

The Confessor's Tongue for June 13, A. D. 2021

Sunday of the Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council

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.

Prayers for Our Bishop-Elect

It is a high calling to be a bishop and a heavy responsibility before God. It is not an office anyone in his right mind would actively seek. As Fr. Gerasim prepares to be consecrated Bishop of Fort Worth to serve as an auxiliary bishop in the Diocese of the South under Archbishop Alexander, we have been asked to help in his preparation through our prayers and particularly by two petitions we have been asked to add to the Augmented Litany.

The two petitions are similar.

Again we pray thee, O Lord our God: Through thy grace and compassion, have mercy on thy servant, Archimandrite Gerasim, Bishop-elect of Fort Worth. Fulfill all his petitions and forgive all his sins; accept his prayers and alms before the throne of thy dominion, and protect him from all enemies, both visible and invisible; deliver him from temptation, sorrow, danger, and distress; keep him firm in the faith, and grant him health and length of days.

O Master who lovest mankind, look down with a merciful eye upon thy servant, Archimandrite Gerasim, Bishop-elect of Fort Worth, and give ear to our prayer offered in faith, for thou thyself hast said, "All things whatsoever ye would ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." Wherefore, though we are unworthy, yet we hope in thy mercy, and we beseech thee: Show mercy upon thy servant; fulfill all his good desires; keep him steadfast in the faith, and preserve him in peace, safety, honor, health, and length of days.

We ask God to have mercy on him, to be good to him in ways he does not deserve, cannot claim by right, and has not earned. We all depend on God's mercy, but a bishop is in particular need of it, for he answers to God for his flock and bears responsibility for every man he lays hands on to ordain. We ask God to answer his prayers; it is good if a bishop's prayers for his flock are heard by God and are effective. We ask God to receive his alms: this implies that he is a giver of alms and gives for the right reasons and in the right way, not for show out of vainglory. We ask God to forgive his sins, so that there is nothing in him that will hinder his ministry. A bishop is a target for the enemy, for if a bishop can be compromised or brought down, his fall negatively affects many. Thus we pray that God will deliver him from all enemies, visible (humans) and invisible (demons). We ask that God would deliver him from things that would impair or destroy his ministry: temptation, sorrow, depression, danger, distress.

In each petition, we ask something profound importance to the flock he will oversee: that God will keep him firm and steadfast in the Faith. A bishop is "rightly to divide the word of truth"—to understand and teach the Faith properly, to convey the faith

delivered "once for all to the saints" (Jude) accurately to his flock. The bishop is not only a teacher of the one Faith but also a defender of it, much as St. Athanasius of Alexandria defended the faith against the heresy of Arius in the fourth century, St. Mark of Ephesus defended it against the false, compromising union at Florence in the fifteenth century, and St. Tikhon of Moscow defended it against the militant atheism of the Bolsheviks only a century ago. More than anything in our age of compromise, we need faithful, courageous bishops who stand firm, uncompromising in the one Faith, living according to Christ's commands, and governing the Church by the holy canons, guided in all by the Holy Spirit.

As we hear these petitions for the next couple weeks, may we make them our own with conscious fervor for the benefit of him who is to be made bishop to serve us, Christ's flock here in Texas. And may we consciously pray with fervor for Archbishop Alexander, the Holy Synod of the OCA, and any other bishop we encounter that these petitions may be fulfilled in them, too. For all these requests are implied when we say, "For his Eminence, the most-reverend Archbishop Alexander...let us pray to the Lord", and all this we, the one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church, need from our bishops. Grant it, O Lord! *Fr. Justin Frederick*

The Fathers of Nicaea: 7th Sunday of Pascha

Devoting this Sunday to the memory of the Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council, the Holy Church sings: "Let us, the pious assembly of true believers, celebrate today in prayerful memory the God-bearing Fathers from every part of the world who assembled in the brilliant city of the Nicaea. For these pious wise ones put down the godless teachings of the terrible Arius, and expelled him from the unity of the Catholic Church, and clearly taught everyone to profess their faith in the consubstantial and coeternal Son of God, existing before the ages, expressing this clearly in the symbol of faith". The heresy of Arius was one of the most destructive heresies. It concerned the teaching about the divinity of the Son of God, i.e. that main doctrine of Christianity, on which all our faith and the whole Church of Christ is founded, which makes it the unique basis for all hope of our salvation. If the Arian heresy, rejecting the divinity of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, then exasperated the whole Church and carried away with itself a great many pastors and shepherds; if this heresy had overcome the true teaching of the Church and was made dominant; then for a long time Christianity itself would no longer exist and the whole world would be plunged into its former darkness of unbelief and superstitions. The Holy Fathers at the First Ecumenical Council laid

down the Orthodox teaching, having established it universally. And the Holy Church, after a comfortable time, glorifies these same Holy Fathers of Nicaea on the Sunday after the Ascension because the most glorious Ascension of the Lord serves as clear proof of the inseparable connection of the two natures in Jesus Christ, the divine and the human.

In the service for the present day, the Holy Nicaean fathers are hymned, as "the hierarchs of Christ", "hierarchs, glorious pastors", "most blessed fathers of divine knowledge", "as luminous stars bright with the truth of Christ", "keepers of the known apostolic traditions", "O divine array, God-proclaiming knights of the Lord's company, most brilliant stars of the spiritual firmament, impregnable towers of the mystical Zion, fragrant flowers of Paradise, all-golden mouths of the Word, the praise of Nicaea, the adornment of the universe".

Commemorating the efforts of the Holy Fathers of the Nicaea Council, the Holy Church glorifies them because they, "gathered all pastoral art and righteous ascetic passion, avenging the difficult rotten and pernicious wolves, with the sling of the spirit casting them out from church performance", "preaching peace, with the peace most of the world was united", and "all the gathered spiritual art and through the Divine Spirit immediately seeing the heavenly and honorable symbol of faith divinely written sketched out", i.e. as St. Demetrius of Rostov says, "a true canon of the Christian faith". According to the manual of this hierarch, firmly containing this canon of the Orthodox faith in Christ, as the bright candlestick in the darkness of this world, we should go the way of the commandments of the Lord, in order for us to inherit a bright and blessed place. With all our life we should confess, that the Lord Jesus Christ is the true God and the perfect man, and He, our Savior, will call us true servants and His confessors (Mt. 10:2). With a loud voice we should most sweetly glorify the name of Christ, before whom every heavenly, earthly, infernal worldly knee bends, but the Lord will glorify us with heavenly glory for He says: "I will glorify those who glorify me". Continuously we should hymn Him as the true God, and He will bless us in this contemporary life with the fulfillment of His grace, and for the praise of our mouths He will satisfy our flesh and souls with the glory of eternal life in His kingdom of heaven where He in unapproachable glory reigns with the Unoriginate Father, the Coeternal and Life-creating Spirit to ages of ages without end.

By the way, in the service of the present day we commemorate the wonderful vision of one of the Holy Fathers who attended the Council of Nicaea, St. Peter, Archbishop of Alexandria. This zealous advocate of the Orthodox faith, "seeing Christ like the Child on the holy offering table, dressed in a torn robe" asked: "who are you, O Savior, in torn clothes?" "Arius", replied the Lord. "Truly", as St. Demetrius of Rostov says, "this wolf (Arius) tore the clothes of the Lamb of God, when he denied His divinity, when the

Creator of all called creation as created, when the faithful people, through the blood of Christ, were divided from the unity of faith and love, when the only begotten Son was called the servant and attendant to God the Father. But for tearing the clothes of the Lamb, the blasphemer accepted the reward for his deeds. For the Lord tore the belly of Arius, (all his innards dropped out), as a second Judas, and at the same time also tore the impious soul from the corrupt body, as an example and lesson to other heretics, blasphemers". S. V. Bulgakov, *Manual for Church Servers*, 2nd ed., 1274 pp. (Kharkov, 1900), pp 0604-0606 Translated by Archpriest Eugene D. Tarris © April 20, 2004. All rights reserved.

Confession Mechanics

Every so often, we need instruction or reminders. Based on what I have observed over the past few months, the following reminders are in order.

When we come for Confession, we place ourselves before the icon of Christ and the Cross; we cross ourselves and bow twice, kiss the cross and the icon, and then cross ourselves and bow a third time.

When our Confession is done, we again cross ourselves and bow twice, kiss the Cross and icon, and cross and bow a third time. We then turn, bow to the priest, and ask his blessing by holding out our hands in the form a cross, right over left, and then kiss the priest's hand when he finishes giving his blessing.

During Confession, we do not use other people's names. We may speak of our husband, our wife, our third child, our mother, our father, our friend, but we don't use their names. This helps keep us focused on our sin and from speaking unnecessarily about others in our confession.

Confessions are normally scheduled to be heard after Vespers and Vigil in the evenings, and after Matins in the morning. You may also make an appointment if these open times do not accommodate you. The priest does not normally hear Confessions before Divine Liturgy. You are expected to make the effort to come prior to that. Only in special, limited circumstances will your priest hear a Confession before Liturgy—except the Russian Liturgy the first Saturday of the month, when it is open Confession for Russian speakers.

When we come to confession, we come ready to name our sins as specifically as we can. Most of us would do best to have a list of things written down, which we have prepared beforehand to confess. We name our sins, our faults, our failures to love God with all our heart, our neighbor as ourself, our wives as Christ loved His Church. Any 'story' needed to give the context of the sin should be only what is needed to make the nature of the sin clear.

This last item becomes particularly important as the parish grows and more people are needing to come to Confession. If you do due diligence and come prepared, the confession line can be kept moving. *Fr. Justin*

Upcoming Events 2021

16 June: Holy Unction, 6:30 p.m.

19 June: Chrismation, 4:00 p.m.

26 June: 2:00 p.m. Tarpley Lectures on Modernism and Postmodernism.

26 July: 20-year Anniversary Celebration

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!