

The Confessor's Tongue for December 13, A. D. 2020

27th Sunday after Pentecost; St. Herman of Alaska

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.

On the World Economic Crisis

St. Nicholas of Zicha

Written to Priest K. in 1929, pertinent now.

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). Apostle Peter writes, "For the time is come that judgment must begin at 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 at 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. The drought would come, 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 Lord's peace!

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And if blood of Martyrs is to flow on the steps  
We must first build the steps;  
And if the Temple is to be cast down  
We must first build the Temple. *T.S. Eliot*  
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December 11: Sunday of the Forefathers

The Sunday of the Holy Forefathers occurs between the 11th and the 17th of December. This Sunday commemorates all the ancestors of the people of God, the holy patriarchs living up to the law, given on Sinai, and under the law, — from Adam to Joseph the Betrothed; together with them are commemorated "those who preached Christ" the holy prophets — from Samuel to Zechariah and to John the Baptist, and all the Old Testament righteous men, who were righteous in the faith in the coming of the Messiah. Especially in the service for this day are praised "the pious youths" Ananias, Azarias, and Misael, who "in faith were thrown into the fiery furnace" and . . . who are mystically a prototype of the Trinity and the incarnation of Christ" from the Virgin. . . .

On this day, the holy Church appoints the Gospel reading about those invited to a lord's supper but then at the last minute declined to come, warning us, that we can be distracted from worthily meeting the Lord by permitting the predominance of flesh over

spirit, the attachment to the terrestrial, the blinding by gleam of worldly goods, the predilection for vanity, the unwillingness to deny one's self-love and pride everyday, the enslavement to passions and covetousness. The Epistle reading directly commands us to destroy our earthly members: fornication, impurity, passion, evil lust and cupidity, to lay aside anger, evil, blaspheming, slander, lies, and in general to take off the old man and put on the new in the image of the Creator (Col. 3:4-11).

V. Bulgakov, Handbook for Church Servers. Translated by Archpriest Eugene D. Tarris © All rights reserved

December 13: St. Herman of Alaska

"Once the Elder was invited aboard a frigate which came from St Petersburg. The Captain of the frigate was a highly educated man, who had been sent to America by order of the Emperor to make an inspection of all the colonies. There were more than twenty-five officers with the Captain, and they also were educated men. In the company of this group sat a monk of a hermitage, small in stature and wearing very old clothes. All these educated conversationalists were placed in such a position by his wise talks that they did not know how to answer him. The Captain himself used to say, 'We were lost for an answer before him.'

"Father Herman gave them all one general question: 'Gentlemen, What do you love above all, and what will each of you wish for your happiness?' Various answers were offered ... Some desired wealth, others glory, some a beautiful wife, and still others a beautiful ship he would captain; and so forth in the same vein. 'It is not true,' Father Herman said to them concerning this, 'that all your various wishes can bring us to one conclusion - that each of you desires that which in his own understanding he considers the best, and which is most worthy of his love?' They all answered, 'Yes, that is so!' He then continued, 'Would you not say, Is not that which is best, above all, and surpassing all, and that which by preference is most worthy of love, the Very Lord, our Jesus Christ, who created us, adorned us with such ideals, gave life to all, sustains everything, nurtures and loves all, who is Himself Love and most beautiful of all men? Should we not then love God above every thing, desire Him more than anything, and search Him out?' "

All said, "Why, yes! That's self-evident!" Then the Elder asked, "But do you love God?" They all answered, "Certainly, we love God. How can we not love God?" "And I a sinner have been trying for more than forty years to love God, I cannot say that I love Him completely," Father Herman protested to them. He then began to demonstrate to them the way in which we should love God. "if we love someone," he said, "we always remember them; we try to please them. Day and night our heart is concerned with the subject. Is that the way you gentlemen love God? Do you turn to Him often? Do you always remember Him? Do you always pray to Him and fulfill His holy commandments?" They had to admit that they had

not! "For our own good, and for our own fortune," concluded the Elder, "let us at least promise ourselves that from this very minute we will try to love God more than anything and to fulfill His Holy Will!" Without any doubt this conversation was imprinted in the hearts of the listeners for the rest of their lives.

Choruses from the Rock

T. S. Eliot, 1934

This poem of T.S. Eliot, inspired by his faith in Christ, speaks much truth to us today. The thinness of the civilized veneer in society and Christian martyrdom are central themes in this section.

VI (4th installment)

It is hard for those who have never known persecution,
And who have never known a Christian,
To believe these tales of Christian persecution.
It is hard for those who live near a Bank
To doubt the security of their money.
It is hard for those who live near a Police Station
To believe in the triumph of violence.
Do you think that the Faith has conquered the World
And that lions no longer need keepers?
Do you need to be told that whatever has been, can still be?
Do you need to be told that even such modest attainments
As you can boast in the way of polite society
Will hardly survive the Faith to which they owe their
significance?
Men! polish your teeth on rising and retiring;
Women! polish your fingernails:
You polish the tooth of the dog and the talon of the cat.
Why should men love the Church? Why should they love
her laws?
She tells them of Life and Death, and of all that they would
forget.
She is tender where they would be hard, and hard where
they like to be soft.
She tells them of Evil and Sin, and other unpleasant facts.
They constantly try to escape
From the darkness outside and within
By dreaming of systems so perfect that no one will need to
be good.
But the man that is will shadow
The man that pretends to be.
And the Son of Man was not crucified once for all.
The blood of the martyrs not shed once for all,
The lives of the Saints not given once for all:
But the Son of Man is crucified always
And there shall be Martyrs and Saints.
And if blood of Martyrs is to flow on the steps
We must first build the steps;
And if the Temple is to be cast down
We must first build the Temple.

Upcoming Events 2020

22 December: Holy Unction, 6:30 p.m.
24 December: Nativity Eve: Royal Hours, Vespers
Liturgy, Vigil
25 December: Nativity of Our Lord Liturgy
31 December: All Night Vigil for St. Basil and New
Year

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!