He teaches us to pray for what He commands us not to seek? Obviously He does not order us to do anything of the kind: we should ask in prayer only for things that we are commanded to seek. If the Savior commanded us to seek only the kingdom of God and righteousness, then surely He intended those who desire divine gifts to ask for this kingdom in their prayers, in this way, by showing what petitions are blessed by His grace. He conjoins the intention of those who ask with the will of Him who bestows the grace.

If, however, we also take this clause to mean we should pray for the daily bread that sustains our present life, let us be careful not to overstep the bounds of the prayer, presumptuously assuming that we will live for many cycles of years and forgetting that we are mortal and that our life passes by like a shadow; but free from anxiety let us pray for bread sufficient for one day at a time, thus showing that as Christian philosophers we make life a rehearsal for death, in our purpose anticipating nature and, even before death comes, cutting off the soul's anxiety about bodily things. In this way the soul will not transfer its natural appetite to material things, attaching itself to what is corruptible, and will not

learn the greed that deprives it of a rich possession of divine blessings.

Let us therefore shun the love of matter and our attachment to matter with all the strength we have, as if washing dust from our spiritual eyes; and let us be satisfied simply with what sustains our present life, not with what pampers it. Let us pray to God for (his, as we have been taught, so that we may keep our souls unenslaved and absolutely free from domination by any of the visible things loved for the sake of the body. Let us show that we eat for the sake of living, and not be guilty of living for the sake of eating. The first is a sign of intelligence, the second proof of its absence. And let us be exact in the way we observe this prayer, thereby showing through our actions that we cleave fast to the one life lived in the spirit alone, and that we use our present life to acquire this spiritual life. We use it, that is to say, only in so far as we do not refuse to sustain our body with bread and to keep it as far as possible in its natural state of good health, our aim being not just to live but to live for God. For we make the body, rendered intelligent by the virtues, a messenger of the soul, and the soul, once it is firmly established in the good, a herald of God; and on the natural plane we restrict our prayer for this bread to one day only, not daring to extend our petition for it to a second day because of Him who gave us the prayer. *To be continued. . .*

#### From St. John Chrysostom

"For which of you is there, a father, of whom if his son shall ask bread, will he give him a stone?" So that if thou receive not, thy asking a stone is the cause of thy not receiving. For though thou be a son, this suffices not for thy receiving, that being a son, thou askest what is not profitable. Do thou also therefore ask nothing worldly, but all things spiritual, and thou wilt surely receive.

*Homily XXIII on St. Matthew's Gospel*

Let us catch them then by our mode of life; and by these souls let us build up the Church, and of these let us amass our wealth. There is nothing to weigh against a soul, not even the whole world. So that although thou give countless treasure unto the poor, thou wilt do no such work as he who converteth one soul. "For he that taketh forth the precious from the vile shall be as my mouth." [Jer 15:19] A great good it is, I grant, to have pity on the poor; but it is nothing equal to the with-drawing them from error."

*Homily 3 on I Corinthians*

#### Upcoming Events 2016

13 November Parish Thanksgiving Day & Picnic  
15 November – 24 December Nativity Fast  
15 December Holy Unction, 7:00 p.m.  
31 December Feast Day at Holy Nativity Monastery  
31 December New Year's Eve Vigil 8:00 p.m.

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!