

The Confessor's Tongue for January 26, A. D. 2020

32nd Sunday after Pentecost; New Martyrs & Confessors of Russia

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 New Russian Martyrs

The Synaxis of the New Martyrs and Confessors of the Russian Church under the Bolshevik yoke is celebrated the first Sunday following January 24.

Martyrdom is the same thing as Christianity. These two words have the same meaning. Hatred against Christ and His followers should not surprise us. It is natural, it was foretold by the Lord Himself, Who said: "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you" (John 15:18).

Today we celebrate the memory of the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of the Russian land. These are all the multitude of bishops, priests, monks, nuns, laymen, laywomen, and children who were killed or suffered gravely because of their faith and their refusal to compromise their faith, to cooperate with the new revolutionary atheistic government, or to renounce their faith in Christ.

The experience of each and every one of these martyrs and confessors was unique. Even if their manner of death or suffering was similar in many cases, each of them brought with them to that moment of confession or martyrdom a unique soul, a unique set of experiences and circumstances. If we were to enter into the mind and heart of each one of these saints and observe the unique way in which they experienced their suffering and the knowledge of their coming martyrdom, we would see a wondrous tapestry of experience. And the thread which holds all this tapestry together is love, love for Christ. was foretold by the Lord Himself, Who said: "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you" (John 15:18).

The Commandments of Christ

"If ye love Me, keep My commandments." (John 14:15)
Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Matthew 5:38-41

The basic commands here may be summarized as "If struck, turn and offer the other cheek", "If sued for thy coat, give thy cloak as well," "If compelled to go one mile, go a second mile." The basic principle is that when the disciples of Christ are asked or compelled to do something they do not want to do, Christ commands them to do more than required.

We might well remember movies of yesteryear such as Laurel and Hardy in which one party slaps another on the cheek only to be slapped in turn. Back and forth it goes. This is probably the most primal response following the notion of doing to others what they do to you. To refrain from striking the striker is

to break the cycle of violence and to apply the command "Do not return evil for evil". Just because you did wrong to me does not mean I must return the wrong to you. One might grudgingly (or in fear) restrain one's anger and not hit the hitter back. But Christ calls God's children to go still further. Not only are they not to return the blow, but they are to offer their other cheek for a blow. Who having had one cheek slapped would normally offer the other to be slapped? No one. But this is what Christ commands God's children to do. This demonstration of meekness and humility works on the wrongdoer to shame him and bring him to repentance.

Christ applies this not only to physical violence but to legal violence. When one is sued for one's coat, Christ says to give one's cloak also. Give more than the demand or the award. It does not matter if the demand or award seems unjust. It does not appear to matter who wins the case. Christ command does not permit an ongoing lawsuit. In another place, he urges us to make peace with our neighbor before it goes to court. Legal battles are not the place for the Christian. Who when sued by someone and having the judgment against him, normally would give his opponent even more than the judge awarded? No one. But so Christ commands.

In Palestine under the Roman occupation, a Jewish man could be conscripted to carry a Roman soldier's heavy pack for a Roman mile (1000 paces), but no more. To carry upon demand for one mile was his obligation, but after the mile he was free to go his way. One likely would carry the soldier's pack the required mile, resenting the imposition but having no way of avoiding it. But who would willingly carry the pack of a foreign soldier occupying one's homeland further than one was obligated? No one. But Christ commands his disciples so to do.

To be this 'no one' is precisely what Christ commands His disciples. When forced to do something unpleasant against their will and seeming best interest, they are to rise above it by doing more than required for Christ's sake. The Christian overcomes evil by doing good, and obedience to this principle contains great power to transform ugly situations. Try it at work with your difficult customers or co-workers, going the extra mile for them against the thought in your heart that they aren't worthy of it. Try it with your wife: when she asks you to do a job for her, get to it quickly and cheerfully, and then ask what else you may do for her. Try it with your husband or with your in-laws or with a fellow parishioner. There is far more power in good than in evil, especially when we do it in obedience to Christ's command with faith in Him that His command is good and obedience to it will bring His rich blessing.

In one case, a man's wife wanted to divorce him. He had thought the marriage to be happy and was oblivious to what he did to make her unhappy. After the divorce, every time he had to pay alimony and child support, he felt great bitterness. Asking a counselor what to do about the bitterness, he was directed to this command of Christ and encouraged to give more in payments than he was required. This obedience delivered him from bitterness, helped him to love his former wife as never before, communicated to her that he was changing, and resulted in their being eventually reunited in marriage. God's ways, though so often not our ways, do work—in mysteriously powerful ways. *Fr. Justin Frederick*

On the World Economic Crisis

St. Nikolai of Zicha

You are asking me, man of God, about the reason and meaning of the present crisis. Who am I that you ask me about this great mystery? "Speak if you have something greater than silence," said St. Gregory the Theologian. And although I find that presently silence is higher than any word, I will, out of love for you, write what I think about this question.

"Crisis" is a Greek word, and in translation it means "judgment". In the Holy Scripture the word "judgment" is used many times. We read in the Psalms, "*Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment*" (Ps. 1:5). Later again, "*I will sing of mercy and judgment: unto thee, O LORD, will I sing*". (Ps. 101:1).

The wise king Solomon writes that the judgment will come to everyone from the Lord (Proverbs 29:26).

The Savior himself said, "*For the Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment unto the Son.*" (John 5:22).

The Apostle Peter writes, "*For the time is come that judgment must begin in the house of God*" (1 Pet. 4:17).

Replace the word "judgment" with the word "crisis" and read, "I will sing of mercy and crisis", "Crisis will come to everyone from the Lord", "The Father committed all crisis unto the Son", "For the time is come that crisis must begin in the house of God".

Previously the Europeans, when some trouble befell them, used the word "judgment" instead of the word "crisis". These days the word "judgment" is replaced with the word "crisis", a clear word with one less clear. A drought would come and people would say – "God's judgment!" Flood – "God's judgment!" A war or epidemic would start – "God's judgment!" Earthquakes, locust, other trials, always the same – "God's judgment!" Therefore, crisis is because of the drought, because of the flood, of the wars and epidemics. And people see the present financial, economic catastrophe as God's judgment, but they call it "crisis" rather than "judgment". So that the trouble would increase from lack of reason! Because when the clear word "judgment" was said, the reason that led to the trouble was clear, and the Judge who allowed the trouble was known, and so was the purpose for which the trouble was allowed. But after replacing the word "judgment" with the word "crisis",

which is unclear for the most, no one can explain why it is, from whom, and for what. And this is the only thing in which this crisis differs from the crisis that happens from drought and flood, war or epidemic, locust or other tribulation.

You are asking about the reason of today's crisis, or God's judgment? The reason is always the same. The reason for all droughts, floods, epidemics and other troubles is the same as of today's crisis – the falling away from God. The sin of falling away from God has resulted in this crisis as well, and the Lord allowed it so as to wake people, sober them, so that they would repent and come back to him. The crisis is commensurate to sins. And truly, the Lord used modern means to teach modern people: he struck the banks, the stock exchanges, the entire financial system. He overturned the tables of money-lenders just as he once did in the temple in Jerusalem. He created an unprecedented panic between merchants and money-lenders. Stirred up, brought down, mixed up, confused, bestowed fear. And all that so that proud European and American wise men would wake up, repent, remember God. So that they who are anchored in the haven of material comfort would remember their souls, acknowledge their trespassings, and bow down before God the Highest, the living God.

How long will the crisis last? Until the proud culprits acknowledge the victory of the All-Powerful. Until the people would realize that they have to translate the unclear word "crisis" into their native language and would exclaim with the repentant sigh, "God's judgment!"

Therefore you, honest Father, should also call "crisis" "God's judgment", and you will understand everything.

Greetings to you and the Lord's peace!

From St. Silouan of Athos

The Lord and heaven mourn, if someone sins and does not repent.

The Lord loves a courageous soul that completely trusts Him.

People who repent will live forever with God and will love God, and will be pleasant to the Father like children.

Upon knowing the Lord the soul misses Him day and night and tearfully searches for Him, because it cannot forget the sweetness of the Holy Spirit.

The proud cannot love God.

He who loves to eat a lot cannot love God properly.

Rely on the will of God, and sorrows will be less, and it will be easier to bear them, because the soul will be in God and will find comfort in Him.

If a person becomes irritated, then the demon enters him, and if he humbles himself, then the demon goes out.

Upcoming Events 2019

2 February: Meeting of the Lord in the Temple
1 March: Forgiveness Vespers
2-7 March: Clean Week
19 April: Great and Holy Pascha

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!