

The Confessor's Tongue for April 14, A. D. 2019

Fifth Sunday of Lent: St. Mary of Egypt

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.

The Sayings of St. Anthony the Great 22

Abba Anthony said, 'I believe that the body possesses a natural movement, to which it is adapted, but which it cannot follow without the consent of the soul; it only signifies in the body a movement without passion. There is another movement, which comes from the nourishment and arming of the body by eating and drinking, and this causes the heat of the blood to stir up the body to work. That is why the apostle said, "Do not get drunk with wine for that is debauchery." (Eph 5.18) And in the Gospel the Lord also recommends this to His disciples: "Take heed to yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness.: (Luke 21:34) But there is yet another movement which afflicts those who fight, and that comes from the wiles and jealousy of the demons. You must understand what these three bodily movements are: one is natural, one comes from too much to eat, the third is caused by demons.' Saying 22 Sayings of the Desert Fathers

Commentary: This is not an easy saying for us to understand. It is not so much that we do not live as monks, but that we are so habituated to abundance of good things and an ease of acquiring whatever our body desires that we are deadened to the dynamic Antony describes. We are acquainted, at least, or know all too well, the effect drinking too much alcohol has: it decreases our inhibitions, loosens the rational mind's control over the body, and allows the passions free rein, particularly anger and lust. Antony and many other experienced fathers bears witness to the same dynamic, only more subtle, in response to eating too much, pandering too much to the taste, and pampering the body.

The body is ever to be guided by the soul rather than to guide the soul. It is designed to serve the soul, especially the rational element in man and highest part of the soul, the *nous* illumined by Christ. In man disordered by sin, the soul becomes enslaved to the body and its desires. The body is not evil, and has a proper movement natural to it. When it is in subjection to the soul, it does not move without the soul's consent. We can stir up passionate movements in our bodies, however, by excessive eating and drinking (i.e. more than the body needs to maintain health), by pampering and indulging the body. These give the body pleasure and increase its desire for more. This movement is always passionate, and is involuntary, though it is voluntarily aroused through excessive eating and drinking. Increasingly, the body impresses the soul as its servant to fulfill its growing desires, even against the rational judgment of the soul. Hence we witness the drug addict or drunkard, who though he knows with his mind that he needs to stop and that what he is doing is self-destructive, his body lords it over his soul and compels the mind to scheme as to how it can get the next fix or drink.

A publication of St. Maximus Orthodox Church, 2026 West Oak, Denton, TX, 76201 (940) 293-3032

Hence fasting is indispensable for keeping the body in proper subjection to the soul. Sometimes it is the demons who stir up the body directly, not natural motion or our over eating or drinking. This has to be borne with faith and patience, and is most often experienced by those who are actively engaged in spiritual combat and are making progress. *Fr. Justin*

Five Paths of Repentance

St. John Chrysostom

Would you like me to list also the paths of repentance? They are numerous and quite varied, and all lead to heaven.

A first path of repentance is the condemnation of your own sins: "Be the first to admit your sins and you will be justified." For this reason, too, the prophet wrote: "I said, I will accuse myself of my sins to the Lord, and Thou forgavest the wickedness of my heart." Therefore, you too should condemn your own sins; that will be enough reason for the Lord to forgive you, for a man who condemns his own sins is slower to commit them again. Rouse your conscience to accuse yourself within your own house, lest it become your accuser before the judgment seat of the Lord.

That, then, is one very good path of repentance. Another and less valuable one is to put out of our minds the harm done us by our enemies, in order to master our anger, and to forgive our fellow servants' sins against us. Then our own sins against the Lord will be forgiven us. Thus you have another way to atone for sin: "For if you forgive your debtors, your heavenly Father will forgive you."

Do you want to know of a third path? It consists of prayer that is fervent and careful and comes from the heart.

If you want to hear of a fourth, I will mention almsgiving, whose power is great and far-reaching.

If, moreover, a man lives a modest, humble life, that, no less than the other things I have mentioned, takes sin away. Proof of this is the tax collector who had no good deeds to mention, but offered his humility instead and was relieved of a heavy burden of sins.

Thus I have shown you five paths of repentance: condemnation of your own sins, forgiveness of our neighbor's sins against us, prayer, almsgiving, and humility.

Do not be idle, then, but walk daily in all these paths; they are easy, and you cannot plead your poverty. For, though you live out your life amid great need, you can always set aside your wrath, be humble, pray diligently, and condemn your own sins; poverty is no hindrance. Poverty is not an obstacle to our carrying out the Lord's bidding, even when it comes to that path of repentance which involves giving

money (almsgiving, I mean). The widow proved that when she put her two mites into the box!

Now that we have learned how to heal those wounds of our, let us apply the cures. Then, when we have regained genuine health, we can approach the Holy Table with confidence, go gloriously to meet Christ, the King of Glory, and attain the eternal blessings through the grace, mercy, and kindness of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Practical Spiritual Counsel on Judging, etc. St. Sergius of Kasimov

If you have a sinful habit of judging and condemning your neighbor, then here you are, the Great Fast has arrived, lay down a good beginning and pitch out this habit. But if out of weakness you forget, if you condemn someone, then give yourself the rule to make three prostrations that day with the prayer: "O Lord, save and have mercy on ___ (say the name of the person you judged), and by his prayers have mercy on me, a sinner." Do this always, whenever you judge someone. If you fulfill this, the Lord will see your fervor and will deliver you for good from this sinful habit. And if you don't judge anyone, then God, too, will never judge you, and so you will receive salvation.

Act exactly the same way with everything else. Has an unchaste thought visited your heart? Make three prostrations with the words, "O Lord, forgive me the prodigal," and consider yourself a prodigal. For you know the Lord considers even an unchaste glance to be an unclean action. Have you deceived someone? Go and apologize to him, admit your falsehood, and ask forgiveness. Have you taken something belonging to someone else? Go and return it to him; but if this is impossible, then give double its value to a person in need. Have you offended someone? God and make peace with him. Meanwhile, the spirit of pride will whisper, "How is this possible? It's disgraceful! what will people think of me?" Answer it: "You can't fool God; He knows and sees everything. I wasn't ashamed to sin; I won't be embarrassed to repent also. Help me, O Lord!"

And—may God have mercy—if you fall into any major sin, then bring to God special repentance, confess your sin to your spiritual father as soon as possible, ask him for the kindness of giving you a penance, and carry it out willingly, with great joy, knowing that in this lies your salvation: you have both repented and also wish to bring forth fruit worthy of repentance. Without fail, begin to act in this way and pray constantly: "O Lord our God! Even thou I have done nothing good in Thy sight, grant me henceforth to make a good beginning." From "A Spiritual Testament"

The Lord Hath Become King

Vladyka Dmitri's translation of the Saturday great prokeimenon from Psalm 92 reads "The Lord hath become king, with beauty hath He clothed himself." In contrast, the standard OCA translation (and those of other jurisdictions) based on the Revised Standard Version of the Old Testament read "The Lord IS king, He is clothed with

majesty". Modern translations of the Psalm read "the Lord reigns."

When I first moved to Texas after seminary, accustomed as I was to the standard translation, this wording grated on my ear. "How does the Lord become king?" I wondered. "Is He not king before all ages as God?" I asked Vladyka Dmitri about it. He insisted that this was the proper way to translate the text.

I acceded to him and over the years serving from his service book pondered these words every Saturday night. After several years, I began to make sense of that reading. But do the Greek and Slavonic really support it?

If we trouble ourselves to examine the translation of Psalm 92:1 (Psm 93:1), we find an immediate problem with the rendering it "the Lord reigns" or "the Lord is king". The Greek verb in Psalm 92:1 is aorist in tense (past, *ebasileusen*) and the Slavonic verb *воцарися* is also past tense. We find the same verb in the aorist tense in Psalm 96:1, 98:1 (LXX), and Revelation 19:6 (made famous in Handel's chorus: "Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.") The Greek verb indicates something that happened in the past, but the aorist is difficult to render. It does not mean an action completed in the past with enduring results in the present (perfect), or a progressive ongoing action or repeated action in the past (imperfect). The Slavonic verb indicates something that happened and was completed in the past. The Slavonic/Russian word literally means "to come to the throne". So the translators of the Greek text rendered it in Slavonic. Is this a permissible way to render the Greek aorist *ebasileusen*?

The verb *basileuo* denotes the action of a *basileus* as *basileus*: what does a king do? He reigns. Why would the Greek text of the Psalm read literally "the Lord reigned"? Does He no longer reign?

God as God has reigned over His creation always. If these passages merely assert God's kingship as God, the verbs would not be in the aorist tense. Theologically, there is another aspect to God's kingship to consider. While God cosmically is king from eternity, in another sense, by taking human flesh, clothing himself in human nature and glorifying it, by facing temptation, the devil, and death and prevailing over these mortal enemies of man, he has won the right to be king of mankind. Revelation 19:6 celebrates Christ's putting down all enemies and beginning to reign without opposition at His second coming. Psalm 92:1 then may be taken to speak prophetically about what the Son of God accomplishes by becoming incarnate and trampling down death by death: he becomes the rightful king of mankind by His service and victory. He comes to the throne, much as the rightful heir Aragorn comes to the throne of Gondor in *Lord of the Rings*—but only after winning the right and doing the service to his people of defeating the enemy. He does this in us personally at Baptism and universally at His Second Coming. So the dynamic rendering "the Lord hath become King", "the Lord hath begun to reign", or "the Lord hath come to the throne" captures the meaning better than the static "the Lord reigns" or "the Lord is king" and thus it glorifies Christ for the accomplishments of His incarnation on our behalf. Fr. Justin

Upcoming Events 2019

20 April, Saturday: 10:00 a.m. Baptisms
28 April: Great & Holy Pascha, Picnic

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!