

The Confessor's Tongue for April 15, A. D. 2018

Thomas Sunday, Antipascha Christ is Risen! Indeed, He is Risen!

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.

Thomas Sunday & Antipascha

This Sunday commemorates the appearance of the Lord to the Apostles after His resurrection and the touching of His wounds by the Apostle Thomas. The circumstances of these events are sung in all the stikhera and troparia of the canon on Apostle Thomas Sunday and in the stikhera of the other days of this week. The appearance of the risen Lord to the Apostle Thomas and all the eleven is selected for the first Sunday after the Paschal Sunday because the circumstances of this appearance serve as the indisputable proof of the resurrection of the Lord from the tomb, "as from the chamber, with His immaculate flesh". It assures not only believers and the amazed of the joy of all the followers of the Lord, but even the infidel pagans and the enemies of Christ the Savior - the Judeans. It assures that by the power of His Divinity Jesus Christ is risen again from the tomb, that after the resurrection He did not have an imaginary or illusory flesh in which form the bodiless spirits or inhabitants of heaven are vested when they sometimes appear to us or to the holy brethren, but the real immaculate flesh which He has assumed from the womb of the All-holy Theotokos, with which He was nailed to the cross and on which there remained wounds even after the resurrection.

The eighth day after Pascha as the ending of the celebration of Bright Week was a special celebration since ancient times, as if it replaced the very same Day of Pascha and was called Antipascha, which means 'instead of Pascha.' From this day the cycle of Sundays and weeks of the entire year begins. On this day the commemoration of the resurrection of Christ is updated for the first time. This Sunday of the Antipascha was called the New Sunday, i.e. the first day of renewal or simply renewal. The more proper name is the real day, the eighth day after Pascha, that on this eighth day the Lord Himself willed the renewal of the joy of His resurrection with a new appearance to the Holy Apostles.

St. Gregory the Theologian says in his Homily on this Sunday, "With the ancient and good purpose, it is to honor the day of renewal as established law, or better to say, to honor the new benefactions with the day of renewal. But was not the day of renewal also the first Resurrection Day, followed by the blessed and radiant night? Why you give this name to the present day? That was the day of salvation, but this day is the commemoration of salvation. That day differentiates the burial and the resurrection in itself, but this day is purely of the new birth. It is the first day among those following it and eighth among those coming before it".

Commemorating this day of "renewal" the Holy Church inspires in us the necessity for our beneficial spiritual renewal. "The real renewal", the same Holy

Father teaches, "we now celebrate, is the going from death to life. And so we put off ourselves the old man and renewed ourselves; that we too might walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4)". "The old has passed away, behold, the new has come" (2 Cor. 5:17).

Akathist in Preparation for Holy Communion

This is a beautiful work we would all profit from by knowing better. A small portion is given below. A link to the complete Akathist may be found on our website under Orthodox Prayer.

Kontakion 1

Chosen Bridegroom of our hearts and souls, through Thine incarnation and death on the cross Thou hast betrothed all mankind to Thyself forever and hast given us as a pledge of eternal life Thy most pure Body and Blood. Lo! At Thy call, I though unworthy, dare to approach Thy divine Table, and struck by its majesty, I cry: *Jesus, God of my heart, come and unite me to Thyself forever.*

Ikos 1

Thou didst send Thine Angel to the Prophet Isaiah with a live coal from the heavenly altar that his lips might be purified thereby, when, beholding Thee seated upon Thy throne, he was distressed over his impurity. And how shall I, who am defiled in body and soul, dare to approach to partake of Thy divine Mysteries for communion except Thou Thyself purify me from on high? Where fore, I cry out to Thee from the depths of my soul:

Jesus most good, touch also mine impure lips with the fire of Thy grace.

Jesus, burn the thorns of my many transgressions. Jesus, create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me.

Jesus, lead my poor soul out of the prison of the passions.

Jesus, destroy in me impure thoughts and evil lusts.

Jesus, guide my feeble steps to the path of Thy commandments.

Jesus, God of my heart, come and unite me to Thyself forever.

Kontakion 7

To the disciple who at the supper leaned upon Thy breast and asked: "Who is it that betrayeth Thee?" Thou didst answer; "He it is to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it." And, having dipped the bread, Thou didst give it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to move him to repentance. But, being hardened by the spirit of malice, he had no desire to understand his Lord and Master's voice of love. May I be delivered by Thy grace from such hard-heartedness, by crying to Thee: *Alleluia!*

Ikos 7

Taking pity on the weakness of our nature, which turneth away from eating human flesh, Thou wast well-pleased to bestow upon us Thine all-pure Body and Blood not manifestly, but under the appearance of Bread and Wine, most wisely ordering the whole matter of our salvation in Thy love for mankind, O Jesus, and accommodating Thy most saving Mysteries to the weakness of our comprehension and senses. Marvelling at this condescension of Thy wisdom to the weakness of our nature, I thankfully glorify Thee thus:

Jesus, Who in Thy wisdom and love for mankind arranges all things for our salvation!

Jesus, Who adapted Thy most saving Mysteries to the weakness of our understanding and senses.

Jesus, Who for the assurance of the doubting hast many times manifested Thy very Body and Blood at Thy holy Table, instead of bread and wine.

Jesus, Who hast shown to worthy ministers of the altar the Holy Spirit descending for the consecration of the Gifts!

Jesus, Who instead of unworthy ministers of the altar dost send invisibly Thy holy Angels for the celebration of the Divine Mysteries.

Jesus, Who through the manifestation of miracles at the holy Table, hast converted to faith many of the impious. *Jesus, God of my heart, come and unite me to Thyself forever.*

From "How to Live a Holy Life"

What To Do During Sleeplessness at Night

If you cannot fall asleep for a long time after you go to bed, then, after lying down, try to imagine the Lord Jesus Christ in His sufferings on the cross and pray to Him in your heart about everything that comes into your heart: pray that the Lord God may deliver you and your family from all sins, from every evil will, and from every sinful impurity, from deadly plague, from hunger, from lightning and storms, from sudden death, and especially from eternal death.

Pray that the Lord God may bring all sinners to heartfelt repentance and correction, that He may give to His Church faithful pastors who will zealously care for its purity, firmness, and glory; that He may subdue the enemies of His Church and persuade everyone of its purity and holiness, and that He may dispose everyone to sincere acceptance of its truth and principles.

Or try to imagine yourself at your death and think something like this: "If I were to die right now, what would become of me...? Now I lie in bed and find it annoying that I have not been able to fall asleep; but how hard will it be to lie in hell if I go there because of my sins. In hell there is never any sleep, not even for a moment."

When you happen to wake up in the night, always turn your thoughts immediately to the Lord God, taking care lest some foolish thought enter your heart, signing yourself with the sign of the Cross.

If you still do not sleep, it is better to get out of bed, stand before the holy icons, and read psalms with full attention, make full prostrations, or do prostrations with the Jesus Prayer until you are tired and peace enters your soul and you can go to bed.

From St. Silouan of Athos (+1938)

Orthodox Epistemology: How We Know

Pride is the root of unbelief. The proud man would acquire knowledge of things through his mind and his studying, but it is not given to him to learn to know God, in that the Lord reveals Himself only to the lowly in heart. To the lowly in heart does the Lord discover His works, which are beyond the understanding of our minds but are unfolded through the Holy Spirit. With the mere mind we can only come to know the things of this earth, and then only in part, while God and all that is of heaven are known through the Holy Spirit.

We may study as much as we will but we shall still not come to know the Lord unless we live according to His commandments, for the Lord is not made known through learning but by the Holy Spirit. Many philosophers and scholars have arrived at a belief in the existence of God but they have not come to know God. And we monks apply ourselves day and night to the study of the Lord's commands but not all of us by a long way have come to know the Lord, although we believe in Him. To believe God exists is one thing, to know God another.

On Love for Enemies

He who has the Holy Spirit in him, to however slight a degree, sorrows day and night for all mankind. His heart is filled with pity for all God's creatures, more especially for those who do not know God, or who resist Him and therefore are bound for the fire of torment. For them, more than for himself, he prays day and night, that all may repent and know the Lord.

If we wish to preserve grace, we must pray for our enemies. If you do not feel pity for the sinner destined to suffer the pains of hellfire, it means that the grace of the Holy Spirit is not in you...

St. John of the Ladder on Anger

The beginning of freedom from anger is silence of the lips when the heart is agitated; the middle is silence of the thoughts when there is a mere disturbance of soul; and the end is an imperturbable calm under the breath of unclean winds. *Step 8*

An angry person is a voluntary epileptic, who due to an involuntary tendency keeps convulsing and falling down. *Step 8*

Upcoming Events 2018

16 May: Leavetaking of Pascha
17 May: Ascension
27 May: Pentecost
28 May: Memorial Day Picnic

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!