

The Confessor's Tongue for November 14, A. D. 2021

21st Sunday After Pentecost: Apostle Philip, St Gregory Palamas, St. Justinian
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.

November 14: SS Justinian & Theodora

St. Justinian was born a Slav. The famous Greek emperor, fortunate in wars with the enemies of the empire, was also zealous in rooting out paganism as a real adherent of Orthodoxy, as a fervent law-giver (under him the code of church – civil laws was made), and as the mediator of church disputes he was both voluntarily and truly a pious person. He built the St. Sophia temple in Constantinople and many other temples and hospitals. He called the Fifth Ecumenical Council and wrote the church hymn "Only-begotten Son" in refutation of the Nestorian heresy. He died in 565 and for his service to the Church and devout life he was added to the choir of saints. St. Theodora became a faithful wife of the Emperor from being a sinner and became the defender of Orthodoxy from being the patroness of the Monophysite heresy. She died in 548.

From the Typicon: Nativity Fast

In this Lent the Typicon (Ustav) allows fish on the day of Entrance of the Most Holy Theotokos and on weekends up to and including the Sunday of December 20, that is, up to the days of the Forefeast. On Tuesday and Thursday fish is allowed only when a Saint's day with the Doxology or one having a feast day sign occurs. On Monday, Wednesday and Friday fish is allowed only if the feast is of the temple or it is a feast with a Vigil. If there is no feast, then on Monday, Wednesday and Friday a strict dry fast is prescribed; and on Tuesday and Thursday wine and oil is allowed.

The Nativity Lent begins after November 14. It anticipates the Feast of the Nativity itself for 40 days and is why it is referred to also as the forty days (see the Typicon (Ustav) Nov. 14). It is also called the St. Philip Lent, or in popular speech, St. Philip's (Filipovkami) because it begins after November 14, which is the day in memory of the Apostle Phillip. This fast is established by the Church for the worthy preparation of believers for the meeting of the very feast. According to the rules of abstinence it comes closer to Apostle's Lent (see May 17). Its severity is especially increased from December 20, the days of the Forefeast before the Nativity, and reaches its maximum degree in the so-called "eve (socheljnik)". This fast undoubtedly has an ancient origin, although clear mention of it is met only in the fourth century. In the fifth century Leo the Great, mentioning this fast, indicates its ancient establishment and attributes to it the meaning of the offering of gathered fruit. The amount of days of this Lent in antiquity in different churches was not uniform. The uniform order in this respect was established in 1166 in the Constantinople Council that, on the basis of ancient

typicons, defined the Nativity Lent of 40 days from November 14.

From the Optina Elders on Humility

St. Macarius of Optina is bold to say that "All problems come from pride; it is the main source of our sins distress, and misfortune." He also says, "Where there is a fall, even if only in thought, it was preceded by pride." Pride manifests in judging or criticizing others, looking down on others, comparing oneself favorably to others, despising others, thinking oneself better than others, and the like. "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall", warns Solomon in his Proverbs (16:18). Given the harm that comes from this malady, let us, as we begin the Nativity Fast, consider the remedies to pride and apply them to ourselves.

With only humility one can be saved, even without any works. *St. Macarius of Optina*

Let the following be for you signs of humility or pride: the latter scorns everyone, reproaches them, and sees darkness in them, while the former sees only his own faults and does not dare to judge anyone. *St. Macarius of Optina*

Humility consists in not judging and not reproaching anyone, and having simple clothing and furniture in your cell. *St. Ambrose of Optina*

The humble do not investigate the depth of the unknown, but they humble their thinking, and, in time, God enlightens them. *St. Macarius of Optina*

Humble yourself in spirit more—humility takes the place of works. Endure all misfortunes and entrust yourself to the Lord. *St. Ambrose of Optina*

By all means strive to acquire the opposite of pride—humility; and how it is acquired you will learn in the books of the holy fathers: continual self-reproach is the shortest path to it. *St. Macarius*

How do you reproach yourself? Very simply. The conscience immediately speaks out, it immediately censures us, and we have only to agree that we acted wrongly and humbly turn to God with a prayer for forgiveness. Even if only for a minute, you must absolutely reproach yourself in this way. Our job is to reproach ourselves, even if it is just for a brief time, and the rest is up to God. *St. Barsanuphius of Optina*

[How to reproach yourself:] When the devil points out to you the faults and weaknesses of others and urges you to judge them, then you say to yourself: "I am worse than everyone else, I deserve eternal torments. Lord, have mercy on me." And even if you say this without feeling, you still need to say it. *St. Barsanuphius of Optina*

One can acquire humility by means of obedience. The person who submits his will to his spiritual guide

overcomes pride and acquires humility. *St. Barsanuphius of Optina*

Genuine obedience which brings great benefit to the soul comes when you act in defiance of yourself. Then the Lord Himself takes you in His arms and blesses your labors. *St. Nikon of Optina*

Every obedience which seems difficult becomes very easy when we fulfill it, because that is how obedience works. *St. Nektary of Optina*

Take this advice for your whole life: if the superiors or those older than you suggest something, then no matter how difficult or how lofty it might seem, do not refuse. God will help you for your obedience. *St. Nektary of Optina*

Humility consists in yielding to others and considering yourself worst than all. *St. Ambrose*

When your heart is troubled, keep silent, but not with anger. If you see that angry thoughts are secretly acting in you, depart and pray to God for those who have grieved you and ask for mercy through their prayers. Always try to find the fault in yourself, and if this time you were not at fault, then the reproach is being sent for previous sins and to expose our woeful condition. *St. Leo of Optina*

You ask, "By what path do I go to God?" Go on the path of humility! By humbly bearing the difficult circumstances of life, by humbly enduring sicknesses sent by the Lord, by the humble hope that you will not be abandoned by the Lord, the quick helper and Heavenly Father overflowing in love, by humble prayer for help from on high to dispel despondency and feelings of helplessness by which the enemy of salvation tries to bring us to despair, which is so perilous for man, depriving him of Divine Grace and removing from him the mercy of God. *St. Nektary of Optina*

Do not be despondent because you are not living as you should, but humble yourself and the Lord will look more favorably on your humility than on struggles which are great but not humble. *St. Anatoly of Optina*

Increasing Prayer

One way to grow in prayer during the Nativity Fast this year is to cultivate the practice of praying at the canonical hours: at 9:00 in the morning, at noon, and at 3:00 in the afternoon. This helps us refocus on Christ during the day and keeps us from completely forgetting Him and getting caught up in the cares of this life.

We may, of course, do this is by reading the full versions of the Hours, Third, Sixth, Ninth. They are available on our website under the tab "Orthodox Prayers". Each of the Hours takes but ten minutes to read, and the regular reading of them will do much to strengthen our awareness of God and keep us from sin.

Not everyone may read the full Hours due to work and other duties. So instead, one may use an abbreviated order of prayer for each of the hours (also on our website, "Short Hours"). Each of these consists only of the trisagion prayers, the short prayer of each hour said thrice, the longer general prayer of the hours "O Thou who at all times and at every hour...", and a closing sequence. This can easily be memorized and then used wherever one is and whatever one is doing.

While a particular time is fixed for the praying of the Hours, we need not think that if we forget to pray at noon we must omit the Sixth Hour. Rather, pray each hour at any time one remembers in a window appropriate for it: one could pray the Third Hour between 8 and 11, or the Sixth from 11 to 2, and the Ninth from 2 to 5. If you undertake to do this, pray the appropriate hour the first time you remember during the appropriate window rather than putting it off. Responding immediately to divine promptings to pray does much to plant prayer in our hearts. Copies of the short Prayers of the Hour entitled "Prayers During the Day" are available on the candle table or in the bookstore rack.

Another way to increase one's prayer is to add the Psalter during one's prayers and try to read the whole thing, if not more, during the course of the Fast.

Then there is the Jesus Prayer. While we do well to use it during the day while we work and drive, a great benefit comes to us when we pray it undistractedly, doing nothing else. Standing or sitting before a lit candle and an icon, we say the prayer audibly and briskly, keeping our minds contained in the words of the prayer, lifting and opening our hearts to the Lord. It is good to have the daily use of the Jesus Prayer as part of our prayer rule. Another way to use the Jesus Prayer is to pray the daily services we don't or can't attend (or which aren't offered). Here is a schedule commonly used for that purpose:

1 kathisma of the Psalter	300 knots
1 stasis of the Psalter	100 knots
Midnight Service (Nocturnes)	600 knots
Matins (w/o 2 kathismata)	1500 knots
Hours (per Hour)	250 knots
Vespers (w/o kathisma)	600 knots
Small Compline	400 knots
Great Compline	700 knots
Entire Daily Office w/kathismata	5000 knots

Upcoming Events 2021

- 14 November: Parish Thanksgiving Meal
- 15 November: Nativity Fast Begins.
- 21 November: Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple.
- 25 November: Thanksgiving Day Liturgy
- 14 December: Holy Unction, 6:30 p.m.

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!