

The Confessor's Tongue for September 30, A. D. 2018

18th Sunday After Pentecost: St. Gregory Enlightener of Armenia

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.

All-Night Vigil: Great Litany to Kathisma Hymns

At the conclusion of the Six Psalms, the Deacon exits the sanctuary to intone the Great Litany (*discussed previously at Vespers*) before the Royal Doors, and the Priest re-enters the sanctuary. Though the Litany was taken to start the Vigil at Vespers, it is repeated at the start of Matins, instructing us in unceasing prayer and allowing those who missed it the first time to catch pray it. After the Litany, the Deacon makes the solemn proclamation, "The Lord is God and hath revealed Himself unto us. Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." At a Resurrectional Vigil, "The Lord is God" is then sung by the choir in the troparion tone of the week.

The first part of this proclamation is taken from Psalm 117, and the second part from the Gospel (Mt 21:9; Lk 13:35). All the verses are from the psalm. By the deliberate joining of the psalm with the Gospel, the prophecy and its fulfillment is made clear. "Lord" refers here to Christ; He is God and has come to us in the name of the Father for our salvation. The Lord, the God of Israel, has revealed Himself and dwelt among us in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ.

These words are solemn, but most joyous. In the words of the anaphora of the Divine Liturgy, God is "inexpressible, inconceivable, invisible, incomprehensible, ever in being, eternally the same." But in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is Himself God, the fullness of divinity dwelt and is revealed to us. Thus Christ can say to Philip, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." This proclamation is made at Matins, at the dawning of the new day, for the manifestation of God in the flesh brings the light of a new day to a dark world. (Remember, that even though we hear this announcement at 6:00 p.m. local time, they are properly part of an all-night vigil that begins at 10:00 p.m. or so and lasts until dawn.)

The proper troparia follow "The Lord is God." At a Resurrectional Vigil, normally the troparion of the Resurrection in the tone of the week will be sung twice, followed by "Glory...", a troparion from the *Menation* for a saint or saints, "now and ever...", and a theotokion in the tone of the week. At a Festal Vigil, the Troparion of the Feast is sung three times, and "The Lord is God" is sung in the tone of that troparion.

The kathisma readings from the Psalter follow. Two kathismata are appointed for the Resurrectional Matins, the second (Psalms 9-16) and the third (Psalms 17-23). Local parish practice usually abbreviates them or leaves them out altogether. (*Our local practice is to read one stasis a week, rotating them.*) Each kathisma is followed by a Little Litany and two kathisma hymns, which treat the theme of the Resurrection, separated by a Psalm verse, and followed by Glory...now and ever...and a Theotokion. These kathisma (or sessional) hymns contemplate the empty tomb from the perspectives of the soldiers, the myrrhbearing women, Mary Magdalene, and the Angels, and well as the scene in Hades below when the God-man descends to that place of death. The empty tomb on the earth's surface contemplated by the Myrrhbearers and the Apostles not only proclaims Christ's personal resurrection, but is an image of Hell (Hades) once it has been visited by Christ: it has been emptied of every righteous soul and has no inherent right or power to hold any soul henceforward.

Every grave on earth will one day resemble Christ's tomb: it will be empty, as every human who ever lived is reconstituted as a human being through the reunion of his soul and body that he might stand before the dread judgment seat of Christ to give an account of how he lived in the body on earth.

Archbishop Dmitri on Giving

This article was originally written in 1972 for the Third All-American Council. Since then, the Church in America has taken steps to educate clergy and laymen alike in the areas of stewardship and tithing, and much has changed. Nevertheless, the following comments are still applicable to our day, particularly that which is said about the theology of giving. The article was republished in The Dawn, June-July 2002.

Giving as Practiced in Our Churches

Even a cursory glance at the system of giving in our Church, the difficulties and ill will arising from finances...(within the framework of the Church's life), would lead one to believe that, indeed, money is the root of all evils, and that, insofar as the Church is concerned, it is simply an evil that has to be endured. In fact, there is little evidence that any thought is ever given to the possibility of money's being sanctified or to its being an integral part of worship. Nor has there been any sustained or general interest in trying to discern the meaning of money from the theological point of view. Almost always, when the various organs of the Church, the National Church, the Diocese, and the parish appeal for contributions or gifts or for the fulfillment of the several assessments, it is invariably in terms of the needs of those organs. The practical is almost the only consideration, and that every member must give, even sacrifice, of his possessions and wealth for his spiritual well-being and, ultimately, for his salvation, will strike most of our people not only as a daring innovation but as a completely non-Orthodox scheme.

It is also true that many of our people think in terms of giving only what they can spare when everything else is taken care of and no sacrifice would be required. Any suggestion that he give a regular part of his income, a certain percentage, making it a part of his personal or family budget, is looked upon as an attempt to encroach upon his freedom, to coerce him, and to destroy the element of freewill in his offering.

Parish Support

Our parishes have usually supported themselves through the payment of dues and fund-raising, this last either for the general fund or for improvements and building programs, in the form of bazaars, raffles, food-sales, dances, and even gambling. We have been trained to think that except for the minimal amount required for membership, any other donation to the Church is to be made only after clear evidence of the need has been presented. Further, these extra gifts have to be made in exchange for something: food, entertainment, or even the chance for personal profit.

Money, then, in this environment, is the principal temporal business of the parish, and any idea of relating it to the spiritual life is regarded as unorthodox and anti-traditional. The priest thus is not to concern himself with money at all, except to act sometimes as a kind of salesman whose personal persuasiveness may be put to use by and for the parish council, the proper agency for dealing with the necessary, but still dirty, business.

Money as Worship

It may be startling to hear that the giving of money is an integral part of worship and can in no way be divorced from the spiritual life. But such is the case, for there is no worship without giving or offering. The Christian's life demands a totally consecration to God, and this means that every aspect of his life must be sanctified. No one part of his life can be reserved and kept as a purely material, this-worldly concern, for when one refuses to let his wealth be sanctified, then it can become the root of all evils, and stand between him and God. In commenting on I Timothy 6:10, St. John Chrysostom says, "But this root is from us, and not from the nature of things." The young man thought he was just because he kept all the commandments, but went away sad when he learned that the one thing needful for him was to part with his wealth (Mt 19:22).

The Theology of Giving

The offering acceptable to God is nothing less than the offering of oneself. In speaking of the gift of the Macedonians, St. Paul says, "First they gave their own selves to the Lord" (2 Cor 8:5), and, "Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead" (Rom 6:13).

In the Eucharist, the meaning of the offertory is that each member offers himself to God, all that he is and all that he has. His offering is accepted and is returned to him so that he may be a member of the Body of Christ through Communion.

Throughout the Old Testament, the sign of man's offering of himself was his offering from what he produced. Such offering, regularly the tithe or tenth (Lev 27:30-32), was holy and, in turn, sanctified the rest of his possessions. So when man produced things, the works of his hands, the produce of the land, cattle, or other animals, it was the tenth part of those things that he offered. In modern society, the only thing that man produces is money. He usually works for a salary or he invests money and increases his holdings through interest and dividends. To this pursuit of making money he dedicates most of his time and energy, that is, he devotes himself. Unless a certain part of his modern product is consciously and premeditatedly devoted to God, to His work, and to the extension of His Kingdom among men, then donations, gifts, and dues are merely token amounts. The amount of one's gift and the spirit in which it is made indicate the relative importance God and His Church hold in the heart of the giver.

The eighth and ninth chapters of St. Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians contain the whole theology of Christian giving. Although he is speaking specifically about a collection for the relief of the Christians at Jerusalem, he reveals a number of universal truths about giving.

Giving represents the degree of a Christian's devotion, and is a means of grace (2 Cor 8:1, 8). It is part of the Christian life and even proof of one's love (2 Cor 8:24, 7). Christian giving is sacrificial (Mk 12:43-44) and our Lord's emptying Himself and becoming poor for our sakes is the basis for the call to Christians to sacrifice (2 Cor 8:9). Giving must be in proportion to what one has, though the Macedonians had given even more than they were able (2 Cor 8:3). It must be voluntary (2 Cor 8:12) and cheerful (2 Cor 9:7). Giving provides a good example to others and is the occasion for thanksgiving (2 Cor 9:11, 12).

Truly, if each Christians followed the principles of giving as outlined by St. Paul, there would be no need for any kind of fund-raising events or assessments.

Conclusions

In the light of the clear teaching of the Gospel, each Christian must give according to his means. This implies that he must dedicate regularly a part of his income to God's work (ideally a tithe, or even more if he is especially blessed materially). It would be appropriate for the Church to be a real item in the budget of each family and each individual. The concept of total commitment, which is the only acceptable way of life for a Christian, means that we must begin, as indeed a few parishes have already done, to encourage people to consider the urgency of adopting the pledge system or any other system in which they could give freely and generously to God's work, to respond to the responsibility of mission, to complete the work of sanctification of their whole lives.

Further, when real Christian giving becomes general in our Church, the necessity for the parishes to depend on money-making schemes will automatically diminish. Then so much of the energy and time of the parish can be given over to knowing the saving faith of Christ, to preaching the Gospel, and to deepening the spiritual life.

Parishes in their turn, rather than being selfishly turned in upon themselves, must make the work of the whole Church and the carrying out of its mission their own concern. This means that parish budgets should include regular and generous contributions and allotments to work outside their own boundaries—to mission, to education (particularly to seminaries), and to works of mercy.

Finally, it should be understood that there is a close relationship between the spiritual life and one's financial commitment to the Church. Over and over again in the Bible, it is made clear that one's willingness to give of his possessions to God's work is the measure of his willingness to give himself, and one's *self* is the only acceptable offering. "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Lk 12:34)

Upcoming Events 2018

30 September: Annual Meeting
14 October: Octoberfest
31 October: All Saints Party
11 November: Parish Thanksgiving Meal
2 December: Children's Craft Fair

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!