

The Confessor's Tongue for June 11, A. D. 2017

First Sunday after Pascha: All Saints

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 Preciousness of Time

Bishop Jeremiah the Recluse

What is the most valuable thing on earth? Time. Because it is in time that all is acquired and in time that all the works of humans are accomplished. If you have food, clothing, enormous houses, glory, and knowledge—if you have absolutely everything—and yet do not have time, you have nothing. What is worst of all for men on earth? The loss of time. For having lost our time, we can no longer acquire anything nor have anything; by wasting time we lose everything, we lose even ourselves.

Another question: what do people treasure the least? What do they randomly squander the most? It is time as well. The majority live carelessly, according to accepted tradition, from day to day, year to year, not concerning themselves with how they have wasted their days and years, how they have spent their lives. We often lament the loss of frivolous things, yet we have neither regret nor sorrow when we waste not some small change, but precious minutes of time. That is why the Holy Apostle Paul, in warning us against the vain waste of time, commands us wisely to dispose of every minute of our lives: *See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.* By saying 'redeeming the time,' the Apostle shows that it is with time that true good is purchased, just as all things needed for physical life are bought with money and that, likewise, the proper use of time is very similar to the use of money in expert hands. The wise householder does not waste a single penny. He properly budgets the entire sum he has, and allots a goal for every penny. He properly budgets the entire sum he has, and allots a goal for every penny. This is exactly how we should manage our time. We must properly budget it; every hour and minute should be assigned for some good goal. Each day should be spent in good deeds that benefit our neighbor and us. For it is not for idleness, nor for frivolous activity, that the Lord has assigned each minute of our life, even if it were to last a thousand years on this earth.

There is a story that has been told that can be beneficial for us to consider here:

The story holds that some time ago Satan called together the entire host of the lower realm because he wished to send another of his diabolical assistants to earth.

When they had all assembled, he asked them: "Who is willing to go to earth to assist me with the destruction of souls?"

A certain demon volunteer to go. "And what is your plan for assisting me with the destruction of souls?" asked Satan/

"I will tell them that there is no hell," replied the demon.

"No, we have tried that, it will never do," Satan said. "For it turns out that within the heart of every human there is a sense of justice; consequently, no matter how much they try to deny it, or are otherwise taught, humanity still senses that there must be a state of existence in opposition to God. They will never be convinced beyond question that there is not hell. Your plan will surely fail."

A second demon said, "I will go."

Again Satan asked, "What is your plan for assisting me with the destruction of souls?"

"I will tell humans that there is no heaven."

"No," Satan replied again. "We have tried that also, and it is no better. For as we know all too well, every human retains within himself something of the image of God his Creator; hence, while they often wish they could deny it, they will never fully be convinced that there is no heaven. No, your plan will not work."

A third demon came forward.

Satan asked this one as well, "What is your plan for assisting me with the destruction of souls?"

"I will tell them," said the demon, "that there is no hurry, that they have all the time in the world."

"Go!" shouted Satan, "for your plan will surely succeed. Every human has a sense of both heaven and hell, but if we can keep them from considering their eternal destiny, then hell will certainly grab them before they take hold of heaven."

Orthodox Life, July—December 2010

Homily on the Twofold Mystery of Marriage

St. Nicholas of Zicha (+1956)

It is a great mystery when a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife. The Apostle himself, who has been raised to the third heaven and beheld many heavenly mysteries, calls the marriage of natural man on earth a great mystery. It is the mystery of love and life, and the only mystery that exceeds it is the mystery of Christ's link with His Church. Christ calls Himself the Bridegroom and the Church His Bride. Christ so loved the Church that He left His heavenly Father for her—though remaining equal with Him in unity of essence and divinity—and came down to earth and clave to His Church. He suffered for her sake that He might, by His Blood, cleanse her from sin and from all impurity and make her worthy to be called His Bride. He warms the Church with His love, feeds her with His blood, and enlivens, enlightens, and adorns her with His Holy Spirit. As a man is to his wife, so Christ is to the Church. Man is the head of woman, and Christ is the Head of the Church. A woman obeys her husband, and the Church obeys Christ. A man loves His wife as his own flesh, and Christ loves the Church as His own flesh. A man loves his wife as he does

himself, and a wife is in awe of her husband. Christ loves the Church as His own self, and the Church is in awe of Christ. As no one hates his own flesh, but gives it warmth and food, so also Christ gives warmth and food to the Church as His own flesh. Each individual human soul is the bride of Christ the Husband, and the community of all the faithful is the bride of Christ the Husband. The relationship of any one believer with Christ and that of the whole Church with Christ is essentially the same. Christ is the Head of that great Body that is called the Church, and which is in part visible and in part invisible.

Oh my brethren, this is a great mystery. It is revealed to us according to the measure of our love for Christ, and of our fear of His judgment.

O Lord and gracious Savior, cleanse Thou our souls and save and adorn them, that they may be worthy of that deathless and indescribable unity with Thee, in time and in eternity. To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.

Comment: Contemporary redefinitions of marriage serve to obscure, not illumine, the relationship between Christ and His Church. This compels us who are in Christ to work on our marriages so that they image Christ and the Church as part of our proclamation of the Gospel to the world, regardless of how the world may distort and debase its own conceit of marriage. Christ's relationship to the Church is the prototype of marriage; our marriages at their best are but icons of the prototype. How great is the vocation of the married: to set forth in their own marriage an accurate image of Christ and His Church! How short of this we too often fall! More is at stake in our marriages than we commonly imagine. Fr. Justin

From St. Paisios

The spirituality of a person is defined by the quality of his thoughts. One day, three men were sitting in a park chatting. Suddenly, a young man hastily ran by them. When they saw him, they all thought something.

The first one thought, "He must have stolen something, so he is running to escape. The second one thought: "He must be late for his date with some girl—that is why he is running." And the third one said to himself: "Most probably he is a chanter in a church and runs to be on time for the service."

Three men had three different thoughts about the same person. However, only the last one, who had a positive thought, was benefited, whereas the other two were spiritually harmed.

Love calls the Christian to think the best of others, not the worst. When something ambiguous happens as in this word of St. Paisios, what are we prone to think: the best? the worst? something in between? Our media is full of scribblers and babblers who always assume the worst and provide no good example to us. Consider how choosing to think the best about others on the road would change your experience of driving. Consider how imputing the best possible intent to the words and actions of friends would improve your relations with them. Consider how putting the best possible

interpretation on the words and actions of your spouse would improve the quality of your relations. But how many times we think what is evil about others without evidence! And how that habit harms our souls and our relations with others! Fr. Justin

Hatred in Christian Life

Hatred is not something we commonly associate with Christian life. We have heard so often that God is love and Christians are to love all that the very thought that hatred has a place in Christian life strikes us as strange. Can a Christian hate?

In fact, the question is reversed: can one be a Christian and not hate? For after all, we are Christians, called to become like our heavenly Father, who is said in the Scripture to hate many things. God hates pride, evil, a perverse mouth, false ways, lying, vain and wicked thoughts, hands that shed innocent blood, feet that run to mischief, a false witness, one who sows discord among brethren, covetousness and all dishonest gain, and bribes—to name the objects of God's hatred specifically mentioned in the Scriptures. Are we not to be come like God?

King Solomon said that there is "a time to love, and a time to hate" (Ecclesiastes 3:8). St. Paul provides a more pointed command: "Abhor that which is evil cleave to what is good (Romans 12:9). Origen comments on this verse:

Perhaps it seems odd to find hatred listed among the virtues, but it is put here of necessity by the apostle. Nobody doubts that the soul has feelings of hatred in it; however, its praiseworthy o hate evil and to hate sin. For unless a person hates evil he cannot love, nor can he retain the virtues. For example, if someone intends to preserve chastity, he cannot keep it safe unless he hates and despises immodesty.

Seen in this light, we may realize that hatred is a corollary of love. Love of the Good for man implies hatred for all that deprives us of Good—namely evil. And what is evil but a corruption of the Good accomplished by the choice of a free will to depart from God's will and the natural order of what He has made? To love the Good and to hate the evil are two sides of the same orientation.

It is often said that there is too much hatred in the world. In light of what has been said, we must reconsider that claim. Indeed, there is too much hate—but of the wrong kind. There is too much hatred of good and love of evil; not enough hatred of evil and love of good." Fr. Justin Frederick

Upcoming Events 2017

11 June, Coffee Hour Picnic and Youth Craft Sale
23-24 June: 10 p.m. to 3:00 a.m. All-Night Vigil for
Nativity of St. John the Baptist
12 - 28 June Apostles' Fast

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!