

The Confessor's Tongue for May 2, A. D. 2021

Sunday of Holy Pascha, the Feast of Feasts

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 Blessing of the Artos

The blessing of the Artos is one of the special paschal rites, "in honor and glory and memory of the glorious resurrection" of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Artos is understood to be a Prospora with an image on it of the cross crowned with thorns or with the image of the resurrection of Christ as signs of victory of Christ over death. The word "Artos" is Greek; translated into Russian it means "bread".

The historical origin of the Artos is as follows: the Apostles, who were accustomed to partake a meal together with the resurrected Lord (Acts 10:41), after His ascension to heaven, remembering His covenantal words: "I am with you always" (Mt. 28:20), felt the invisible presence of the Lord through living faith in their assemblies, but could not see Him with carnal eyes. The natural expression of this burning faith of the disciples to their Teacher and their desire to have a constant reminder of His abiding with them, was that at a meal they left an unoccupied place for Jesus Christ to recline with them, but placed on the table before that place some bread as if for Him, and each time after the end of the meal, lifting up thanksgiving to God, lifted this bread, saying: "Christ is Risen."

When the disciples of Jesus Christ went away to various countries for the proclamation of the Gospel, they whenever possible tried to observe this custom: each of the Holy Apostles in whatever country founded a new society of followers of Christ and when beginning a meal left a place and a fragment of bread in honor of the Savior, and after the end of the meal together with them glorified the risen Lord, raising up the fragment of bread placed in memory of Him.

What is accepted by the first students of the Gospel from the lips of the Apostles and was done by them daily, that is what the fathers of the Church of the following centuries have applied to the feast of the Resurrection of Christ in order to keep forever the apostolic tradition in the Church. In this way this custom was really kept in the Church and through a number of centuries reached our time. As the Apostles during their assemblies have placed the particle of bread in the place appointed for the Savior reminded them of the risen Christ, so, intentionally the Holy Church even at the present time places an Artos on Holy Pascha in the temple in full view of the faithful to serve as their same reminder of the invisible presence of the risen Lord with us. Thus, preparing the Artos, the Holy Church imitates the Apostles and by these blessed loaves remembers the appearances of the risen Lord to the Apostles.

At the same time the Artos reminds us that Jesus Christ by His death on the cross also has become for us the rising of the truly living bread. Such is the meaning of the Artos and is revealed in the prayer of its blessing (see below). Besides, in this prayer the priest, calling down the blessing of God on the blessed Artos, asks the Lord to heal any infirmity and illness and to grant healing to all who eat of the Artos. According to the Supplemental Book of Needs in monasteries the sanctification of the Artos is done on the first day of Holy Pascha and is done as follows: "The Artos, which is bread usually with a cross on it prepared for this, is brought to the priest in the sanctuary. After the Prayer before the Ambo and the ending of the

Divine Liturgy, the Deacon says: "Let us pray to the Lord", and the clerics: "Lord, have mercy" and the priest reads this prayer over it:

"O All-powerful God and Almighty Lord, Who by Thy servant Moses during the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, and the liberation of Thy people from the bitter slavery of Pharaoh, didst command that a lamb be slain, prefiguring the Lamb, Thy beloved Son our Lord Jesus Christ, who voluntarily was slain on the cross for us, taking away the sins of the whole world, do Thou now also, we humbly pray Thee, look down upon this bread and bless and sanctify it. For we Thy servants, in honor and glory and in commemoration of the glorious Resurrection of Thy Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom we also have received remission, freedom and release from bondage of the eternal slavery of the enemy and from the indissoluble bonds of Hades, do now offer this before Thy Majesty on this bright, all-glorious and saving day of Pascha. Grant that we who offer this and kiss it and eat of it become partakers of Thy heavenly blessing, and by Thy power burn away from us every sickness and infirmity, granting health to all. For Thou art the source of blessings, and the Bestower of healing, and unto Thee we send up glory, to the Unoriginate Father, with Thine Only-begotten Son, and Thine All-holy, Good and Life-creating Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages". Choir: "Amen".

"Immediately the priest sprinkles the Artos with Holy Water (of Theophany) saying: "This Artos is blessed and sanctified by the sprinkling of this Holy Water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen", three times. And after this he goes out and places it on the Analogion, and the people, as they receive the Antidoron, kiss the Artos".

On the day of Pascha and during all Bright Week the Artos with an image of the Resurrection of the Lord is placed on an Analogion purposely arranged either in the sanctuary or in the temple. In monasteries after the Liturgy there is a procession to the refectory with the icon of the Resurrection of Christ, with the Artos, with a lampada or two, with the ringing of all bells simultaneously, and with the singing of "Christ is Risen!". After the meal there is a lifting up of the Artos. At the raising of the Artos, the cellarer says: "Christ is Risen!" once; and all respond: "Indeed, He is Risen". Then, having signed the Artos cross-wisely, he says: "Let us worship His three-day resurrection", and places the Artos on the Panagiarion (a special vessel). Then everyone kisses the Artos, singing the ninth ode of the canon of Pascha: "Shine, shine". After kissing the Artos sing the Hypakoe and the Kontakion of Pascha, then comes the Dismissal, and the Artos is then returned to the temple, according to the former order, and is placed in its proper place in the temple (for details see "The Order of the Blessing of the Artos on the day of Holy Pascha in the Ustav and the Pentecostarion). In parish churches during the cross processions done during Holy Pascha (see about them below), the Artos is carried around the temple. Both on the first day of Pascha and during all Bright Week the Artos with the image of the Resurrection of the Lord is placed on the Analogion in the temple.

The Rule For Attending To Oneself For One Dwelling In The World

By St. Ignatius Brianchaninov

Now that we have concluded the Fast and are keeping the Feast, care is needed that we do not lose the grace gained during the Fast. St. Ignatius Brianchaninov, whose feast fell on Holy Friday this year, gives us important guidance in how to watch ourselves.

The soul of all practices in the Lord is vigilance. Without vigilance, all these practices are fruitless. He who is desirous of saving himself must so establish himself that he might remain continuously vigilant toward himself, not only in solitude, but also under conditions of distraction, into which he is sometimes unwillingly drawn by circumstances.

Let the fear of God outweigh all other sensations upon the scales of your heart; and then will it be convenient to for you to be vigilant toward yourself, both in the silence of your cell and in the midst of the noise that surrounds you from all sides.

A well-reasoned moderation in foodstuffs, diminishing the passionate heat of his blood, tends greatly to facilitate your being able to attend to yourself; while the impassioning of your blood, stemming, as it does, from an excessive consumption of foodstuffs, from extreme and intensified bodily movements, from the inflammation of wrath, from being heady with vanity, and by reason of other causes, gives rise to a multitude of thoughts and reveries—in other words, to distraction. The Holy Fathers, first of all, ascribe to such a one as is desirous of attending to himself a moderate, evenly-measured, constant abstention from food.

Upon awakening from sleep—an image of the awakening from the dead, which awaits all men—direct your thoughts to God, offering up to Him the first-thoughts of your mind, which has not yet become imprinted with any vain impressions whatsoever.

Having carefully fulfilled all the needs of the flesh upon arising from sleep, quietly read your customary rule of prayer, taking care not so much for the quantity of your prayerful expression, as for the quality of it; i.e., do it attentively, so that, by reason of your attention, your heart might be enlightened and enlivened through prayerful feeling and consolation. Upon concluding your rule of prayer, do you again, direct all your strength to the attentive reading of the New Testament, primarily the Gospel. In the course of this reading, intently take note of all the instructions and commandments of Christ, so that you might direct all your actions—both manifest and veiled—in accordance with them.

The quantity of the reading is determined by one's strength and by one's circumstances. It is unnecessary to weight-down one's mind with an excessive reading of prayers and Scripture; likewise, is it unnecessary to neglect one's needs in order to practice immoderate prayer and reading. Just as the excessive use of foodstuffs disorders and weakens the belly, so too does the immoderate use of spiritual

food weaken the mind and create in it a revulsion to pious practices, leading it to despair.

For the novice, the Holy Fathers suggest frequent—but brief—prayers. When one's mind matures with spiritual age, becoming stronger and more manly, then shall one be in proper condition to pray without ceasing. It is to such Christians as have attained to maturity in the Lord that the words of the Apostle Paul pertain:

“I desire, therefore, that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without anger and reproach.” (I Tim. II, 8) i.e., dispassionately, and without any distraction or inconstancy. For that which is natural to the man is not yet natural to the infant. Enlightened, through prayer and reading, by our Lord, Jesus Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, one may then go forth to carry out the affairs of one's daily course, vigilantly taking care that in all one's deeds and words, in one's entire being, the All-holy will of God might prevail, as it was revealed and explained to men in the Commandments of the Gospel.

Should there be any free moments during the course of the day, use them to read attentively some chosen prayers, or some chosen portions of Scripture; and, by means of these, fortify the powers of your soul, which have become exhausted through activity in the midst of a world of vanities.

Should there not be any such golden moments, it is necessary to regret their loss, as though it were the loss of a valuable treasure. What is wasted today should not be lost on the day following, because our heart conveniently gives itself up to negligence and forgetfulness, which lead to that dismal ignorance, so ruinous of Divine activity, of the activity of man's salvation.

Should you chance to say or to do something that is contrary to God's commandments, immediately treat your fault with repentance; and, by means of sincere contrition, return to the Way of God, from which you stepped aside through your violation of God's will. Do not linger outside the Way of God! Respond with faith and humility to sinful thoughts, reveries and sensations by opposing to them the Gospel commandments, and saying, along with the holy patriarch Joseph:

How shall I speak this evil word and sin before God? (Gen. 30:9)

One who is vigilant toward oneself must refuse himself all reverie, in general—regardless of how attractive and well-appearing it might seem, for all reverie is the wandering of the mind, which flatters and deceives it, while being outside the truth, in the land of non-existent phantoms, and incapable of realization. The consequences of reverie are: loss of vigilance toward oneself, dissipation of the mind, and hardness of heart during prayer, whence comes distress of the soul.

In the evening, departing into slumber—which, in relation to the day just past, is death—examine your actions during the course of that day. Such [self-] examination is not difficult, since, in leading an

attentive life, that forgetfulness which is so natural to a distracted man is destroyed through vigilance toward oneself. And so, having recollected all your sins, whether through act, or word, or thought, or sensation, offer your repentance to God for them, with both the disposition and the heart-felt pledge of self-amendment. Later, having read the rule of prayer, conclude the day which was begun by meditating upon God by meditating, once again, upon God. Whither do they depart—all the thoughts and feelings of a sleeping man? What mysterious state of being is this sleep, during which the soul and body are both alive and yet not alive, being alienated from the awareness of their life, as though dead? Sleep is as incomprehensible as death. In the course of it, one's soul reposes, forgetting the most-cruel earthly afflictions and calamities that have beset it, while it images its eternal repose; while one's body (!) ... if it rises from sleep will also arise, inevitably, from the dead.

The great Agafon said: "It is impossible to succeed in virtue without exerting vigilance toward oneself." (*The Patericon of Skete*) Amen.

Excerpted from *The Writings of Bishop Ignatii Brianchaninov: Ascetic Essays, Volume I*, pp. 185-187 (in Russian). Translated into English from the Russian by George Spruksts intrprtr@prodigy.net. English-language translation copyright (c) 1999 by The St. Stefan of Perm' Guild, The Russian Cultural Heritage Society, and the Translator. All Rights Reserved. Permission is hereby granted to use this essay for non-commercial purposes, as long as this entire notice is included therewith.

Spiritual Instructions

Archimandrite John (Krestiankin, +2006)

Fr. John was an inspired elder at the Pskov Caves Monastery and a good candidate for canonization. You may meet him in the pages of *Everyday Saints and in a collection of his letters: May God Give You Wisdom!*

"The world is governed by God's Providence alone, and in this is salvation for one who believes; in this is the strength to endure earthly sorrows."

"My dears, the world is governed by God's Providence and not by us mortals."

"I will tell you from experience that the sooner we accept what God has given us, the easier it will be to bear God's good yoke, His easy yoke. It becomes heavy from our inner resistance."

"Such a time has come when only faith that God's Providence orders life can overcome all the hardships of life."

"Lord! You know all things; do with me as You will. Amen."

"There are no forgotten people in God, and God's Providence watches over everyone. God rules the world—only God, and no one else."

"The main thing in spiritual life is faith in God's Providence and discernment with counsel."

"Throughout all times, the world is governed by God's Providence; and shall we pronounce judgment on it?"

"He gave us the path to salvation, and He is the same in all ages, for Christians of the first and last times—and this is faith in God's Providence, and life according to faith."

"If you live for God, for the sake of God, and to the glory of God—that is salvation, that is truth, and not an ephemeral meaning of life."

"Remember, my child, that the most valuable thing is to learn to commit yourself entirely to God's will."

"Fear divisions and schisms in the Church! Fear falling away from the Mother-Church; only she holds back the lava of antichristian debauchery in the world now! Fear judging the Church hierarchs, for this is destructive even without the seal of antichrist!"

"O wondrous path of manifest works, I sing a hymn to thee! People, surround yourselves, gird yourselves with small good works—a chain of small, simple, easy—costing you nothing—kind feelings, thoughts, words, and deeds."

"Only in works of love toward our neighbor must we see and feel the possibility of transforming our love, the possibility of salvation. For only through mercy and love can we acquire the Holy Spirit of God, which alone can enable us to resist the terrible evil spirits that have possessed people and the world."

"So let us not pass by hands stretched out to us, the suffering, whose eyes are filled with pain and woe; let us not pass by our neighbor."

"My dear ones, let us not pass by our salvation; let us not pass by Christ Himself, Who in the image of every person in need, calls us to the supper of love."

Namedays, Birthdays, Anniversaries in May

- 01 John Semerikov, BD
- 02 Zoe Frederick, ND (Martyr Zoe of Attlia)
- 02 Sarah Charpie, BD
- 02 Madeleine Heitzenrater, BD (2002)
- 03 Rich & Nancy Hollebeak, WA (2015)
- 03 Mark & Meghann Jones, WA (2003)
- 06 Daniel Van Hoose, BD
- 14 Dn. Maximus & Michelle Gibson, WA (2005)
- 15 Madeleine Heitzenrater, ND (St. Dymphna)
- 15 Joy Wells, ND (St. Dymphna)
- 17 Frank & Cathy Wells, WA (1997)
- 18 Alexandra Semerikov, ND (St. Alexandra of Ancyra)
- 18 Connor Patrick, BD
- 19 Pamela Ward, BD
- 20 Matthew & Valorie Rogers, WA (2007)
- 21 Elaina Kaufman, ND (St. Helen)
- 21 Debra Sancer, ND (St. Helen)
- 21 Ericka McAnear, BD
- 24 Elisabeth Terry, BD
- 25 Charlotte Heitzenrater, BD (2016)
- 25 Ricky & Cheryl Dean, WA (1974)
- 27 Madalina Killfoil, BD
- 28 Jonathan Strand, ND (St. Germanus of Paris)
- 28 Fr. Justin & Michelle Frederick WA (2000)
- 30 Ericka McAnear, ND (St. Emilia)
- 30 Emma Stokes, ND (St. Emilia)
- 30 Charity Wells, ND (St. Emilia)
- 31 Alexandra Semerikov, BD

Upcoming Events 2021

2 May: Agape Vespers, 3:00 p.m., Picnic and Egg Hunt following.

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!