

The Confessor's Tongue for May 23, A. D. 2021

Sunday of the Paralytic; St. Leonty of Rostov, St. Michael of Synnada

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.

St. Porphyrios & the Prayer of the Paralytic

St. Porphyrios recommended that the faithful make the kontakion for the Sunday of the Paralytic a daily part of their prayers. Considering the text, one may readily perceive why he recommended it.

Paralytic, Kontakion, Tone 3

As of old Thou didst raise up the paralytic, / O Lord God, by Thy God-like care and might, raise up my soul / which is palsied by diverse sins and transgressions / and by unseemly deeds and acts, / that saved I may also cry out: / O Compassionate Redeemer, / O Christ God, / glory to Thy dominion and might.

In the prayer, we identify ourselves with the paralytic in his crippled condition.

Who of us can claim to be fully free of the paralysis that sin brings to our life, which keeps us from loving God and others freely? Sin is a sort of paralysis which hinders us from love. Love fulfills the law, love does no wrong to one's neighbor. Sin is always a failure to love God or neighbor, a paralysis that holds our souls back from love.

Let us make this kontakion part of our regular prayers that by it we may implore God to deliver us all from this paralysis that we may freely love Him and those made in His image.

Christ Is Risen, Means That We Are All Risen!

St. Justin of Chelije

The following sermon was delivered at the Ćelije convent in 1978 on the Sunday of the Paralytic, which coincided with the feast day of St. John the Theologian (May 8)./

Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen! In four words is expressed the entire mystery of this (and the other) world, of every person, of the mystery of *my* being, and of the mystery of *your* being. If there were no Risen Lord, His Resurrection would not be; and if there were no Risen Lord, we would not be – there would be no Christian in the world.

How did the Lord Christ conquer this world? How did Christianity conquer this world? You know that in the beginning of Christianity the great and powerful Roman Empire persecuted Christians everywhere for 330 years. They did not defend themselves with guns and airplanes. No! They defended themselves through prayer and God's help. And for 330 years they turned wolves into sheep. Recall the Savior's words to His disciples: "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves" (Matthew 10:16). A great miracle took place, brethren: the wolves were turned into sheep, and the wolves did not devour the sheep, did not tear up and destroy them. What is this? What is this power? This is that power about which you heard today in the words of the Apostle Peter, when he says to Aeneas: "Arise," and he immediately rises (Acts 9:34); and

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when he says to Tabitha: "Arise," and she rises from the dead as from sleep (Acts 9:40). What is this, what happened to this world? A great mystery has been explained, the mystery of this world and the mystery of man. What does the Resurrection of the Lord Christ demonstrate? It demonstrates that man is an eternal being. Death is defeated – that is what the Resurrection of the Lord Christ means. Eternal Life is provided for all human existence. It was for this that the Lord came to this world.

This world had been constantly under the power of terrible death. What is more terrible than death? Nothing! This entire planet, this holy land of God, had been a cemetery and tomb, an enormous tomb, and people were plucked into this tomb one after another. So the Lord Christ, through His Resurrection, showed us all that we people are eternal beings, that we are created for Eternal Life. Yes, for Eternal Life, and nothing less. "If Christ be not risen," says the Apostle Paul, "then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain" (1 Corinthians 15:14). What is Christ to us, if He has not conquered death? How then do we, Christians, differ from other people? Here, look: today, yesterday, and always throughout the history of the world there are continuously valiant men, heroes. But who are they, what are they? Mosquitoes.

Only the Lord Christ stands as the Conqueror of death and the Giver of life. In this lies His exceptional greatness. Our faith is faith in the Resurrection of the Lord Christ and in our own resurrection. Christ is risen, means that we are all risen! He is risen in order to give us Life Eternal, in order to ensure us victory over death, this only true victory in this world. All other victories are just mockeries. Millions of people perish – for what? Why do people perish today? Not for the reason for which they were created, not for Life Eternal, but for earthly, corruptible, simple, negligible things.

When people in their madness forget God, when people in their madness persecute the Lord Christ, what happens to these people, what is this land then? Then this land is a madhouse! To persecute the Lord Christ, the most elevated Being in this world, this great Lover of mankind – what is this? This is madness, insanity. We people, we turn this world, this little star of God called Earth, we turn it into a madhouse. Therefore every condemnation of man and mankind is just. All of us people are responsible in this world for death in this world, for sin in this world, for the devil in this world. What will happen to us if we start a war against God? We are always weaker than He; we will always be defeated.

Look at how many dead souls, at how many corpses there are among the Serbian people alone. People reject the Lord Christ, they reject Life Eternal – for what? What is this world offering them? But we

stand with the Apostle Paul for Eternal Truth: Christ is risen, so that we too would be risen (1 Corinthians 15:20-23). This is the foundational truth for us Christians. The Orthodox Church glorifies the Resurrection of the Lord Christ, His feast, not for a day or two, but for forty days – until the Ascension – continuously glorifying the Resurrection of the Lord Christ. And not only then: the Resurrection of the Lord Christ is glorified every Sunday; every Sunday, brethren, we remember the Resurrection of the Lord Christ. The Resurrection? It does not grow old in our soul. The power of the Lord Christ is poured out on us through His Holy Resurrection, through this infinite joy.

Today you heard from the Epistle of St. John the Theologian what he said about the Lord Christ: "that which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life ... we bear witness unto you" (1 John 1:1,2). This we bear witness unto you, the Lord Christ, Who grants Eternal Life. We, like His disciples, have handled Him with our hands. Christianity, persecuted for almost two thousand years already, is created stronger than all earthly things. Many nightmares and storms will come, but the Church of Christ will remain and not perish. People perish, but not the Church! People perish, but not the Church! St. John the Theologian, a man who witnessed and witnesses with all his being and all his conviction that Christ is the God-man, says: if you want to possess Life Eternal, then believe in the Lord Christ, in His Resurrection, believe in what He has done (c.f., 1 John 5:5, 12-13).

Look at the Apostle Peter, how he resurrects people and performs miracles. Sheep turn wolves into sheep and lambs. St Basil of Ostrog today, too, performs miracles, as does St Prochorus of Pchinja and all the countless Serbian saints. How does this come about? From the Resurrection of the Lord Christ, from the Feast that is celebrated for forty days and on Sundays throughout the course of the entire year. This is what supports us Christians in this world. We laugh at our persecutors; we do not fear death, we are children of the Risen Lord, for He gave us the power and strength to defeat everything that separates us from God, that separates us from his Righteousness, His Truth, His Goodness.

May the Good Risen Lord confirm us through His Disciple, St. John; through the All-Holy Theotokos; and through all the saints, in this faith in the Resurrection of the Lord Christ, in our resurrection, in the fact that we are eternal beings. Our calling in this world is to manifest the Resurrection of the dead and the victory over death. This victory over death is experienced by every one of us when we live evangelically, when we strive in faith in the Lord, in love, and in prayer to fulfill our lives. All this, deeply engraved on our souls, will lead us to Life Eternal. Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!

St. Ignatius on Prayer for Others

Pray ye without ceasing in behalf of other men. For there is in them hope of repentance that they may attain to God. See, then, that they be instructed by your works, if in no other way. Be ye meek in response to their wrath, humble in opposition to their boasting; to their blasphemies return your prayers; in contrast to their error, be ye steadfast in the faith; and for their cruelty, manifest your gentleness. While we take care not to imitate their conduct, let us be found their brethren in all true kindness; and let us seek to be followers of the Lord, that so no plant of the devil may be found in you, but ye may remain in all holiness and sobriety in Jesus Christ, both with respect to the flesh and spirit. *Letter to the Ephesians 10*

The Hundredth Person

During the time Father Moses was abbot of Optina Monastery in Russia, a certain rich merchant stayed at a monastery guest house with his grown-up son. Because of unexpected flooding, they had to remain several days. This merchant did not trust monks and was not well disposed toward them, and he was only staying so long at the monastery because he was forced to by circumstances.

Seeing that the monastery guestmaster had diligently waited on them for several days and brought them meals, he once said to him at dinner time, "You sure treat us well, but just how much are you going to charge us later?"

"We're not going to charge you anything."

"What, nothing?"

"This is how we do it—we have a box on the wall and you just put in there whatever amount God puts into your heart to give."

"Why, of course I'll put something in, but the next person won't, and maybe there will be a lot of people like him, and so the monastery will go broke feeding everyone for free!"

"Our Father Abbot says that even if ninety-nine people do not give anything, God will send a hundredth person to make up for them all."

At this the merchant looked at his son and said, "Well, my boy, it looks like that hundredth person is you and me." Astonished at the Superior's faith, he became a regular benefactor of Optina Hermitage from that time forth. From *The Elder Moses of Optina*

Upcoming Events 2021

31 May: Memorial Day Picnic, noon
19 June: Baptisms
15 August: 20-year Anniversary Celebration

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!