

# The Confessor's Tongue for August 25, A. D. 2019

10th Sunday after Pentecost; Apostles Bartholomew & Titus

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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## From St. Ambrose of Optina (+1891)

Someone asked a monk: "Who taught you to pray? He answered, "Demons." "How did demons teach you?" "This is how! They warred against me with various thoughts, and I beat them off with prayer."

"If you do not feel like praying, you have to force yourself," the Elder said. "The Holy Fathers say that prayer with force is higher than prayer unforced. You do not want to, but force yourself. The Kingdom of Heaven is taken by force (Matthew 11:12).

On almsgiving, the Elder said, "St. Dmitri of Rostov wrote: 'Even if a man comes to you on a horse [today, a nice car] and asks you for alms, give it to him. You will not have to answer for how he uses it.'"

Also, "St. John Chrysostom says, 'Begin by giving away what you do not need, what is just lying around unused, to those who are in need. Then you will begin to give what you can according to your means, and finally you will be ready to give away all that you have.'"

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

## September 1: The Church New Year

On this day, when the Jews celebrated the new summer, the Savior, came to Nazareth where He was brought up and entered the synagogue on the Sabbath day as was His custom, and read these words of the Prophet Isaiah: "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed Me ... to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord*" (Luke 4, 18:19). On the first of September 312 the Emperor Constantine the Great won a victory over Maxentius. After this, Christians were granted complete freedom to confess their faith. In commemoration of these two events the fathers of the First Ecumenical Council decided to begin the New Year on the first of September (See January 1, March 1 and the Paschalia). In its hymns for this day the Holy Church prays "Creator and Fashioner of all things visible and invisible" "bless the crown of the year", "grant fruitful seasons and rains from heaven for those on earth", "bless our comings and goings, direct the works of our hands and grant us forgiveness of offences", "grant peace to Thy churches", "overthrow heresies", "protect our cities unbesieged, make glad our faithful Sovereigns by Thy power, giving them victories against enemies".

From: S. V. Bulgakov, *Handbook for Church Servers*, 2nd ed., 1274 pp. (Kharkov, 1900) pp 307-310. Translated by Archpriest Eugene D. Tarris © 2004. All rights reserved.

## Troparion, tone 2 of the Indiction (New Year)

O Fashioner of all creation, who in Thine authority hast appointed the times and seasons: bless Thou the crown of the year with Thy goodness, O Lord, preserving in peace Orthodox Christians and Thy city, and through the prayers of the Theotokos, save us.

## Kontakion, tone 2 of the Indiction

O Christ our King who livest in the highest, Creator and Maker of all things visible and invisible, who hast fashioned days and nights, seasons and years: bless Thou now the crown of the year; preserve and keep in peace Orthodox hierarchs, this city and Thy people, O greatly Merciful One.

*The Church New Year is a time for us to gather our energies to make "a beginning of good"; in other words, to be renewed and revived in seeking Christ first, to set in order what has fallen into disarray in our lives, to recalibrate spiritually, to reestablish correct priorities, to cultivate repentance, strengthen our prayer, increase our giving, devote ourselves afresh to spiritual reading and applying Christ's commandments in service to others. We need opportunities to take stock and make adjustments. While every provides and opportunity, times such as the civil New Year, the Church New Year, Great Lent, and others readily support such an effort. May God grant us all that beginning of good!*

## The Sayings of St. Anthony the Great 35

*Abba Anthony said, "Whoever hammers a lump of iron, first decides what he is going to make of it, a scythe, a sword, or an axe. Even so, we ought to make up our minds what kind of virtue we want to forge, or we labor in vain.*

*Saying 35 Sayings of the Desert Fathers*

*Commentary:* In forging a metal object, the smith must know ahead of time what he is making. Not only does he need to know how to form it, but also how hot to heat the metal, what type of metal to use, and how to quench the hot metal to achieve the desired quality of hardness. The process a good sword requires will not work for a hammer or a chisel.

St. Anthony likens the acquisition of the virtues to this process. If we take a general approach to forging a virtue, for example, just going to Church, praying, reading, fasting, receiving the Holy Mysteries, and so forth but without any more precise focus, we may not succeed in gaining any of the virtues. What are the virtues? Humility, liberality, chastity, mildness, temperance, happiness, diligence, faith, hope, and love are among them. Providing needed focus, St. Justin of Chelye recommends that each day we seek to put aside one sin and put on one virtue. St. Theophan the Recluse advises us to discern what our controlling passion is and to fight against it by putting on the virtue that opposes it, and having prevailed in this struggle, we shall much more readily prevail over our other vices and acquire the other virtues.

Warring against a particular passion most often means obedience to a particular command of Christ that counteracts the passion and develops the virtue. For example, avarice and love of money are counteracted by almsgiving: obedience to Christ's command "Give to them that ask of thee, and from them that would borrow from thee turn thou not away." The sinful passion is cut away by obedience to

Christ's command and working to acquire the virtue of generosity. If we struggle with lust, we must learn to guard not only our eyes but also our stomachs by fasting. If pride is our controlling passion, we seek to acquire the virtue of humility by serving others, putting others first, doing without recognition the dirty jobs no one else wants to do. "Whoever wishes to be first among you, let him be the servant of all," as Christ has said, and "If you are invited to a feast, take the lowest place." "He who exalteth himself will be abased, but he that humbleth himself will be exalted" (Luke 14:11, 18:14). Humility leads to the spiritual heights. If you struggle with anger, hatred, remembrance of wrong, and unforgiveness, seek to put on love by obeying Christ's command to not return evil for evil, but to overcome evil with good by doing good to those who harm us, blessing those who curse us, and praying for those who persecute us and whom we experience as enemies.

### The Eight Chief Passions

*St. Ignatius Brianchaninov; The Field*

*St. Ignatius Brianchaninov lists the various sins connected to each of the eight "chief passions" or "deadly thoughts" as they are variously called. This can be of great help to us in searching and understanding our own hearts before God in preparation for Confession.*

**1. Gluttony:** Overeating, drunkenness, breaking or lessening the fast, secret eating, indulgence in eating, and intemperance in food in general. An incorrect or excessive attention to the body and the stomach and its needs, from which we develop self-love and form which come unfaithfulness to God, the Church, the virtues, and other people.

**2. Fornication:** Carnal lust, impure desires and feelings in the body, impure feelings and desires in the soul and heart, and acceptance of impure thoughts—conversation with them, pleasure in them, cooperation with them, persistence in them, lustful imaginings and bondage to them. Not keeping watch over the senses, especially sight, in which is found brazenness that destroys all virtues. Using foul language and reading sensual books. Natural carnal sins: fornication and adultery. Sins of the flesh contrary to nature: self-stimulation, homosexuality, bestiality, and others like them.

**3. Avarice (Greed):** Love of money, or a general love for property and riches. The desire to become rich, thinking of ways to get rich, and imagining future riches. Fear of old age, sudden poverty, sickness, or exile. Miserliness. Avarice. Unfaithfulness to God and lack of trust in His providence. Passionate attachment or sickly, excessive love for various perishable things that destroy peace of soul. Preoccupation with earthly matters. Love of presents. Stealing things belonging to others. Usury. Cruelty to the poor and to all who are in need. Thievery and brigandage.

**4. Anger:** Irrascibility, acceptance of angry thoughts; harboring evil thoughts about others and

thoughts of revenge, disturbing the heart with anger, and the darkening of the mind through anger. Inappropriate yelling, arguments, fighting, cruel and hurtful words, striking others, pushing others, murder. Remembrance of evils, hatred, fighting, revenge, slander, judging others, and disturbing or offending your neighbor.

**5. Sorrow:** Causing sorrow to others, sadness, lack of hope in God, doubt in the promises of God, lack of gratitude to God for everything He has given, lack of faith, lack of patience, not blaming oneself, being offended at others, complaining, and rejecting one's cross.

**6. Despair (Acedia):** Lack of enthusiasm of any good deed, especially prayer (both in church and at home), not praying constantly, ceasing to treading of spiritual books, and lack of attention or hurrying in prayer. Lack of care for the spiritual life. Laziness, too much sleep and lying around or lazing about. Constant moving about from place to place. Frequently leaving one's cell [or place] for walks and visits with friends. Idle talk, jokes, blasphemy. Ceasing prostrations or other physical labors. Forgetting your sins. Forgetting the commandments of Christ. Lack of reverence for holy things. Lack of the fear of God. Harness of heart. Lack of feeling for others. Hopelessness.

**7. Vanity:** seeking the praise of men. Boasting. The desire for and seeking of earthly glories. Love for beautiful clothes, carriages, servants, or decorations in your cell [or home]. Paying attention to your physical appearance, the way you speak, or other qualities of your body. Inclination to the learning and sciences of this fallen age and seeking to succeed in them solely for earthly gain and glory. Being afraid to confess your sins, hiding your sins before people and your spiritual father. Cunning. Self-justification. Contradiction. Trusting in your own reason. Hypocrisy. Lies. Duplicity. People-pleasing. Envy. Demeaning others. Pretending to act unnaturally for the benefit of others. Lack of conscience. Demonic habits.

**8. Pride:** Disdain of our neighbors. Preferring ourselves first before all others. Brazenness. Darkening of the mind and heart; nailing them to the earth. Blasphemy. Lack of faith. Delusion. False opinions of oneself. Lack of submission to the Law of God and the Church; following your own fallen will. Reading heretical, impure, or vain books. Lack of submission to the ruling authority. Rude mockery of others. Abandoning the humble emulation of Christ and the path of humility and silence. Loss of simplicity. Loss of love for God and your neighbor. False teachings. Heresy. Godlessness. Ignorance. The

### Upcoming Events 2019

1 September: Church New Year  
13 October: Oktoberfest  
31 October: All Saints Party  
10 November: Parish Thanksgiving Meal

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!