

# The Confessor's Tongue for August 11, A. D. 2019

## Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

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.

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### **Dormition of the Most-Holy Theotokos**

*August 15*

This feast, celebrated on August 15, is the last Great Feast of the liturgical year, which ends on August 31. The Dormition refers to the "falling asleep" or death of the Theotokos.

According to the ancient tradition of the Church, when it came time for the Theotokos to pass from this life to the Kingdom, an angel appeared to her three days before her death to inform her of this passage. The Virgin made preparations for her death, ascending the Mount of Olives to pray and give thanks to the Lord. Meanwhile, the Holy Apostles were miraculously carried away from where each had been to the house of the Theotokos. There, they prayed with her, and she committed her soul to her Son and God. The Apostles laid her body to rest in a tomb in the valley of Kedron near Gethsemane. By God's providence, Thomas arrived late, on the third day after her death. He was grieved that he had missed Mary's last moments, and so he wanted to see her one last time and venerate her body. The other Apostles took him to the tomb and had it opened. Inside, they discovered her body missing and the empty grave clothes. In this way, they realized she had already partaken of the Resurrection.

The focus of the Dormition Feast is the glorification of the Holy Theotokos in death and her participation in the Christ's Resurrection before the day of the general resurrection. This shows her to have reached man's goal of perfect life in union with God. The feast is also eschatological in that it points to the victory over death that every faithful believer will gain.

In commemorating the Theotokos' repose or death, Dormition is akin to the feast of any other saint. It differs, however, in that it affirms her bodily resurrection and her participation in the life of the age to come. Though affirmed in the hymnology and by many of the Fathers, this belief in Mary's "assumption" is not dogma in the Orthodox Church, though by papal decree in 1950, it is dogma for Roman Catholics.

We celebrate the Dormition for 8 days, from August 15 through the Leave-taking August 23. We add the festal troparion and kontakion to our regular morning and evening prayers, in place of our usual prayers before and after meals, and when setting out to travel.

It is customary to bless herbs and flowers on this feast.

### **Troparion, tone 1**

In giving birth, thou didst preserve thy virginity, / in falling asleep thou didst not forsake the world, O Theotokos. / Thou wast translated to life, O thou who art the Mother of Life, // and by thy prayers thou dost deliver our souls from death.

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### **Kontakion, tone 2**

Neither the tomb nor death could hold the Theotokos, / who is constant in prayer and our firm hope in her intercessions. / For being the Mother of Life, she was translated to life / by the One who dwelt in her virginal womb. *CT 110814, 170813, 130811, 180812*

### **Ascetical and Theological Chapters**

*By St. Justin Popovich*

1.12 The whole planet stinks with sin, death, the devil and man. At midnight, the soul with sweet – breathing prayers ascends from the stench to the unearthly sweet fragrance of the creature in Christ. (Midnight, 21 September 1919, Athens.)

*Translation by Fr. Justin Frederick*

### **The Sayings of St. Anthony the Great 34**

*Abba Anthony once went to visit Abba Amoun in Mount Nitria, and when they met, Abba Amoun said, "By your prayers, the number of the brethren increases, and some of them want to build more cells where they may live in peace. How far away from here do you think we should build the cells?" Abba Anthony said, "Let us eat at the ninth hour and then let us go out for a walk in the desert and explore the country." So they went out into the desert and they walked until sunset, and then Abba Anthony said, "Let us pray and plant the cross here, so that those who wish to do so may build here. Then when those who remain there want to visit those who have come here, they can take a little food at the ninth hour and then come. If they do this, they will be able to keep in touch with each other without distraction of mind." The distance is twelve miles.*

*Saying 34 Sayings of the Desert Fathers*

*Commentary:* Abba Amoun in humility credits Anthony's prayers for the growth of his community rather than his own leadership. In humility, he asks Anthony's council about that matter of where to build more cells to house the brethren so a modicum of peace may be maintained. Anthony on his part, does not give his own wisdom off the top of his head. He waits until the fast of the day is concluded and broken at the ninth hour (3:00 p.m.) and then walks into the desert with the brethren to explore until they find the proper place at sunset. And notice how practical is the result, how it fits into the monks' way of life: the one's building the cells are far enough away from the original settlement so as to have a large measure of peace and quiet, but they are within the walking distance of an afternoon (let it not be said that these monks are lazy and out of shape! a twelve-mile walk between 3:00 p.m. and sundown...) and so will not be so remote as to be practically cut off. Thus Abba Amoun and Abba Anthony set an example of doing all things with prayer and counsel and in not relying on their own wisdom.

The custom of planting a cross on a site where a

church or monastery will be built remains a living custom in the Church to this day. When we have the official groundbreaking ceremony for our new church, we, too, shall plant a cross on the spot to claim it for its holy purpose.

### Prayer after the 12th Kathisma

O Lord my God, Who alone art good and lovest mankind, Who alone art merciful and meek, Who alone art true and just; O God Who alone art compassionate and merciful: Let Thy power come upon me, Thy sinful and unworthy servant, and let it fortify my temple through the glad tidings of Thy divine teaching, O Master Who lovest mankind, Who lovest the good, Who art [full] of lovingkindness. By Thy will enlighten mine inmost parts and all my members. Cleanse me of all evil and sin; preserve me undefiled and uncorrupted by any indwelling and activity of the devil; and grant me, in Thy goodness, to understand those things which are of Thee, to ponder them, to live in Thy desires, to be daunted by the fear of Thee, and to do what is pleasing unto Thee until my last breath, that according to Thine inexpressible mercy Thou mayest keep my soul and body, my mind and thoughts, as a temple immune to all the wiles of the adversary. O Lord my Lord, cover me with Thy compassion and forsake not me a sinner, Thine impure and unworthy servant, for Thou art my Defender, O Lord. Of Thee ever is my song, and we send up glory unto Thee – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit – now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

### On the Profit in Reading the Scriptures

*St. John Chrysostom*

For, tell me, who of you that stand here, if he were required, could repeat one Psalm, or any other portion of the Divine Scriptures? There is not one.

And it is not this only that is the grievous thing, but that while ye are become so backward with respect to things spiritual, yet in regard of what belongs to Satan ye are more vehement than fire. Thus should any one be minded to ask of you songs of devils and impure effeminate melodies, he will find many that know these perfectly, and repeat them with much pleasure.

But what is the answer to these charges? "I am not," you will say, "one of the monks, but I have both a wife and children, and the care of a household." Why, this is what hath ruined all, your supposing that the reading of the divine Scriptures appertains to [monks] only, when ye need it much more than they. For they that dwell in the world, and each day receive wounds, these have the most need of medicines. So that it is far worse than not reading, to account the thing even "superfluous:" for these are the words of diabolical invention. Hear ye not Paul saying, "that all these things are written for our admonition?"....

For if thou wouldest learn how great is the profit of the Scriptures, examine thyself, what thou

becomest by hearing Psalms, and what by listening to a song of Satan; and how thou art disposed when standing in a Church, and how when sitting in a theatre; and thou wilt see that great is the difference between this soul and that, although both be one. Therefore Paul said, "Evil communications corrupt good manners." For this cause we have need continually of those songs, which serve as charms from the Spirit. Yes, for this it is whereby we excel the irrational creatures, since with respect to all other things, we are even exceedingly inferior to them.

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If a man falls into some sin and does not feel remorse for his offence as he should, he will easily fall into the same net again. *St. Mark the Ascetic*

St. John Chrysostom says: If you want to know the truth about yourself, seek it from your enemies. They will tell you. *Elder Ambrose of Optina*

### On Sufferings and Temptations

*St. Ignaty Brianchaninov; St. Isaac of Syria*

The way of God from the beginning of time and from the creation of the human race has been the way of the cross and death. How did you get your idea that everything is just the opposite? You must realize that you are outside the way of God, that you are far from Him, that you do not wish to walk in the steps of the Saints, but want to make some special way for yourself and travel by it without sufferings. The way of God is a daily cross. No one has climbed to heaven by living a life of pleasure.

The innocent and all-holy Lord...has provided suffering as the way of salvation for all His followers... At the same time, He infuses into the sufferings of His servants from His own sufferings unspeakable spiritual consolation in proof positive of the truth of salvation, and of the truth of the way of suffering which leads to salvation. The innocent and all-holy Lord spent His earthly life in sufferings; still more should the guilty suffer, fully aware that they deserve to suffer. They should rejoice that by means of brief sufferings they are delivered from eternal sufferings and join the ranks of the followers and friends of the God-man. He who refuses sufferings and does not consider that he deserves them, does not acknowledge his fall and perdition. He who has used his earthly life merely for earthly success, foolishly mistakes this briefest spell for eternity and regards eternity as non-existent—and he prepares himself for eternal misery! *From The Arena*

### Upcoming Events 2019

1-14 August: Dormition Fast.  
13 August: Feast of St. Maximus and Leavetaking  
15 August: Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos  
18 August: Blessing of Students and Teachers  
1 September: Church New Year  
13 October: Octoberfest  
10 November: Parish Thanksgiving Meal

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!