

The Confessor's Tongue for October 14, A. D. 2018

20th Sunday After Pentecost: Fathers of the 7th Council; St. Parasceva of Serbia
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.

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: whether notions of legal contract, divorce and serial monogamy, or same-sex unions, etc. That marriage properly images Christ and His Church compels us who are in Christ to work on our marriages that they at least begin to image Christ and His 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

Holiness Comes Not in a Day!

The Apostle Paul proclaims, "Strive for peace with all men, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14). Why did he say, "Strive"? Because it is not possible for us to become holy and to be saints in an hour! We must therefore progress from modest beginnings toward holiness and purity. Even were we to spend a thousand years in this life, we should never perfectly attain to it. Rather, we must always struggle for it every day, as if mere beginners. This again Paul has shown us by saying, "Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect" (Philippians 3:12). *Discourse 5*
St. Symeon, the New Theologian

All-Night Vigil: Sessional Hymns To Gospel

After the singing of "Blessed Art Thou, O Lord, Teach Me Thy Statutes" (or the Magnification for a festal vigil), come the Sessional Hymns, otherwise known as the Hymns of Ascent (Anabathmoi). These hymns (Psalms 119-133) were the most festal part of the Jewish liturgy and have been used by the Church since the beginning. Each of the eight tones for Sunday has different sessional hymns. The best known is the festal Hymn of Ascent in the fourth tone: "From my youth, many passions have fought against me..." These hymns are generally centered on the Holy Spirit and draw on the eighteenth kathisma of the Psalter, Psalms 119-133, for their thematic inspiration.

The Prokeimenon follows, announced by the Deacon. The word "prokeimenon" is from the Greek, meaning, "what is set forth," that is, what is appointed to be read: the select Psalm appropriate for understanding the feast or that part of the service. The main theme of the prokeimenon of Sunday Matins is the Resurrection, as Sunday is always the day of the Resurrection, a "Little Pascha." Today, only the key verse of the Psalm is sung, (and another read by the reader) a practice based in part on the assumption that every good Christian knows the Psalter more or less by heart and can, upon hearing the prokeimenon, recall the whole Psalm to mind. The Matins prokeimenon is also a preparation for the reading of the Gospel and is sung in the tone of the week.

Tone 1: Now will I arise, saith the Lord. I will set myself for salvation; I will speak boldly thereof. (Psm 32)

Tone 2: Rise up, O Lord my God, in the precept which Thou hast commanded, and the congregation of the people shall compass Thee. (Psm 117)

Tone 3: Say it among the nations: that the Lord hath become King; for He hath established the world, which shall not be moved. (Psm 46)

Tone 4: Arise, O Lord, help us, and redeem us for Thy name's sake. (Psm 103)

Tone 5: Arise, O Lord my God, let Thy hand be lifted up, for Thou art King unto the ages. (Psm 11)

Tone 6: O Lord, arouse Thy power and come to save us. (Psm 27)

Tone 7: Arise, O Lord my God, let Thy hand be lifted up; forget not Thy needy ones til the end. (Psm 28)

Tone 8: The Lord shall be King forever; Thy God, O Zion, from generation to generation. (Psm 75)

A priestly exclamation and "Let Every Breath Praise the Lord" follow the prokeimenon. Then the Deacon exclaims, "And that He may vouchsafe unto us to hear the holy Gospel, let us pray to the Lord God." To be able to hear the Gospel, which implies acceptance and obedience, is a gift not to be taken lightly. It is not automatic. Hence, before we hear the Gospel, we pray that God will enable us to hear it, understand it, and do it, rather than just listening to the words and not responding.

The cycle of Eleven Matins Gospels of the Resurrection, read every Saturday evening at the Vigil, extend the celebration of Pascha to the entire year. The Matins Gospels are read from the Royal Doors of the iconostasis, a ceremonial rubric which may have its origin in the Church of Jerusalem. Already in the 4th century, the Gospel of the Resurrection was not read from the Ambo, but from the Sepulchre, as if the celebrant, standing at the entrance of the Sepulchre, would turn to the faithful like the Angel to the women: "Ye came to seek Jesus, but He is not here, He is risen!" In the Greek tradition, the Resurrectional Gospel is read at the altar (which represents the tomb), from the right hand side, as the Gospel account tells us that the Angel stood to the right and announced the Resurrection.

The successive appearances of the risen Lord are the subject of the Eleven Matins Gospels. The regular cycle of the Resurrectional Gospels starts with the first Sunday after Pentecost; the order for the seven Sundays of Pascha differs slightly.

The reading of the Gospel is not just the reading of a lesson, but is part of the total proclamation of the Gospel. After the Gospel is read, it is brought out for veneration by the faithful to the center of the church in solemn procession during the singing of they hymn "Having Beheld the Resurrection of Christ." We ourselves have become eyewitnesses to the Lord's Resurrection. Preaching makes Christ present, but Matins has no sermon because the whole service is preaching. All leads to the Gospel. All that follows is

from the Gospel. The Gospel is the Presence of the Risen Lord.

The role of the Gospel Book in the Resurrectional Vigil is the role of the Icon of the Feast. (Indeed, a small icon of the Resurrection is on the front of the Gospel Book.) The liturgical use of the icon comes from the liturgical use of the Gospel, for the first icon of Christ the Word is the Book of the Gospels.

Icon of Theotokos "Joy of All Who Sorrow"

Joy of all who sorrow art thou, and protector of the oppressed, feeder of the hungry, consolation of travellers, haven for the tempest-tossed, visitation of the sick, protection and aid of the infirm, staff of old age. O all-pure Mother of the most high God haste thou, we pray thee, to save thy servants. *Hymn of the Feast*

This holy icon became glorified in 1688. Euthymia, the sister of Patriarch Joachim, living on Ordynka Street in Moscow, and suffering for a long time with a severe wound in a side, once, during a prayer to the Savior and the Mother of God, heard a voice that asked her to pray before the icon "Joy of All Who Sorrow" found in the local parish temple of the Transfiguration. When the Molioben was served before the holy icon and the patient was sprinkled with holy water, she instantly felt better and rose by herself from the bed. This miracle occurred on October 24 and in its memory the feast of the "Joy of All Who Sorrow" was established on this day. The Mother of God on this icon is represented in full stature with the eternal Child on her left hand. On both sides of the Mother of God are depicted two angels, and at her feet are depicted those praying and flowing to her for help and healing. This holy icon is found in the Temple of the Transfiguration on Ordynka Street in Moscow. Another wonderworking icon of the "Joy of All Who Sorrow" is found in the village of Ivanovo, Moscow Province. The service of the Mother of God "Joy of All Who Sorrow" is printed by the Synodal printing house in a special booklet. *Note: This is a favorite icons of the Theotokos for many. I know a priest who was healed praying at one.*

We shall try to serve this beautiful service in another week when its feast comes.

Prayer: *O All-Holy Lady Theotokos, more exalted than the Cherubim and more honorable than the Seraphim, O Divinely-Chosen Maiden, Joy of All Who Sorrow, grant consolation also to us, who are in sorrow: for without thee we have no other refuge or help. Thou alone art the mediatrix of our joy and as the Mother of God and the Mother of mercy, standing at the throne of the All-Holy Trinity, Thou art able to help us: for none that flee to thee departs ashamed. Therefore bear us now on the day of sorrow who fall down before thine icon and pray to thee in tears: drive away from us sorrows and grief in this temporal life, that we may not be deprived of thine omnipotent intercession and of the eternal, unending joy in the Kingdom of thy Son and our God. Amen.*

Upcoming Events 2018

- 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!