

The Confessor's Tongue for October 31, A. D. 2021

19th Sunday After Pentecost: New Hieromartyr John of Chicago

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.

October 31: St. John of Chicago

Fr. John Kochurov was born in 1871 to a pious priest's family of many children. Desiring to be a missionary, after his ordination to the priesthood in 1895 he served in Chicago. With the blessing of St. Tikhon, he acquired land and built Holy Trinity Church there, which was completed in 1903. Having firmly established a healthy, stable parish, he returned to the diocese of St. Petersburg in 1907 to serve in Narva. In 1916, he was transferred to St. Katherine's Cathedral in Tsarskoye Selo, where the Tsar had his primary residence. There, on October 31, 1917, he was murdered by Bolshevik revolutionaries, the first priest (of many) to die as a martyr at the hands of the Communists.

On a Rule for Beginners

St. Isaac the Syrian, From Homily 17

This is the rule of life that is chaste and pleasing to God: to refrain from glancing here and there with your eyes, but always to gaze steadily on what lies before you; to refrain from speaking idly and to say only what is necessary; to regard mean attire as sufficient for your body's need and, in like manner, to make use of foods that sustain the body, and not those that satisfy gluttony; to take a little from all foods, and not disdain some and select others and choose to fill your belly with these. Discretion is greater than all the other virtues. Without companions (when not ill or infirm), do not partake of wine. Do not interrupt the words of one who is talking, and contradict him like someone uncouth; but like a wise man be patient. And wherever you find yourself, consider yourself the inferior, and the servant of your brethren. Do not expose any part of your body in front of any man; and do not touch the body of another, except for some necessary reason, nor permit anyone to touch your body without good cause, as I have said. Shun familiarity as death. Acquire a chaste rule for your sleep, lest the power that guards you remove itself far from you. Wherever you sleep, if possible, let no man see you. Do not spit in front of anyone. If a fit of coughing comes over you while seated at table, turn your face to your back, and cough in this manner. Eat and drink with moderation, as befits the children of God...

O glutton, bent on the worship of your own belly! It is better for you to cast live coal into your stomach than the fried foods of rulers and princes. Pour your mercy out on all, and be moderate in all things. Keep yourself from much talk, for it is this that extinguishes the noetic movements produced in our heart by God. Flee from discussions of dogma as from an unruly lion; and never embark upon them yourself, either with those raised in the Church or with strangers. Do not pass through the streets of the hot-

tempered and quarrelsome, lest your heart be filled with anger, and the darkness of delusion dominate your soul. Do not dwell with a proud man, lest the energy of the Holy Spirit be taken from your soul and she become the dwelling of every evil passion. If you keep these observances, O man, and occupy yourself continuously with the study of God, in truth your soul will see the light of Christ in herself, and will never be darkened unto all eternity. To Him be glory and dominion to the ages. Amen.

How To Live A Holy Life

What to do in the morning.

1. Upon awakening, immediately direct your thoughts towards God.
2. Without delay, cross yourself and say "In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."
3. Get out of bed quickly.
4. Wash and dress properly.
5. Go to the icons and pray your morning rule.
6. Use your own words in prayer occasionally to keep your mind and heart from wandering from the prayers.
7. Think over the coming day and what temptations and occasions for sin you are likely to encounter, and arm yourself against them.
8. Pray for spiritual awareness during the day and zeal and grace to avoid sin.
9. Ask God to strengthen your will.
10. Consider how you will conduct yourself before God and the people you are likely to encounter during the day.

"One should pray like this especially in the morning, and one should make such a resolution and take such prudent measures in the morning. No other time is so appropriate for prayer and for all good undertakings as the morning, because at no other time is a person so capable of prayer, or of undertaking business, or of reflection as in the morning. In the morning, his thoughts are much less constricted, his heart is purer, and he can contain himself much more easily than at any other time. In the morning, the necessities of life are still sleeping, and the very nature surrounding us disposes us to a serious and reflective state. With the passing of morning, the passions awaken, everyday needs appear and stir up cares, a person begins to work and toils like a slave who must always eat bread in the sweat of his face. My friend, spend the morning in prayer and in the holy guidance of your life. Put a high value on the morning every day. Be wise, for the Spirit of God portrays the behavior of a wise man thus: He will give his heart to resort early to the Lord that made him, and will pray before the most High (Ecclesiasticus 39:5)." *How To Live a Holy Life*,

Metropolitan Gregory of St. Petersburg, St. Job Printshop,
Jordanville.

From St. Moses of Optina (+1862)

“We must bear one another’s spiritual infirmities cheerfully, without bitterness. After all, if someone is physically ill, not only are we not offended with him, but we even help him in any way we can. That is how we must treat spiritual illnesses also.”

Abbot Moses counselled everyone to keep what he called St. Dorotheos’s rule for being at peace: “Do not want things to turn out as you would like, but want whatever happens. That way you will be at peace with everyone.... One who does not have his own will always gets his way. Since he has no desire of his own, no matter what happens with him, he is content—and so it turns out that he always fulfills his desires, for he does not want things to turn out as he wishes, but as they do turn out.”

On Prostrations & Bows

In prayer, the creature man has the inestimable privilege made possible only through the Godman Jesus Christ of standing before the infinite, uncreated God and addressing Him as “Father.” When we go to pray, remembering who God is and who we are in our sin and weakness, we are naturally moved to bow in worship and repentance before Him.

Pride is something that God hates and which creates a barrier between God and man so that man cannot receive the grace of God to aid him. “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” When we truly pray, we come with a felt awareness of our great need, even with a holy desperation, seeking to receive God’s grace. Knowing that humility attracts God’s grace, Christians have cultivated the practice of prostrating themselves in prayer to humble themselves. By humbling the posture of the body, the Christians works to humble the soul.

Making prostrations (crossing ourselves and bowing to the ground on our knees so the forehead touches the floor) and bows (crossing ourselves and bending at the waist and reaching towards the ground with our hand) is a normal, prescribed part of private prayer and public worship in the Church. Every rule of prayer at home should begin with prostrations to warm the heart and humble the soul and honor God as King and Lord. Prostrations involve the body in prayer. They help us fight against sluggishness and sloth. They prepare us for Christ’s return when “every knee shall bow”.

The great *hesychast* bishop Theoliptos of Philadelphia (+1322) answers the question of why we do prostrations. “Do not neglect prostration,” he admonishes his spiritual children. “It provides an image of man’s fall into sin and expresses the confession of our sinfulness. Getting up, on the other hand, signifies repentance and the promise to lead a life of virtue. Let each prostration be accompanied by a *noetic* invocation of Christ, so that by falling before

the Lord in soul and body you may gain the grace of the God of souls and bodies.”

Prostrations are normally done all days of the year in Church except: Sundays (Saturday night after Vigil until the start of Vespers Sunday evening), Great Feasts of the Lord, and the period from Pascha to Pentecost. Even when they are not done in Church, some do them at home nonetheless out of love for God, and we should feel free to do them on such days privately if our soul requires it or our confessor prescribes it.

When we are young and healthy, there is no excuse for not doing prostrations. As we age, our body may not permit us to do many or any. We may still cross ourselves and bow, while patiently bearing the infirmities that keep us from prostrating while prostrating ourselves before Christ in our soul.

The back of the Jordanville Prayerbook contains the seven-bow beginning below. I highly recommend it for starting both morning and evening prayers. One may and should go beyond this, using these and other short prayers, such as those in the “Prayers for the 24 Hours of the Day and Night” (found in the evening prayers) including the Jesus Prayer with prostrations, doing as many as we desire. One may also do prostrations during one’s rule (one could repeat at the end the prayers and prostrations one did at the beginning). Some cross themselves and prostrate at the end of each prayer, some at “come let us worship and fall down”. However we do them, we should make prostrations a regular part of our prayer life and increase the number we do during fasting periods.

The Seven-Bow Beginning

1. O God, have mercy on me, a sinner
2. O God, cleanse Thou me a sinner, and have mercy on me.
3. Thou hast created me, O Lord, have mercy on me.
4. Countless times have I sinned, O God, forgive me.
5. Most holy Theotokos, my Lady, save me, a sinner.
6. Angel of God, my holy guardian, protect me from all evil
7. Holy *Father, Mother, Martyr name of patron saint*, pray to God for me.

Upcoming Events 2021

- 31 October, Sunday: Octoberfest & All Saints Party
- 14 November: Parish Thanksgiving Meal
- 15 November: Nativity Fast Begins.

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!