

The Confessor's Tongue for July 25, A. D. 2021

Dormition of St. Anna

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.

How To Become A Temple of the Holy Spirit

Message of Elder Zacharias Pre-Lenten Retreat 2008

What follows is a summary of Elder Zacharias's talk generated from Fr. Justin's notes from a talk he gave locally. These thoughts are developed in his books.

Christ became man for us, so we men must become God-like by grace for Him. We are called to be a "temple of the Holy Spirit", but we are also warned not to receive the grace of God in vain.

Many means of grace are given to us in the Christian life. We shall examine three essential ones: the Divine Liturgy, the Name of Christ, and God's Word.

The Word of God is powerful. Christ's words are the Father's words: they cannot be separated one from another. God's words transmit the energy of the Trinity to us when we accept them. As we accept them and act upon them (keep Christ's commandments), we are gradually re-generated. To accept Christ's words is to partake of the energy of the Kingdom of God. "The Word of God is the incorruptible seed of grace sown in the heart of man to regenerate man." Just as we eat physical food three times a day, so we must hasten to eat of the spiritual table laid out for us in God's Word.

The Name of Christ is another powerful means of grace by which we become the temple of the Holy Spirit. As St. Paul said, "There is no other name in heaven or in earth by which we must be saved." The name of Jesus has great power and grace, for this name was given to Him by revelation: the Archangel Gabriel told the Virgin Mary what to call him, and said "He shall be called 'Jesus', for He shall save His people from their sins." It is also written that "whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." In the Jesus Prayer, we confess the Trinity in the first half "Lord Jesus Christ son of God" and in the second half we confess our need "have mercy on me the sinner." In response to Solomon's prayer, God hallowed the temple he had built by putting His name on it. In the New Testament, all is made new. There is no more temple made with human hands, but the one who calls on the name of the Lord enters into His living presence. In doing this, we gradually accumulate divine energy and God's temple is built in us. One must persevere in calling on the name of the Lord.

Third, the Divine Liturgy is given to us as a most powerful means of grace. In it we receive the very body and blood of Christ, our true food and drink. Jesus said that one cannot have life without eating this food; thus man is spiritually dead without it. He who eats of it will live no longer for himself but for the Lord, and to be pleasing to God, he will live according to the commandments.

At Baptism, we made an agreement with God to be dead unto sin and alive unto God. At the Divine Liturgy, we make an exchange of our little life for God's limitless life. How is this? The priest offers bread and wine to God on behalf of the faithful, indeed, in behalf of the whole world. He and those present fill those gifts with their faith, humility, repentance, and desire for God. The priest elevates the gifts, offering them to God with the words "Thine own of Thine own, we offer unto Thee on behalf of all and for all." All things are God's. The wheat and grapes from which the bread and wine were made are gifts from God. [Even we ourselves—our very life and existence—are a gift God has given us.] We take of what God has given us and offer it back to God, including ourselves as living sacrifices. We do this because Christ commanded it: "This do in remembrance of Me."

Thus man offers his little life to God in the Liturgy, and God reciprocates by giving His limitless life back to man, filling the gifts offered with His Holy Spirit. Just before Communion, the priest proclaims "the holy things are for the holy!" Through the priest, Christ speaks to us these words as if to say, "You have filled the gifts with yourself in offering them to Me, now I will fill them with My holy self for you."

As we come to understand this dynamic process, we shall be more attentive at the Divine Liturgy and come better prepared to make this exchange of our life for God's life as complete as possible. When we properly participate in the Divine Liturgy, the words we joyously sing at the end, "We have seen the true Light, we have received the heavenly Spirit, we have found the true faith, worshipping the undivided Trinity, who hath saved us" will resound in our ears and hearts.

On Suffering

Fr. Seraphim Rose

What suffering has not God reserved for man in this age! As though man had not suffered enough already throughout all the ages—no, it is simply that man has not realized the presence of God in his suffering. God is allowing man to suffer now without revealing Himself as the cause of that suffering. He wishes man to be reduced to the very utmost of despair. What a cruel God this must be!—No, it is the infinite and incalculable love of God that makes Him allow us so much suffering. Man had thought himself sufficient, and even now he—we—think we can escape our destiny by our own efforts. Escape!—that is our only thought. To escape from the insanity, the hell, of modern life is all we wish. But we *cannot escape!!!* We must go through this hell, and *accept* it, knowing it is the love of God that causes our

suffering. What terrible anguish!—to suffer so, not knowing why, indeed, thinking there is no reason. The reason is God's love—do we see it blazing in the darkness?—we are blind. Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy: Holy Mary Mother of God, pray for us sinners." *Fr. Seraphim Rose: His Life & Works, p. 98.*

On Truth *Fr. Seraphim Rose*

Our age has been taught to believe in nothing higher than the human mind, and in the ideas of that mind; that is why the conflicts of our day are 'ideological,' and why Truth is not in them. For Truth is only in living communion with living Truth, Christ: apart from Him, there is no life, no Truth.

The Truth is Jesus Christ, the God-man: error is to deny this Truth, which is simply to wish oneself to be as God. All who are not with Him, are against Him, for He is Truth, the Truth of all that is and of our deepest being, and whoever denies that denies all. Indifference is error; the indifferent one has chosen not to accept Him. *ibid., p. 101*

God allowed the Russian [Bolshevik] Revolution to take place, in order that the Russian Church might become purged and purified and that the Orthodox Faith might be disseminated across the whole world. . . . The Church is One, but each nation has its own calling within that Oneness. *St. John of San Francisco, in Rose: His Life, p. 306*

Prayers After Communion

The prayers before and after Holy Communion teach us much about the Mystery, how we should approach it, and what we should expect from it. We'll offer commentary on some of the prayers to help us be more aware of what we are doing when we partake.

"Let thy holy Body, O Lord Jesus Christ, our God, be unto me for eternal life, and Thy precious Blood unto forgiveness of sins. And let this Eucharist be unto me for joy, health, and gladness. And in thy fearful second coming, make me, a sinner, worthy to stand at the right hand of Thy glory, through the intercessions of Thine immaculate Mother and of all Thy saints. Amen."

This fourth prayer of thanksgiving after Holy Communion is the shortest. In it, we ask that our partaking of Christ's Body may be a means of eternal life for us. Partaking of man's true food, Christ's Body, the Bread which comes down from Heaven, imparts true life to man. Partaking of Christ's blood, man's true drink, is the ultimate means of the forgiveness of man's sins. As it is written, "Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins." Through Holy Communion, Christ's precious Blood is applied to our life to cleanse of from sin. Thus in Communion is fulfilled and completed what takes place in Confession.

Partaking of the Holy Mysteries brings man three things: joy, health, and gladness. Being ill and diseased

from the fall and from wrong choices, man needs healing and restoration to health. The early Fathers referred to the Eucharist as the 'medicine of immortality', the cure to death and the remedy that restores man to health. Joy and gladness are close to being synonyms. Joy is "an emotion excited by the acquisition of good, the gratification or possessing of what we love or desire." Gladness may be defined as "wearing and appearance of joy, the condition of being affected with pleasure or moderate joy". Joy and gladness are found together in Psalm 50 in the context of confession and repentance: "Thou shalt make me to hear joy and gladness"; here David also prays "restore unto me the joy of my salvation." Joy and gladness should result from restoration to health. They also naturally flow from perceiving Christ's coming to the soul in the Holy Mysteries and taking up His abode in the temple within. In Nehemiah (8:10) it is said, "The joy of the Lord is your strength." Joy and gladness are the proper condition of the Christian experiencing forgiveness and the presence of God in the midst of the sorrows of life, and through partaking of the Holy Mysteries, he expects God to restore to him the joy of his salvation of which he has compromised by his sins.

The prayer keeps man's end in sight, the coming of judgment. It recognizes that when Christ comes in glory, every eye shall see Him as He is—the veil will be removed, and that glory will either burn or bring joy. Man needs to be changed from his sinful condition and prepared to enter the fire of God's glory without being burned. Such is the condition of those on "the right hand", those numbered with the sheep and not with the goats on the left. The prayer shows that these results of communing are not automatic. It is possible to commune without receiving these benefits. To receive these benefits and to discern Christ's Body and Blood in the Holy Mysteries requires attentive preparation. A good, thorough, compunctionate Confession cleanses the heart from its accumulation of defiling sin and renders it again sensitive to spiritual reality. Fasting from midnight from food and drink establishes the property priority of spiritual food before physical and creates hunger for righteousness. Attentive prayer with feeling lays essential requests before God and sets the proper hope-filled expectations for participation in the Mysteries. And to help, the Christian has the prayers of the Theotokos and all the saints. *Fr. Justin*

Upcoming Events 2021

29 July, Thursday: Parish Game Night, 6:00 p.m.
1-14 August: Dormition Fast
10 August, Tuesday, 6:30 p.m. Holy Unction
19 September, Sunday: Annual Meeting
3 October, Sunday: 20-year Anniversary Celebration at St. Maximus and the Big White Barn in Decatur.

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!