

The Confessor's Tongue for March 1, A. D. 2020

37th Sunday after Pentecost; Expulsion from Paradise; Forgiveness

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.

Sunday of Forgiveness: Cheesefare

On this day, Cheesefare Sunday, we commemorate the banishment of Adam, the First Creature, from the Paradise of Delight.

Our Holy Fathers appointed this commemoration before the beginning of Great Lent to demonstrate how beneficial the medicine of fasting is to human nature and how shameful are gluttony and disobedience by an example of the results of each. They set before us the example of Adam, the first-formed man. They give a clear, case-in-point demonstration of how many evils he suffered—and hence introduced into our nature—from neglecting to fast for only a short time. Furthermore, they show that the first precept of God given to mankind was the ideal of fasting. By not keeping this precept but yielding instead to his stomach, or rather to the serpent-deceiver by the agency of Eve, Adam not only failed to become God, but he also brought death upon himself and communicated this sickness to the entire human race. In order to remove the first Adam's indulgence, the Lord fasted forty days, thus obeying the commandment of fasting. This was the origin of the forty-day Fast of Great Lent. It was instituted by the Holy Apostles so that, if by means of Great Lent we keep the Fast, unlike Adam who did not, we might again enjoy the incorruptibility that he lost....

The purpose of the Holy Fathers was to include in the *Triodion* a concise account of the deeds wrought by God from the beginning of time to the end. Adam's disobedience and subsequent fall from the delight of Paradise are the cause of everything relating to us. In today's commemoration of the fall, the Holy Fathers develop the theme of disobedience so that we might avoid it and strive not to be immoderate in anything....

Therefore, it is because Adam neglected to fast just once that we have had to endure such woes. The commemoration of this is appointed now at the beginning of Holy Lent so that by remembering how many evils the failure to fast has brought upon us, we might welcome Great Lent eagerly and gladly keep the Fast. For by means of it, we can attain *theosis*—deification—of which Adam fell short. We shall attain this only by lamenting and fasting until the appointed time that God shall visit us. For it is not easy or feasible to regain what we have lost in any way.

We should know that today we ask forgiveness from our brethren in Christ so that we may begin the race in the stadium of Great Lent unhindered by any animosity. As long as we live self-centered lives, we cannot forgive our neighbor—our ego will not allow it. Once our lives are God-centered, however, we are able to forgive others as God forgives us. Let us

remember that God's mercy and forgiveness to us is often hidden in our mercy and forgiveness to others. Our Lenten journey is not an isolated or individual affair but a "family" event. Therefore, we are reminded in today's reading from the Holy Gospel that unless there is mutual forgiveness between one another, there can be no true reconciliation with God.

We should also know that this Holy and Great Lent is like a tithe of the entire year. Due to our laziness, we do not choose to fast and abstain from evil all the time. Knowing this, the Holy Apostles and Holy Fathers gave us this Lenten tradition as a kind of harvest-time for our souls. It provides us with the opportunity to remove whatever unseemly deeds we have committed throughout the year by now becoming contrite and humble through fasting. For this reason, we ought to keep it all the more strictly. We should keep the other three fasts as well, the Holy Apostles' Fast, the Holy Dormition Fast, and forty-day Holy Nativity Fast. The Holy Fathers instituted four periods of fasting, corresponding to the four seasons of the year. However, they ascribed a greater prestige to this forty-day fast of Great Lent because of the Lord's Passion, and because Christ likewise fasted forty days and was glorified. The Holy Prophet Moses received the Law after fasting forty days, and the Holy Prophet Elijah and the Holy Prophet Daniel likewise fasted, as did all those who were approved by God.

Therefore, fasting is something beneficial. Adam proved this by doing the opposite. It was for this reason the Holy Fathers placed here today's commemoration of Adam's exile from Paradise.

From the Synaxarion

Truth in Language As a Christian Duty

The words we chose to use and how we use them do much to define reality as we perceive or think it. Careless, sloppy use of words leads to careless, sloppy thinking and the ready generation of inadvertent error and deliberate deception. Indeed many people who desire to remake the world after their own vision work often use common words with new, subversive meaning to assist them in dismantling the old order and bringing in a new one.

A good example of this is the changed meaning of "gender". Before the 1950s, "gender" was used for grammar. Nouns in various languages can have "gender": masculine, feminine, neuter. In 1955, sexologist John Money created a distinction between biological sex and gender as a human role, but it didn't catch on until the 1970s when feminists employed it extensively to try to distinguish between biological sex and gender as a social construct. By the 1980s, "gender" and "sex" in popular usage could be

used interchangeably to refer to someone's sex. But since 2011, the FDA has restricted "sex" to describe biology and "gender" to describe how someone represents himself or is responded to in society. This conception of "gender" is a completely modern concept, and it has changed the way multitudes of people think.

Besides this development in the categories of sex and gender, much has been done in the past fifty years or so in the area of what we might call "sexual identity" to change radically the way people think and perceive reality. A recent letter in *Touchstone Magazine* (March/April 2020) well captures this.

The author sets out to explain "sexual identity."

'LGBT' along with 'heterosexual'—refers to sexual identities, things that did not exist anywhere in the history of human thought before the twentieth century. This isn't to suggest that men haven't procreated, fornicated, committed sodomy and whatever else since time immemorial. Of course they have. But until about 1940, the idea that our sexual urges defined us in any way as human beings occurred to almost no one. Flash forward eighty years to today, and it's hard to imagine how anyone could claim *not* to have a sexual identity.

But what, exactly, *is* sexual identity? When we say, 'Bob is gay/homosexual,' we mean that Bob *is* the sum of his desires associated with sexual orgasm—which, when we say it as it really is, sounds like a crazy way to describe a man.

To understand how bizarre and how recent the invention of sexual identity really is, imagine that I were to travel back in time to 1890 and explain to my great-grandparents that 'I am a heterosexual.' They wouldn't know what I was talking about. At first, they simply wouldn't understand the word, since it didn't exist at the time (psychiatrists coined 'homosexual' in 1892 and 'heterosexual' soon thereafter). But their confusion would only grow were I to define the word. 'What in God's name,' they would rightly wonder, 'could have happened in the world that would cause men to start identifying themselves on the basis of their erotic yearnings?' It would have sounded nothing short of crazy to them—and to anyone else living at that time. (Now imagine their reaction if I went onto explain that, by 2018, parents would have hormonal injections administered to their own children based on nothing more than the professed 'gender identity' of a five-year-child.)

The context for this letter was an article by Rod Dreher about an Orthodox priest in the USA who in December publicly said that "we should encourage homosexuals to find a lifelong partner." The write of the letter points out how much work this word "homosexual" does to push this line in the discussion I have quoted above. By using such a word as an expression of someone's essential identity, we inadvertently foster the radical, progressive agenda that seeks to remove all the landmarks regarding what it is to be human and the nature of the family that God has established and to replace them with new conceptions of our own (or demonic) devising.

The letter writer goes on:

"If Fr. A__ wanted to send his post back in time to his own great-grandparents with any hope of being understood, he would first have to strip it of any reference to sexual identity, which, ironically, would mean he would have to translate it into something he could not say and (I hope) doesn't believe. A literal, no-sexual-identity translation would read, 'We should encourage men who want to sodomize other men to seek out other such men with whom to spend the rest of their lives together.'

"About two weeks after posting his article, Fr. A__, apparently after a talk with his bishop, issued a full retraction of it, writing that 'I affirm the teachings of the Scriptures and the Church that all sexual activity outside the sacrament of marriage is sinful and harmful to the soul and body.' That Fr. A__ could put his name to both statements is a testament to the confusion wrought by the language of sexual identity."

The letter writer goes on to discuss an article in the January/February *Touchstone* by Anthony Esolen before concluding:

"Fortunately, there is an easy way out of the pervasive confusion wrought by sexual identity, and that is simply to stop treating these made-up terms as if they signified anything real. We need only add a suitable verb, such as 'Bob identifies as gay,' to end our participation in the sexual-identity lie that 'Bob *is* gay.' Bob isn't gay, but it sounds like he may be doing some things he shouldn't."

Esolen responded to the letter in part thus:

"To use the language of the movement is to concede all the high ground and all of the cultural machine guns. We must not fall into it, even for the sake of convenience. Bobi is not 'a gay man' but a man, simply; and indeed, one of things he most needs to help put his passions in order it to see that he is indeed a man like other men and not a woman or anything like a woman. So, too, we must not use the term 'same-sex marriage,' because it is absurd, like a square triangle. I have coined the term 'same-sex pseudogamy,' the noun denoting all human liaisons that mimic marriage but are not the real thing, while the adjective tells us that in this case we are talking about two men engaging in the pretense, or two women.

"There is no such thing as 'sexual identity.' Our sexual passions are like our other passions, though often they are more chaotic, powerful and dangerous. We do not say we have a 'gustatory identity' or a 'ludic identity' or a 'thanatological identity'. We do not assume that our passions in any area are constant forever—or why would we have so many divorces? Imagine saying, 'I cannot live, I cannot be myself, unless I engage in erotic excitation in this specific way.' Anyone alive before the day before yesterday, as Mr. Capp [the writer of the letter] well notes, would consider you to be mad. And so you would be."

The world of Western Civilization is in crisis. Having rejected the Godman Jesus Christ, the foundation of our civilization and the One who reveals to us in its fullness what it is to be human, many of us have become completely confused and deluded as to what it is to be human, male or female. They fancy that have rejected man made in the image of God they may freely fashion and remake themselves according to whatever image they

conceive. This is a path to sin, bondage and death, not to virtue, freedom, and life.

We who live in this world must refuse to speak its dishonest, deceptive language as Mr. Esolen above says. We must speak the truth firmly in love, choosing our words carefully to bear the truth to the world for the life of the world. *Fr. Justin Frederick*

The Commandments of Christ

"If ye love Me, keep My commandments." (John 14:15)

And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldst not thou watch one hour? Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak. Mark 14:37-38

Christ commands His disciples to be alert, to be watchful, to be sober-minded because their adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. The Christian is to resist the prowling enemy, but he will not be able to offer effective resistance if he is not alert to recognize the enemy's presence. Should he fall asleep like the Peter James and John, the battle is over.

Christian life is unrelenting spiritual warfare with the spiritual forces of wickedness. When an army is in the field, it always posts sentries to keep watch lest the enemy attempt a surprise attack. So important was keeping watch that sentries who fell asleep on duty could be punished with death for endangering the whole army. The watchfulness of the Christian preserves him from the enemy's attempts to surprise him with a sneak attack and catch him unawares at a great disadvantage.

In dealing with human enemies, the mind and its alertness is a man's most important weapon. A well-known teacher of self-defense with a pistol, Jeff Cooper, developed the following color codes for levels of alertness to help his students be mentally prepared for self-defense. Here they are as described by William Levinson:

Condition White means a person is daydreaming, talking on a cell phone, or is otherwise unaware of what is going on around him. Criminals love to catch victims in Condition White because the usual result of a surprise attack is total paralysis. Many carjacking victims are shot not because they resist, but because they freeze so thoroughly that they cannot even obey the robber's order to surrender the vehicle.

It is noteworthy, by the way, that the Nazis were able to murder upward of 10 million people at a relatively low cost to their own lives (the Warsaw Ghetto uprising was one of the few exceptions) by keeping them collectively in Condition White. Jews and other victims were not told they were being taken to extermination camps; they were told they were being "relocated."

Humans, and possibly domestic livestock, are the only animals that live even part of their lives in Condition White. All wild animals live their entire lives in

Condition Yellow, and law enforcement experts suggest that law-abiding people should do so as well.

Condition Yellow is a prudent level of vigilance, and this vigilance stops many potentially deadly confrontations before they even begin. This is because there is not much difference between the decision processes that criminals and predatory animals use. If a carnivore wins a fight, he gets a meal. If a criminal wins a fight, he gets the victim's property, or the enjoyment of a sexual assault. In either case, however, the attacker cannot risk anything but the most trivial injuries. If the predatory animal is hurt badly in a fight, the meal it just killed will be its last, because it will be unable to catch another. No rational criminal wants to get hurt, either, and even a non-fatal gunshot wound will almost certainly lead to an arrest. No rational criminal will therefore attack somebody who is in Condition Yellow; he does not know for sure that even a smaller and physically weaker victim won't do him some damage.

Pearl Harbor was obviously not caught in Condition White on December 7, 1941. A military base is always at no less than Condition Yellow because there are always sentries and lookouts, and Pearl Harbor also had a rudimentary radar system. The Japanese attack succeeded because the base did not go to Condition Orange when the radar operators saw things of whose identity they were uncertain.

Condition Orange means the identification of a potential threat -- a situation that "makes you uncomfortable." There is probably a good reason for this; our instincts, like those of all other animals, evolved to prevent us from becoming meals. Condition Orange is what police instructor Massaad Ayoob calls "bare fear," as opposed to "reasonable fear." You are justified in taking countermeasures to avoid the situation in question. You are emphatically not justified in even drawing a gun, much less aiming it at somebody, in Condition Orange.

If Condition Orange is the rustling in the woods that tells you a wolf might nearby, **Condition Red** means you can see the wolf. If Condition Orange is seeing a suspicious group of young men on the street, Condition Red means they are coming towards you with no good intention. This is the condition that the law calls reasonable fear, and under which you may be justified in drawing a firearm. It is at this point that you decide, "If he does so-and-so [which is a direct threat to your life or that of another person], I will have to use a weapon, or a potentially lethal martial arts technique."

Cooper's color codes for levels of alertness can be readily translated into spiritual terms assist us in our daily spiritual combat with our prowling enemy. For example, one reason we fall so readily into the same sins repeatedly is that we let ourselves dwell spiritually in Condition White. We forget Christian life is warfare to the last breath. We forget that our enemy never sleeps. We forget he is always waiting, looking for an opportunity to catch us by surprise. We tend

think that, because we have spiritually worked hard for a season, we may now “take a break”, relax, or have a spiritual vacation. But due to the nature of our spiritual life, Christ calls us, at the very least, to live spiritually in Condition Yellow. He commands us to “watch and pray” lest we enter into temptation. And it is his disciple who thrice denied Him who tells us, “Be sober, be vigilant, for your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” There can be no success against the enemy in spiritual life without watchfulness in spiritual Condition Yellow. Like the criminals he inspires, he loves to catch us in Condition White. Watching by itself, however, will not save us from our enemy. It make keep us from being surprise by the enemy’s presence and attack, it does not win the battle. To win the battle, we must join prayer to watching, and this we shall consider that next week.

Namedays, Birthdays, Anniversaries in March

- 1 Becki Stevenson (St. Eudocia) N.D.
- 4 Valorie Rodgers (Elizabeth) B.D.
- 4 Christina Heitzenrater, B.D.
- 5 Hannah Stokes (Elizabeth) B.D.
- 8 Claire Terry (Macrina) B.D.
- 9 Kitara Van Hoose (Anastasia) B.D.
- 9 Solomon Morris (Josiah) B.D.
- 10 Brian Freas (Sabbas) B.D.
- 12 Anna Stokes B.D.
- 12 Melanie Strand, B.D.
- 13 Jonah & Mary Betz, B.D.
- 14 Connor Patrick (St. Benedict) N.D.
- 15 Art Cunningham (St. Aristobulus) N.D.
- 15 Pam Northam (Anna) B.D.
- 16 Katie Colias, B.D.
- 16 Isabella Heitzenrater (Sophia) B.D.
- 17 Patrick St. Jean (St. Patrick) N.D.
- 17 Patrick Neal (St. Patrick) N.D.
- 17 Owen Terry (St. Patrick) N.D.
- 17 Alexei Sidorenko (St. Alexis Man of God) N.D.
- 18 Robert Jackson (St. Edward Martyr) N.D.
- 18 Nikolai Davis (St. Nicholai of Zicha) N.D.
- 19 Mark Jackson B.D.
- 20 Holly Bellan (St. Photini) N.D.
- 25 Lucy Rogers (Mary) N.D.
- 25 Ash Davis (Elias) B.D.
- 26 Gabriel Wells (Archangel Gabriel) N.D.
- 31 Joseph Terry (Patriarch Joseph) N.D.
- 31 Nicholas Dean B.D.

Offerings of Temple Wine and Oil

Olive oil is burned in the lampadas throughout the church and is also used for anointing at baptisms, at vigils, and at Unction. Temple Wine is used at the Divine Liturgy for Communion, the zapivka after Communion, at Litas, where it is blessed and consumed by the faithful, and on Holy Saturday. Both are Biblical symbols of the Holy Spirit.

In the Early Church, the faithful brought their offerings of bread, oil, wine, food, etc., to the temple, where the best was chosen by the deacons for use in the temple and the rest went to support the clergy and those in need.

In our time, these offerings may still be brought. Typically they are offered for the living in thanksgiving for God’s blessings, on namedays, birthdays, for safe travel, healing in illness, general health & salvation, on an anniversary, for graduation, job seeking, special need, in honor of a saint, a special event. They may be offered for the departed for their blessed repose and eternal memory.

Offerings may be made for the benefit of Orthodox and Non-Orthodox alike. The name of the those for whom the offering is made will be published in the bulletin for others to join you in prayer.

You may bring olive oil in any size for an offering, or a bottle of port wine (used for zapivka or litia). If you prefer to make a cash offering, an offering of olive oil is \$5; an offering of altar wine \$10. Cash offerings are used to purchase the oil and wines we use in our worship.

An offering slip for this purpose may be found on the candle table. Fill it out completely. Please specify (by circling the appropriate item) whether you are offering wine or oil (some of you forget to do this). Place the slip in the offering basket on the candle basket.

Prayer for the Start of the 40-Day Fast

O God, Hope of all the ends of the earth, and of those who are far off at sea, who didst foretell these holy days of fasting in the Law, and in the Prophets, and the Evangelists: Do Thou count all of us worthy to pass the course of the Fast in purity, to preserve the Faith undivided, and to keep Thy commandments all the days of our lives. Bid an Angel of peace to preserve our comings-in and goings-out for every good work, being obedient together and together pleasing Thee unto a perfect communion of Thy most-pure Mysteries. And accept, O Master, the bending of the knees and the fasting of Thy servants, granting unto all of us spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus our Lord, with Whom Thou art blessed, together with Thy most-holy, good, and life-giving Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

A Prayer for Prayer

As we do not know how to pray properly (Romans 8:26), we must ask God to teach us to pray and give us a spirit of prayer and a desire for it. Here is a short prayer we may use during the fast to this end.

O Lord, teach me sincerely to pray to Thee with attention and love, without which prayer is not heard! Let my prayer not be sliphod unto sin for me! O God, Holy Spirit, grant me a spirit of prayer!

Upcoming Events 2019

- 1 March: Forgiveness Vespers
- 2-7 March: Clean Week
- 14 March: Retreat at Nativity Monastery with Fr. Reardon
- 13-18 April: Holy Week
- 19 April: Holy Pascha, the Feast of Feasts & Picnic

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!