

# The Confessor's Tongue for March 11, A. D. 2018

## Third Sunday of Lent; Veneration of the Cross

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.

### Veneration of the Cross

The Third Sunday of Lent is given to us for the veneration of the Precious Cross. At Vigil on Saturday evening, the Gospel is not brought out for veneration. Instead, at the end of the Great Doxology, the Cross decorated with flowers, is brought out for veneration by the faithful. Special hymns are appointed to be sung at this time.

At the Liturgy on Sunday, the hymn "Before Thy Cross, we bow down in veneration..." is sung in place of "Holy God". Customarily, the Cross is venerated by all at the end of the Liturgy with prostrations, marking a rare exception to the rule of not doing prostrations on Sundays, or on a day when we have received Holy Communion. The Cross is left out in the church through the Ninth Hour on Friday. When we enter the church, we normally venerate the Cross first making full prostrations instead of our usual bows.

### From the Triodion for the Fourth Week

Now that we have come, my Christ, to the middle of the time of abstinence, and have reached the veneration of Thy life-giving Cross, falling down before it we call upon Thee: Mighty art Thou, who lovest mankind, and mighty are Thy works, for Thou hast made manifest Thy precious Cross. In fear we venerate it as we cry: Glory to Thy boundless compassion. *Matins of Monday of the 4<sup>th</sup> Week*

This is a holy week of light, in which the precious Cross is exalted in the sight of all the world. With souls enlightened let us come, kissing it with fear and love, and let us glorify in songs Christ who was crucified upon it. *Monday Matins Canon*

Let us humble the passions of the body through abstinence from food and the rejection of pleasures, and let us embrace with faith the Wood of the Cross: for it is exalted before us for our veneration, and it halloweth all men with the grace of God. So let us cry aloud unto the Lord: We thank Thee, O compassionate Master, who through the Cross dost save our souls. *Monday Vespers of 4<sup>th</sup> Week*

Nailed upon the Cross, Thy side pierced by the spear, Thou wast counted as a lifeless corpse; and Thou wast given gall to drink, O longsuffering Master, who by the hand of Moses hast made sweet the waters of Marah. Therefore I entreat Thee and I pray: uproot the bitter passions from my understanding, sweeten my mind with the honey of repentance, and grant that I may worship at Thy holy Passion. *Tuesday Vespers of the 4<sup>th</sup> Week*

I have surpassed the Publican in my transgressions, yet I do not vie with him in his repentance; I have not gained the virtues of the Pharisee, yet I imitate his self-conceit. O Christ my God, in Thy supreme humility Thou hast upon the

Cross destroyed the devil's arrogance: make me a stranger to the past sins of the Publican and to the great foolishness of the Pharisee; establish in my soul the good that each of them possessed, and save me. *Tuesday Vespers of the 4<sup>th</sup> Week*

Having reached the middle of the sea of abstinence, let us look towards the haven of salvation, the season of Thy voluntary Passion, O Lord. In Thy lovingkindness and Thy mercy, grant us also to behold in peace the day of Thy glorious Resurrection. *Wednesday Matins of the 4<sup>th</sup> Week*

The Fast that now bringeth us blessings hath now reached its midmost point: it hath helped us to receive God's grace in the days that are past, and it will bring us further benefit in the days still to come. For by continuing in what is right we attain yet greater gifts. We therefore cry to Christ, the Giver of all good: "O Thou who for our sakes hast fasted and endured the Cross, make us worthy to share uncondemned in Thy divine Passover [Pascha]. May we spend our lives in peace and rightly glorify Thee with the Father and the Spirit." *Wednesday Vespers*

### From St. Basil the Great

May you be a delight to your friends, a terror to your foes, an object of respect to all, to the end that any who fall short in their duty to you may, when they learn how gentle you are, only blame themselves for having wronged one of such a character as yourself! *Letter 73*

So truly stand the whole of human life, not contented with what has gone before and fed not so much on the past as on the future. For how is a man the better for having his belly filled yesterday, if his natural hunger fails to find its proper satisfaction in food today? In the same way, the soul gains nothing by yesterday's virtue unless it be followed by the right conduct of today. For it is said, "I shall judge thee as I shall find thee." *Letter 42*

Just as athletes win crowns by their struggles in the arena, so are Christians brought to perfection by the trial of their temptations, if only we learn to accept what is sent us by the Lord with becoming patience, with all thanksgiving. All things are ordained by the Lord's love. We must not accept anything that befalls us as grievous, even if, for the present, it affects our weakness. We are ignorant, peradventure, of the reasons why each thing that happens to us is sent to us as a blessing by the Lord; but we ought to be convinced that all that happens to us is for our good, either for the reward of our patience, or for the soul which we have received, lest, by lingering too long in this life, it be filled with the wickedness to be found in this world. *Letter 101*

### Three Degrees of Eating

*St. Gregory Palamas*

There are three degrees of eating: self-control, sufficiency, and satiety. Self-control is to be hungry after having eaten. Sufficiency is to be neither hungry nor to be weighed down. Satiety is to be slightly weighed down. To eat again after reaching the point of satiety is to open the door of gluttony, through which unchastity comes in. Attentive to these distinctions, choose what is best for you according to your powers, not overstepping the limits. For according to St. Paul, only the perfect can be both hungry and full, and at the same time be strong in all things (Philippians 4:12).

### “Thy Kingdom Come”

*St. John Cassian*

The second petition of a most pure mind eagerly desires the kingdom of its Father to come immediately. This means that in which Christ reigns daily in holy persons, which happens when the rule of the devil has been cast out of our hearts by the annihilation of the foul vices and God has begun to hold sway in us through the good fragrance of the virtues; when chastity, peace, and humility reign in our minds, and fornication has been conquered, rage overcome, and pride trampled upon. And of course it means that which was promised universally to all the perfect and to all the sons of God at the appointed time, when it will be said to them by Christ: 'Come, blessed of my Father, take possession of the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' Desiring and hoping for this with intent and unwavering gaze, we tell him: 'Thy kingdom come.' For we know by the witness of our own conscience that when he appears we shall soon be his companions. No sinner dares to say this or to wish for it, since a person who knows that at his coming he will at once be paid back for his deserts not with a palm or rewards but with punishment has no desire to see the Judge's tribunal. *Conference 9*

### On Confession and Holy Communion

*The following is provided as a reminder to us all.*

Therefore, for those who receive communion seldom (even once a month . . . one must keep in all its strictness the obligation for confession before communion.

For communion more often than once a month, one needs the permission of the rector of the parish. This permission will be given only to those persons who are well-known to the rector and after a thorough pastoral examination of the seriousness and rectitude of such person's attitude towards the Church and towards Christian life. In such a case, the relationship between the rhythm of confession and that of communion must be left to the decision of the priest, confession remaining regular, however, and heard not less than once a month. *From the Encyclical of the Holy Synod on Confession and Communion, 1972.*

Since the Liturgy is the summit of the whole liturgical cycle, the attendance at the services that precede the Liturgy – primarily, Vespers and Matins (or the Vigil) – is an important part of preparation for the partaking of the Holy Body and Blood of Christ.

If a person was absent at the evening services on the eve of Communion or did not recite his prayer rule in its fullness, his spiritual father or a priest who hears his confession must urge him to a more thorough preparation for Communion, but also must take into account the circumstances of his life and possible existence of excusable reasons.

The preparation of children for Holy Communion has its own special characteristics. The length of this preparation is determined by the parents with the advice of their spiritual father and must take into consideration the child's age, state of health, and the extent of his integration into the life of the Church.

Parents who regularly bring their children to the Holy Chalice, which is a good thing, must seek to receive Communion together with them (if it is not possible for both parents to receive, then one parent at a time). The practice where parents bring children to Communion, but themselves seldom receive Communion, prevents the development in a child's mind of a sense of need to partake of the Eucharistic meal.

The first Confession before Communion, in accordance with Canon 18 of Timothy of Alexandria, is performed after the child has reached ten years of age, but in the tradition of the Russian Orthodox Church the first Confession usually occurs at seven years of age. At the same time, the age of the first Confession, as well as the frequency of Confession for a child between seven and ten years of age, if he receives Communion every Sunday, must be determined by the spiritual father and the parents together, considering the individual characteristics in the child's development and his understanding of the life of the Church.

The Eucharistic fast is not mandatory for children until three years of age. According to tradition, beginning with the age of three years, Orthodox families gradually teach the child to abstain from food and drink before the Communion of the Holy Mysteries. By the age of seven years, a child must be firmly accustomed to receive on an empty stomach. From this time, the child should be instructed to read the prayers before Holy Communion, the content and length of which is determined by the parents in accordance with the child's age, as well as his spiritual and intellectual development.

*On Participation of the Faithful in the Eucharist, Official Document of the Russian Orthodox Church, 2015.*

### Upcoming Events 2018

25 March: Annunciation

1-7 April: Holy Week

8 April: Pascha: All-Night Vigil, Agape Vespers, Picnic

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!