

The Confessor's Tongue for June 16, A. D. 2019

Sunday of Pentecost: Eighth Sunday of Pascha

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 Feast of Pentecost

We celebrate Pentecost for seven days through its Leavetaking on Saturday. During the feast, we say or sing the festal troparion before meals and during our daily prayers. We resume saying the Prayer to the Holy Spirit, "O Heavenly King".

Pentecost, Troparion, tone 8

Blessed art Thou, O Christ our God, / who hast revealed the fishermen as most wise / by sending down upon them the Holy Spirit; / through them Thou didst draw the world into Thy net. / O Lover of Man, glory to Thee!

Pentecost, Kontakion, tone 8

When the Most High came down and confused the tongues, He divided the nations; / but when He distributed tongues of fire, He called all to unity. / Therefore, with one voice, we glorify the All-holy Spirit!

First Kneeling Prayer of Pentecost

O pure and blameless Lord, Who art without beginning, invisible and incomprehensible, unchangeable, immeasurable, and unbounded, Who art without evil and alone immortal, who dwellest in the unapproachable light, Maker of heaven and earth and the seas and all that was created therein, Who grantest to all their petitions before asking, to Thee we pray and of Thee we ask, O philanthropic Master, the Father of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ, Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and of the ever-virgin Mary, the noble Theotokos; Who first didst teach by word, and then gave testimony in deed while bearing the saving Passion, teaching us Thine unworthy, sinful, and miserable servants, to offer Thee our supplications with bent head and knee, for our sins and human ignorance.

Wherefore, O most merciful and philanthropic Lord, hear us on whatever day we call upon Thee, and especially on this day of Pentecost, whereon, after our Lord Jesus Christ had ascended into heaven and sat on Thy right hand, O God and Father, He sent down the Holy Spirit to his Disciples, the holy Apostles, Who alighted on each of them and filled them all with His inexhaustible and divine grace; and they did speak in strange tongues, prophesying Thy great deeds. Hear us who beseech Thee, and remember us, wretched and condemned. Deliver us from the (sinful) captivity of our souls by Thy loving intercession. Accept us, who kneel down before Thee and cry out: we have sinned. From birth, from the womb of our mother - we are Thine, O Lord - Thou art our God. But as our life passes in vanity, we have therefore been stripped of thine aid, and have become silent. Yet do we trust in Thy compassion and cry unto Thee. Remember not the sins of our youth and ignorance; cleanse us of our secret sins. Reject us not in our old age, and forsake us not when our strength fails. Before we return to the earth, prepare us to return to Thee. Measure our lawlessness with a measure of

Thy generosity, and erect against our many transgressions a bottomless abyss of these generousities.

Look down from the height of Thy holiness upon Thy people who stand and await from Thee abundant mercy. Visit us with Thy goodness and deliver us from the force of Satan and preserve our life with Thy holy and solemn laws. Commit Thy people unto a faithful guardian angel. Gather us all unto Thy kingdom. Forgive those who put their trust in Thee, relinquish us and them from sin. Purify us by the operation of Thy Holy Spirit and remove from us the wiles of the adversary. Amen.

The Sayings of St. Anthony the Great 29

A brother in a monastery was falsely accused of fornication, and he arose and went to Abba Anthony. The brethren also came from the monastery to correct him and bring him back. They set about proving that he had done this thing, but he defended himself and denied that he had done anything of the kind. Now Abba Paphnutius happened to be there, and he told them this parable: 'I have seen a man on the bank of the river buried up to his knees in mud, and some men came to give a hand to help him out, but they pushed him further in up to his neck.' Then Abba Anthony said this about Abba Paphnutius: 'Here is a real man, who can care for souls and save them.' All those present were pierced to the heart by the words of the old man and they asked forgiveness of the brother. So admonished by the Fathers, they took the brother back to the monastery.

Saying 29 Sayings of the Desert Fathers

Commentary: How ready we are to accuse others falsely, in our hearts if not in words! True, we usually do not do it maliciously and consciously, but do we not often quickly jump to false conclusions about our brother and pass judgment on him on the sketchiest of evidence? This readiness to leap to conclusions, think the worst, and condemn does great harm to ourselves and others and reveals a lack of love in our hearts for our brother. Love demands that we think the best of others, that we put the best possible construction and interpretation on their ambiguous words and actions rather than thinking the worst. How much trouble we suffer ourselves and inflict on others due to our choosing to think the worst!

The wise words of Abba Paphnutius calm a volatile situation. Rather than being a social thermometer registering the temperature of the conversation, he is a thermostat who changes it. He quickly leads the monks to perceive their error and repent. When they realize their fault, they immediately humble themselves and ask forgiveness rather than digging in to justify themselves.

Now suppose that the brother had committed the sin of which he was accused, a serious matter. Even in such a case, one must be careful: one may be right but still be wrong: right concerning the sin and judgment on it, but wrong in dealing with the sinner. The brethren had come to correct the brother and bring

him back to the monastery. This reveals their good intent: to restore their brother. But they didn't know how, and they were not fully operating out of love for him and so fell to arguing with him about his supposed guilt, which helped no one. Their sense of being right and their brother wrong kept them from helping him effectively. We tend to notice and judge sins to which we ourselves. Hence, we must always be on guard when dealing with the sins of others lest we be proud or condemning and thereby end up shooting the wounded and then falling ourselves, often into the same sin. St. Jude thus writes, "Keep yourselves in the love of God...Have mercy on some who are doubting; save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh." (Jude 21-23 NAS). *Fr. Justin Frederick*

Review: *The Quest of the Holy Grail*

Written by an anonymous author about the year 1225 as the fourth of a set of five works known variously as the *Vulgate Cycle*, the *Lancelot-Grail*, and the Pseudo-Map Cycle, *The Quest of the Holy Grail* engages the reader with its account of the quest of the knights of the Round Table for the Holy Grail. Galahad's arrival to fill the *Seige Perilous* and the appearance of the Grail at Pentecost 454 years after the first Pentecost precipitates the Quest. All the knights, following Gawain, rise to give their oaths to embark on a quest to learn its mysteries for at least a year and a day. The Quest will last a full nine years before the full report comes back to Arthur's court.

The *Quest* is not, however, the typical Arthurian romance. Yes, it contains battles, and jousts, knights decked out in full armor, carrying lances, riding proud chargers. It has its share of fair damsels in distress, castles, adventures, and mysteries. But it also has an abundance of monks, nuns, hermits, and priests vested in the "armor of God." The knights take counsel of them at every step, attend church services, and tend to their souls (or not). This work might best be described as a guide to the traditional Christian life (every Orthodox Christian would recognize it) dressed in the clothes of thirteenth-century chivalry. It is a quest, but ultimately a quest for the purification of the soul and union with God.

Two metaphors (which ultimately are not metaphors but reality) well describe the Christian life: quest and warfare. Christians are called to seek first the kingdom of God, which necessitates seeking holiness, perfection, the food which endures unto everlasting life, and love. The Christian realizes he is not home and he is not yet what he was made to be. Hence, he has embarked on a quest for his true homeland and being in Christ. Christians are also called to "fight the good fight" and to "resist the devil", their ancient adversary who "prowls around as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." We are called to "put on the whole armor of God" that we

may be able to fight and prevail in the battle against our relentless foe.

The Quest for the Grail, then, lends itself well to being told not only as a tale of knights and fair maidens in distress for the amusement of the reader but as an account of the Christian life. In fact, this is what the author of the *Quest* has done—and very well. Though written after the Great Schism, the work is thoroughly Orthodox (bear witness to the fact the schism was a long process at the local level) in its spirituality, drawing deeply on such classics as *The Life of Antony* and reflecting the wisdom of the desert fathers. Much as Fr. Seraphim Rose reportedly liked to read St. Augustine's *Confessions* during Lent, this work makes suitable reading both outside and even within a Fast. The account is engaging without being a thriller, while its depiction of the contrasting paths of Sir Gawain and Sir Lancelot is poignantly moving. This work is full of grace and light—while also bearing prophetic witness against those who donned the outer vestments and actions of chivalry but lacked the inner Christian reality. This work deserves to be much better known than it is currently.

The only English version for many years has been Pauline Matarasso's translation from the Old French for Penguin Classics. A new translation by Judith Shoaf was issued last fall by Broadway Press. (I read the former, not the latter.) *Fr. Justin*

The Icon of Pentecost

The Icon of Pentecost presents a cosmic image. The Apostles are seated in an arch, a proxy for the entire Church itself. The icon of Pentecost is one of those icons which though representing an event in the Bible, represents it in a manner that goes beyond the event and becomes a permanent image of how the Church exists in the world. The hint that this is the case is of course how, just as in the image of the Ascension, St. Paul is represented though he was not there in the Biblical account. St. Peter and St. Paul are there as they are in so many icons, as the pillars of the Church, the left and the right hand of Christ. Above the Apostles is the holy fire which descends on them; this fire separates into twelve, just as the Apostles themselves each acquired tongues of fire, tongues which speak in a manner that can reveal Christ through multiplicity and be heard by all men.

And then down in the bottom of the icon is the door which leads outside the upper room, the outer darkness in which the allegorical figure of the Cosmos holds the scrolls, the fully manifest form of the twelve traditions issued by the one fire, the one Church whose unity is preserved in its multiplicity. Of course the door of Pentecost is the door of the Church itself considered at all the levels of interpretation in which we can understand that statement, it the cosmic body of Christ, but it is also the actual church building, is the road that leads out of the nave into the chaotic outside. Jonathan Pageau, *Orthodox Arts Journal*, 9/2017

Upcoming Events 2019

16 June Pentecost: Vespers (2:00 p.m.) with Kneeling Prayers

21 June: Fast-Free Friday Game Night & Cookout 6:00
GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!