

The Confessor's Tongue for April 29, A. D. 2018

Fourth Sunday of Pascha: Paralytic

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.

Midfeast Pentecost

On Wednesday of the fourth week we celebrate the Mid-Feast of Pentecost, i.e. half of the period from Pascha to Pentecost. This day we commemorate that event from the life of the Savior, when He on the Mid-feast of the Tabernacles taught in the temple about His Own Divine ministry and the mystery of water, under which we understand the beneficial teaching of Christ and the beneficial gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The last, the eighth, day of the Old Testament feast of the Tabernacles, commemorating the forty year wandering of the Jews in the desert (that is why the people during this feast lived in tabernacles, i.e. tents made from wood branches), was accompanied by the following action: With a countless confluence of people, the high priest left the temple of Solomon to the spring of Siloam, at the foot of Zion; with a golden chalice scooped up light and clean water; at the sound of the trumpet they returned to the temple, he mixed the water with wine and poured it over the altar of oblation. The people during this action without stopping sang the great alleluia, i.e. the six psalms (112-117). By this action they commemorated the wonderful gift of drinking water for the Jews in the desert, by Moses striking a rock.

Having taken an instance from this sign, Jesus Christ also proclaims Himself as the source of the true living water (for whom both the water of the desert, and the water of the Siloam Spring, together with other springs in the Promised Land, were only prototypes), at the same time teaching that the believer in Him filled with the true living water, will himself become a beneficial vessel, from which flows out plenty of the multifarious abilities of the Spirit of God, and not only will he not thirst forever, but will receive the strength to act with the saving image even for others (John 7:37-39).

The Church has appointed John 7:14-30 to be read for the Midfeast, thereby linking Pascha and Pentecost.

The Troparion of the Midfeast ("In the middle of the Feast, O Savior, fill my thirsting soul with the waters of godliness, as Thou didst cry to all: If anyone thirst, let him come to Me and drink [John 7:37]. O Christ God, Fountain of our life, glory to Thee!") hints at the encounter of Christ and the Samaritan Woman in just a few days.

On this day we perform the Lesser Blessing of Water, and the Blessing of Fields. (*various sources*)

Love Your Wife As Christ Loves the Church

St. Timothy of Esphigmenou (feast October 29), gives us a nearly contemporary example of a husband loving his wife like Christ loves the Church, one we do well to contemplate and emulate.

From Thrace in Greece, the peasant Timothy was married and had two daughters. At this time, in the early 1800s, shortly before the Greek Revolution, Thrace was ruled by Muslim Turks. A Muslim neighbor conceived a lust for Timothy's wife, and, unable to contain his passion, he took her away by force. Somehow he persuaded her to become a Muslim and to be added to his harem.

Timothy, whose given name was Triantaphylos, was deeply grieved by his wife's double tragedy of losing both her marriage and her faith. As Christians under the Turkish yoke had no legal rights in such cases against Muslims, he had no hope of getting her back by legal means. But his love for her did not die, and he turned to God in fervent prayer for his wife's return to Christ. Continuing his prayers, he eventually began sending secret messages to her urging her to abandon Islam and come back to Christ.

In time, his prayers were answered. By God's grace, she came to her senses and her heart was kindled with desire to return to her former faith and way of life and husband, while her new faith and husband seemed to be repugnant to her. She wept bitterly in repentance over her sins. She knew her captor would not easily let her go, so she suggested to Timothy that he pretend to accept Islam, thereby gaining legal rights and a basis for getting her back. His wife's repentance delighted Timothy. Thinking of St. Paul's willingness to be "accused from Christ" for the sake of his Jewish brethren (Romans 9:3), he accepted his wife's suggestion.

Timothy went to the Turkish magistrates, declared his intention to be Muslim, was accepted, and received circumcision according to the Muslim practice. He was then given his wife back. For a time they lived together secretly practicing their Christian faith, but had to flee to another region when the Muslims became suspicious. Timothy's wife entered a women's monastery while he went to the Great Lavra on Mt. Athos. There he took up the monastic life and cultivated repentance for his unavoidable sin committed out of love for his wife and the desire for her salvation.

After seven years, the monk Timothy heard of an Athonite monk named Agathangelos from the monastery of Esphigmenou who, like Timothy, had once denied his faith but had now confessed it and his renunciation of Islam publicly and had been martyred. Timothy began to long to make his confession of Christ in the same way. He moved to Esphigmenou Monastery to receive guidance from the elder who had prepared Agathangelos. After a period of preparation, the abbot blessed Timothy to declare his Christian faith and renunciation of Islam before the Turkish authorities in Adrianopol. He set off joyously to receive martyrdom from the Turks on 29 October 1820. May God grant us all such love and care for one

another as St. Timothy demonstrated for his wife. Holy Martyr Timothy of Esphigmenou, pray unto God for us!

From the Akathist for Communion on the Need for Tears

Kontakion 3

"Our fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. I am the Bread which cometh down from heaven which, if any man eat thereof, he shall live forever. And the Bread which I will give is My Flesh, which I will give for the life of the world," Thou didst say to the Jews that sought to see from Thee a sign from heaven like unto the manna of Moses, And hearing and beholding the fulfillment of the prophecy, we cry out with fear: *Alleluia!*

Ikos 3

Having risen from the supper, as the holy John doth relate, and girded Thyself about with a towel, Thou didst wash the feet of the disciples, thereby teaching us that we ought not to approach Thy divine Table in our sins unwashed by tears of repentance. Mindful of my great need for this mystical ablution and of the dearth of tears of my hardened heart, with Peter I cry to Thee:

Jesus all-good, do Thou Thyself wash not only my feet, but my hands and head as well.

Jesus, lay bare before me the abyss of my soul's corruption!

Jesus, open within me the floodgates of heartfelt contrition!

Jesus, bedew me with the drops of Thy loving-kindness!

Jesus, wrap me about with the fear of the judgment and the eternal torments!

Jesus, awaken within me my sleeping conscience and strengthen its voice.

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

April 29: St. Basil of Ostrog

St. Nikolai of Zicha

Basil was born in Popova, a village in Hercegovina, of simple and God-fearing parents. From his youth, he was filled with love for the Church of God, and when he reached maturity he entered the Monastery of the Dormition of the Mother of God in Trebinje and there received the monastic tonsure.

As a monk, he quickly became renowned because of his genuine and rare ascetical life. Saint Basil took upon himself mortification upon mortification, each one heavier and more difficult than the last. Later, against his will, he was elected and consecrated bishop of Zahumlje and Skenderia.

As a hierarch, he first lived in the Monastery Tvrdoch and from there, as a good shepherd, strengthened his flock in the Orthodox Faith, protecting them from the cruelty of the Turks and the cunning ways of the Latins. When Basil was exceedingly pressed by his enemies, and when

Tvrdoch was destroyed by the Turks, he moved to Ostrog, where he lived an austere ascetical life, protecting his flock by his ceaseless and fervent prayer.

He died peacefully in the Lord in the sixteenth century, leaving behind his incorruptible relics; incorruptible and miracle-working to the present day. The miracles at the grave of St. Basil are without number. Christians and Muslims alike come before his relics and find healing of their most grave illnesses and afflictions. A great pilgrimage of people occurs there annually on the Feast of Pentecost.

The Glorification of St. Basil of Ostrog

St. Justin of Chelije

Immediately after the falling asleep of St. Basil in 1671, people started coming in great numbers to pray at his grave, just as they were accustomed to doing during his earthly life. Many miracles began taking place at the site of his grave and they have not ceased to this day.

Seven years after giving up his soul to God, in 1678, St. Basil appeared in a dream to Father Rafailo (Kosijerevac) the Abbot of Saint Luke Monastery in Zhupa near Nikshich, and ordered him to go to Ostrog and open up the Saint's grave. The Abbot paid no attention to the dream and did not go. He had the same dream again, but he again ignored it. St. Basil then appeared to the Abbot a third time, dressed in episcopal vestments and with a censer in his hand. The Abbot woke up in fear and trepidation and told the brotherhood of his monastery about his dream. They agreed at once to make a hasty journey to Ostrog.

Upon their arrival they first informed the Ostrog monks of the Abbot's dream and then took upon themselves a strict fast, all the while serving the complete cycle of daily prayers with a Divine Liturgy. They did so for seven days. On the seventh day, they censed the Saint's grave and opened it.

Before them appeared the Saint in a glorified body with the color of pure wax, exuding the fragrance similar to that of basil leaves. Then the monks placed his incorrupt body in a case and took it to the Upper Monastery, to the Church of the Presentation of the Most Holy Theotokos, where it rests to this day.

News of the glorification of St. Basil's body quickly spread and people began to flock in great numbers to venerate his holy and wonderworking relics. Not only Orthodox Christians, but also Roman Catholics and Lutherans, and even Muslims came to seek help at the great sanctuary of Ostrog. According to their faith in the mercy of God and that of St. Basil they received help and found consolation.

Even today pilgrims from all parts of the country, of all nationalities and religions come before the Wonderworker of Ostrog. Many people travel to Ostrog from abroad. From the holy reliquary arise prayers in many languages. Many parents bring their

children to be baptized before the relics of St. Basil and many name their offspring after the Saint. Many a marriage ceremony has been performed at Ostrog, countless confessions have been made and many people have partaken of the Holy Mysteries before the holy relics, while countless others have asked for prayers to be read for their health and salvation.

Many sacrifices and donations are brought to the Holy Father at the Ostrog Monastery, but the greatest sacrifice of all is that of sincere repentance and the will to cleanse one's heart before God and Saint Basil. Even the godless and atheists respect and honor St. Basil and utter his name with fear. For, as everyone knows, one did not make light of St. Basil while he lived, and one certainly does not make light of him now when he is glorified.

Before the merciful Ostrog Saint the Serbs pour out their sorrows and pains and offer warm prayers for their living and departed relatives. Having prepared for this encounter by fasting and prayer, pilgrims from near and far, on feast days and on weekdays gather at Ostrog in great numbers to venerate the Saint, to tell him of their sorrows, to weep before his reliquary and to confess their sins and receive a blessing. Besides the regular ecclesiastical fasts the people often promise to take on a special fast. This fast is called "the Week of the Holy Father Basil", and it usually precedes his feast day. Pronouncing the Saint's name is traditionally accompanied by the words, "Glory and mercy be upon him". Many an oath has been sworn before the relics of St. Basil, and many a promise made.

The Power of God and the Temptations of History

During his earthly life the Saint was never left in peace but was persecuted by many enemies of God and by the chief enemy of our salvation. After his repose his holy relics were not spared by the evil one either.

The first time that the Ostrog monks had to conceal the relics of St. Basil was in 1714, when Numan-Pasha Chuprilich attacked and devastated Montenegro. The monks buried the relics below the monastery, near the Zeta river. The river overflowed and flooded the area where the relics were buried, but miraculously the water penetrated neither the reliquary, nor the relics of the Saint.

The second time the relics had to be hidden was during the siege of Ostrog in the winter of 1852. The Turkish commander Omar Pasha encircled the monastery and the siege lasted for nine days. Thirty Montenegrins, headed by the great vojvoda (duke) Mirko Petrovic, father of Prince Nikola, courageously defended the monastery. When they succeeded, with the help of St. Basil, in driving away the Turks, they served a thanksgiving molieben to God, the Most Holy Theotokos and St. Basil in the little Church of the Presentation. After that the Montenegrins took the Saint with them to Cetinje and placed him in the Church of the Nativity of the Holy Virgin, near the relics of St. Petar of Cetinje. There they remained

until the spring of 1853, when they were again returned to Ostrog. During the war with the Turks the Monastery of Ostrog was burned and looted. Many Ostrog treasures, as well as documents dating from the time of St. Basil, disappeared forever.

The third time the relics of the Saint were transferred was during the war in 1876-1877. They were again taken to Cetinje, where they remained for about a year. They were brought back to Ostrog in a majestic procession in 1878.

During World War II, in February 1942, when enemy grenades rained upon Ostrog, the monks, fearing that the Church of the Presentation might be hit and destroyed, took the holy relics into a little cave behind the monastery building. This fear proved to be unfounded, for the grenades flew all around the monastery and fell and exploded, but the monastery itself was never hit, nor was anyone injured during these attacks. The Saint guarded his flock as he had always done before.

Miracles of St. Basil

(St. Basil of Ostrog Appears to a Priest of Weak Faith)

It was in 1940 that Bishop Nikolai asked the Very Rev. Jovan Boskovic from Orja Luka (municipality of Danilovgrad), "Do you believe, Reverend Father, that God's saints live?"

"How can I not believe that, when they have themselves appeared to me and witnessed that they are living!"

One day my popadia (priest's wife) asked me to go to Ostrog with an offering for some misfortune that had occurred in our family. I was somewhat grieved and angry. 'What should I bring?', I asked. 'Leave those dead bones in the Ostrog cave to rest in peace! It is the living you ought to turn to for help!'

The day passed.

That night I had a vision of St. Basil. He struck me with his staff and shouted at me, full of wrath, 'I am alive, not dead as you think! And be not faithless, but believing!'

In great fear I jumped from my bed and asked popadija for the offering she prepared for my pilgrimage. I immediately went to Ostrog and took the offering to St. Basil. Since then I have been firm in my belief that God's Saints are living, not dead!"

The Vision of a Villager from Grbalj

Vujadin Cejovic had moved from Montenegro to the village of Stara Krimovica in Grbalj, Boka Kotorska in 1907. It was on Sunday, October 31st, 1937, that he led his cows to pasture in a dense evergreen forest about two kilometers away from his home.

Suddenly he saw a man in episcopal vestments with a golden epitrachelion and a pectoral cross standing in a small clearing in the forest. His face was the color of wax and his robes very luminous. Vujadin was overcome with fear and trembling such as he had never felt before, not even in the fiercest battles he

had fought against the Turks. His hair stood on end so that his hat fell off.

The man stood watching Vujadin for a little while and then, in a gentle tone of voice, asked him what he was doing there. Vujadin answered and complained that the previous year had not been good. The Saint answered that worse was yet to come, for people had stopped honoring God and His saints; therefore times of lengthy suffering lay ahead.

When Vujadin told him, with trepidation, that since the last war (1912-1918) the people had become corrupt and had taken an ungodly path, the Saint warned him, "You will forget that war when the next war comes, with its misfortunes and suffering that will be brought on by the misdeeds of the people. Young and old, male and female, all blaspheme against God with every step they take; no one heeds the Church or keeps the Faith. A terrible punishment must come upon this people if they do not turn from their evil deeds and vice. Tell your fellow villagers what you have heard from me, that these words might spread."

When Vujadin timidly remarked that he would not be believed and that he would most certainly be mocked, especially as he was a new-comer to the village, the Saint answered sternly, "Regardless of whether they believe you or not, you must still tell them my words. Also, you must remind your priest to finish the work he promised to do last year for the church" (it turned out that the priest had promised to repair and renew the old Church of Saint Nicholas). Having said this, the Saint vanished.

A few years later the winds of war descended upon the Serbian people, bringing with them unspeakable horrors.

The Healing of a Paralytic

Hieromonk Simeon Mihailovic of Ostrog wrote in 1932:

"At the time that Vidak Djurovic, son of Miro, was a pupil at the Ostrog Monastery, some time in the late 1800's, a very ill man was brought into the Church of the Presentation of the Most Holy Theotokos, in which the relics of St. Basil rest. The man had no use of his legs for several years. They placed him under the holy reliquary.

Some time later, while the aforementioned pupil was serving coffee to those who had brought the paralytic, the afflicted man stood up by himself, walked out of the church and unexpectedly appeared in the old monastery guesthouse where the others were drinking coffee.

His appearance startled his companions at first, but soon they were overjoyed and they all embraced and kissed him, as though he had been born again or had risen from the dead. According to Vidak's testimony the ill man, whose name he does not recall, was from some village in Sandzak."

The Quick Healing of An Insane Villager

M.L. from the municipality of Bar dictated the following to Maksim Jovovic in 1959:

"My neighbor M.P., a married man of about 40 years old, lost his wits suddenly one night. He shouted and swore and beat the children. He became dangerous for the community and there was a fear that he might kill someone during one of his fits. Before putting him in a mental institution his father decided to take him to Ostrog first, so that the monks might read prayers for him. This took place in 1905.

He was restless during the trip and his father barely managed to keep him subdued. When they entered the monastery he was forced to get down on his knees before the reliquary so that the monk could read prayers for him. This was achieved with great difficulty.

When the monk had finished reading the prayers he got up. His father left a donation for the monastery. He walked out of the church as a sane man. He traveled home peacefully and this illness never appeared again in his life."

B.I., a landowner from the vicinity of Bar, told this story to Maksim Jovovic:

The Healing of a Man of Weak Faith

"Until the year 1948 my faith in God and in the existence of a spiritual realm was very weak, unsure and unstable. Here is what made me change my mind about these things.

While working on the construction of the Niksic - Podgorica railway line in 1948, I went home to rest for a few days. My wife told me that she intended to go to the Ostrog monastery to pray to the health and the health of our family. I tried to dissuade her from going, but she was very persistent and wanted to go as soon as possible, because of some dream she had had some time ago. Finally we agreed to travel together to the railroad construction site, from where she should go on by herself to Ostrog, which was not very far from the site.

My wife filled two bottles with home-made plum brandy for me to take to my companions at the construction site. She filled the third bottle of the same size with olive oil for the Upper Monastery vigil lamps. We set off, carrying the bottles in a bag, and stepped off the train at the Ostrog station.

While we were stepping off the train, I lost my balance and slipped. The bag with the bottles fell on the hard stone pavement and the bottles broke. To our amazement, when we looked inside the bag, one bottle was intact - the one with the olive oil. The other two were smashed and the brandy had all poured out. This made me think twice and I decided on the spot to join my wife on her pilgrimage.

We went the following day, left the oil there as a gift and venerated the holy relics. We stayed for vespers and prayed.

After that we saw three women who wanted to enter the church but did not dare to, because the holy reliquary had started rocking to and fro. The monk who was in the church ordered them to come in one by one so that he could see which one of them was causing the rocking. When we had determined which of the women could not go in, he sent her to the Lower Monastery for confession and told her to come later. What happened afterwards I do not know, but one thing is for certain: this trip to Ostrog caused a radical change of my way of thinking. Since that time I have had deep faith in the power of God and in His Divine Wisdom."

Upcoming Events 2018

6 May: Concert "Come, Receive the Light" Music of the Paschal Season, 7:00 p.m. St. John's, Eules.

Fundraiser for St. Maximus building fund.

16 May: Leavetaking of Pascha

17 May: Ascension

27 May: Pentecost

28 May: Memorial Day Picnic

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!