

The Confessor's Tongue for March 6, A. D. 2022

Forgiveness Sunday; Cheesefare; 42 Martyrs of Amoria

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.

Prayer for the Start of the 40-Day Fast

O God, Hope of all the ends of the earth, and of those who are far off at sea, who didst foretell these holy days of fasting in the Law, and in the Prophets, and the Evangelists: Do Thou count all of us worthy to pass the course of the Fast in purity, to preserve the Faith undivided, and to keep Thy commandments all the days of our lives. Bid an Angel of peace to preserve our comings-in and goings-out for every good work, being obedient together and together pleasing Thee unto a perfect communion of Thy most-pure Mysteries. And accept, O Master, the bending of the knees and the fasting of Thy servants, granting unto all of us spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus our Lord, with Whom Thou art blessed, together with Thy most-holy, good, and life-giving Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

A Prayer for Prayer

As we do not know how to pray properly (Romans 8:26), we must ask God to teach us to pray and give us a spirit of prayer and a desire for it. Here is a short prayer we may use during the fast to this end.

O Lord, teach me sincerely to pray to Thee with attention and love, without which prayer is not heard! Let my prayer not be slipshod unto sin for me! O God, Holy Spirit, grant me a spirit of prayer!

Lenten Notes

Rule of Silence: Strive during this first week of the Fast to abstain from any unnecessary speech. Remember that if a man can control his tongue, he may be considered perfect (James 3); misusing our tongues either for wrong purposes or for excessive speech does great harm to us and others.

The **Lenten Prayer of St. Ephrem** ("O Lord and Master of my life...") is said as part of our morning and evening prayers with prostrations, if we are physically able. It is not said on weekends.

O Lord and Master of my life, the spirit of idleness, of despondency, of love of power, and of idle words, grant me not. (*Prostration*)

But the spirit of continence, of humility, of patience, and of love, do Thou grant unto me Thy servant. (*Prostration*)

Yea O Lord and King, grant unto me to perceive mine own offences and not to judge my brother; for blessed art Thou unto ages of ages. Amen. (*Prostration*)

Then 12 bows to the waist while saying:

O God, cleanse Thou me a sinner and have mercy on me. (12)

Then repeat the prayer once with a prostration.

Entering and leaving the Church during Lent from Sunday evening after Vespers through Saturday

evening before Vigil (or after a service when we have received Communion) it is customary to make three prostrations (if physically able). When prostrations are not made, we make three bows to the waist instead. In both cases, as we bow, we pray "Thou hast created me, O Lord, have mercy on me," "O God, have mercy on me a sinner," "Countless times have I sinned, O Lord, forgive me."

Confession: We should plan on making at least one confession (if not more!) during the Fast. All the faithful are expected to receive Confession Holy Communion during the Fast. Please make your Confession before Holy Week, if at all possible. If you confess to someone other than your parish priest, please inform him as to when and to whom you confessed.

The Sayings of St. Anthony the Great 9

Abba Anthony said, "Our life and our death is with our neighbor. If we gain our brother, we have gained God, but if we scandalize our brother, we have sinned against Christ."

Saying 9 in The Sayings of the Desert Fathers

Commentary: There is an old saying that "one Christian is no Christian." We are not saved alone in isolation from others; we cannot live as Christians if we ignore the bond to our brother, a bond we acquired at Baptism. We cannot be close to God if we scandalize and alienate the people around us, for this is a sin against love. As St. John puts it in his first epistle, "How can a man love God whom he has not seen if He does not love his brother whom he has seen?" Loving God and loving our neighbor are connected; showing love for our neighbor, even to our enemy, reveals and proves our love for God, who loves all men equally.

Hence the authenticity of our faith and love for God is revealed in our relations to those around us. The Christian faith, life in the Church, is not some abstract intellectual affair, but the mundane, daily, and often dirty business of learning to love the people God has put in our lives, especially the members of our families and our parish.

How can we love our brother and not scandalize him, understanding that love in essence is not a feeling but a choice to do what is right towards him? Let us here count at least a few of the ways:

1. Come to church regularly. By doing this, we affirm to others that our relationship to Christ is our first priority, and that example encourages them. Neglecting to come sends the subtle message that Christian worship is not of first importance to us and tempts others to think and act likewise.

2. When in church, dress neatly and modestly and conduct yourself with great care so as not to distract others. Come on time. Don't go in and out during the Liturgy. Don't get caught in

conversations outside of church during the Liturgy, thus showing disrespect for what is happening in the church and distracting others.

3. Come to Confession regularly. By dealing with your own sins, you make yourself more receptive to God's grace by which alone you can truly love others.

4. Prepare yourself for Communion regularly, thus showing your faith in the Mystery and setting a good example to others. No one who takes his faith seriously should commune less frequently than four times a year (the four fasts). Preferably we should commune at least once a month if not more frequently with the blessing of our spiritual father.

5. Parents: show your love for your brethren by taking the time to discipline and train your children to conduct themselves with reverence and self-control in church. Letting them do as they will, going in and out repeatedly, talking, screaming, playing with noisy toys, running around, etc., not only reflects poorly on you, it sends the message to others that you don't respect your brethren enough to keep your children under control.

6. Others: show your love for parents by helping with children, by not encouraging children to misbehave by playing with them or making faces at them, and by praying for and encouraging them.

7. All: pray for one another, especially for the brethren who annoy you. If you don't know what else to say, use the Jesus prayer and insert the other person's name: "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on N." Do this throughout the day as the thought of a person comes to you, especially if the thought of the person comes with anger, annoyance, judgment, or bitterness. We ought to turn every thought into prayer, especially the negative ones.

8. Shoulder your part of the burden of caring for the parish by giving of your time and resources to develop and improve what God has given us. Don't expect others to do it all.

9. Participate in coffee hour both by being there and providing food. You need not bring food every week, but if you rarely or never bring it, you risk scandalizing those who notice.

10. Before you come to church, offer yourself to God in prayer. Ask Him to use you to be a blessing to someone while at church. As we all have a ministry to fulfill towards one another, we come not only to receive from God but to give to Him and one another. Really listen to your brethren and get to know them. Be sensitive to their needs and be willing to let God use you to meet them. Be willing to be God's hand reaching out in love to someone with whom you'd rather not bother, if were up to your druthers.

11. Help clean up, and, in general, help keep the church clean. If you see something that needs doing, take initiative and get it done after checking with the priest or a council member.

12. Pray for the members of your family. Choose to love them rather than scandalizing or alienating

them by harsh words, wrong actions, disrespect, and disobedience. Quickly and sincerely say you are sorry when you do wrong. Bear your part of the burden of maintaining the home economy: even children can and should be taught to clean, cook, and care for the home.

Furthermore, in winning our brother, we shall win also the lost. Jesus said, "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples in that ye love one another." As Christ's peace is a peace the world cannot give, so is the love of Christ in our hearts for one another a love that has not its source in this world. This love in us is what the world needs, what it craves, and it is this love that bears witness to the truth of our faith in the God-man Jesus Christ. Developing this love in us for one another will attract those outside the Church who are searching for truth and love.

So brethren, let us love one another, look out for one another, seek one another's good, and be willing to limit our own freedom to avoid offending or scandalizing others, for "our life and death is with our neighbor."

All Night Vigil: Augmented Litany

After the readings at Vespers, the Deacon (or Priest) comes out of the altar to stand before the closed royal doors in the darkened church to intone the Augmented Litany, also known as the Litany of Fervent Supplication. The response of the choir and people is a three-fold "Lord, have mercy" rather than the usual one.

Christ's coming into the world has been portrayed in the entrance, and He has spoken through His Word. In response, the faithful are called to intensify their prayerful communion with God through the petitions of the Augmented Litany.

If the Great Litany is the Church's prayer for the whole Church and the entire world, the Augmented Litany offers intercession for the local church and local needs. This is demonstrated by the mention of specific names of those in need and who have departed this life. The Church prays specifically by name in Her services only for those who have been united to her through Baptism. She prays for those not joined to the Church generally (not by name) in the services and specifically by name in the private prayers of the faithful.

The first two petitions of the litany, which have but a single "Lord, have mercy" as the response, are said only at Vigil or Great Vespers. At Daily Vespers, this litany is moved to the end, just after the troparia and before the dismissal, and the first two petitions are dropped. During Lenten Daily Vespers, it is dropped entirely and replaced with forty "Lord, have mercy's".

In the litany, we pray for ourselves, for "pious Orthodox Christians," for our hierarch, for the civil authorities, and all clergy. Though these are not exclusively local concerns, they do concern and affect the local community. Then we pray for the departed,

those who have passed the faith to us and those who have recently left us. We pray for all the departed because the Church is one. We are joined by Baptism to the one Body of Christ, and so the death of any believer anywhere in the world affects us even though we are not personally acquainted with him. We then pray for what each believer needs: "mercy, life, peace, health, salvation, visitation, pardon and forgiveness of the sins of the servants of God. . ." who can then be mentioned by name, "the brethren of this holy temple." Here we are called to intercede for those we know, with whom we live our lives and work out our salvation. Finally, "we pray for those who bear fruit and do good works in this holy and revered temple, for those who labor and those who sing, and for the people present who await of thee great and rich mercy." Sometimes, it may seem our service in the Church is thankless, but not only does God see all and reward what is done in secret, so, too, the Church offers prayer for all who serve locally and even for those who are simply present.

An exclamation (*vozglas*) from the priest concludes each litany. It differs from litany to litany, and each teaches us something about God and His character. The exclamation for the Augmented Litany is "For Thou art a merciful God who lovest man, and unto Thee do we send up glory..." We are able to pray effectively for others and ourselves because it is God's nature to be merciful. We need only to read the accounts of Abraham interceding for Sodom and Gomorrah, or Moses repeatedly interceding for wayward Israel to find the Scriptural basis for this appeal.

When Israel stumbled the first time with the Golden Calf (Exodus 32), God said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people: now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation" (Ex 32:8-9). Moses interceded for the people, and God spared them. On another occasion, Moses appeals directly to God's mercy for the people: "The Lord is long-suffering and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression... pardon, I beseech Thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of Thy mercy..." (Numbers 14:18-19). And God answered his prayer. (Those who say that the God of the Old Testament is a "God of wrath" have not read it with spiritual understanding.) Because God is merciful, we may offer prayers for others and ourselves

The Commandments of Christ

"If ye love Me, keep my commandments." John 14:15

Christ's commands guide us in the Christian life, showing us what love looks like. They purify us as we apply them, which leads to our illumination. As we enter the Great Fast, we do well to review these and ponder how we may apply them to our lives during the Fast.

The following is a list of Christ's commands that I have gathered from the Gospel—just over one hundred in all. I have attempted to gather commands occurring more than once under one point. I have not included the Ten Commandments, which are assumed and upon which some of these are elaborations. I may have missed a few. There may be a few listings here that can be combined. This is a work in progress.

1. Repent. (Mark 1:15 and believe, Luke 3:8 bear fruits worthy of repentance, Matthew 4:17)
2. Follow Me. (Matthew 4:19, 8:22, 16:24 Mark 1:17)
3. Deny yourself. (Matt 16:24)
4. Take up your cross. (Matt 16:24)
5. Rejoice and be glad when you are persecuted of Christ's sake. (Matt 5:12, Luke 6:23) 43
6. Let your light shine before men. (Matt 5:16)
7. Think not that Christ is come to destroy the law and the prophets. (Matt 5:17)
8. If your brother has something against you, forego your worship and first be reconciled. (Matt 5:23-24; Luke 12:58)
9. Do not commit adultery by looking lustfully on another. (Matt 5:27f)
10. Cut off from your body whatever causes you to fall. (Matt 5:30, 18:8-9, Mark 9:43-48)
11. Don't swear oaths, but let your "yes" and "no" suffice. (Matt 5:33-37)
12. Do not resist evil, but go the extra mile to overcome it. (Matt 5:38-41) (three in one)
13. Give to those who ask and do not turn away those who wish to borrow. (Matt 5:42, Luke 6:30, 35)
14. Love your enemies by doing good to them. (Matt 5:44, Luke 6:27) 24
15. Bless them that curse you. (Matt 5:44, Luke 6:28)
16. Do good to them that hate you. (Mt 5:44, Lk 6:27)
17. Pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you. (Matt 5:44, Luke 6:28)
18. Be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect. (Matt 5:48)
19. Take, eat; this is My body. Drink all of you of it, this is my blood. Do this in remembrance of me. (Matt 26:26-29; Luke 22:17-19; Mark 14:22)
20. Watch, be ready. (Matt 24:42, 24:44, Luke 21:34, Matt 25:13, Mark 13:33, 35-37, Luke 21:36)
21. Watch and pray. (Luke 22:40, Mark 14:38, Luke 22:46, Luke 21:36)
22. Make disciples of all nations. (Matt 28:18-19)
23. Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. (Mark 16:15-18).
24. Make not my Father's house into a house of merchandise. (John 2:16)
25. Marvel not that ye must be born again. (John 3:7)
26. Lift up your eyes and look on the field, for they are white for harvest. (John 4:35)
27. Sin no more, lest a worse thing befall thee. (John 5:14)
28. Search the Scriptures for they testify of Me. (John 5:39)
29. Labor not for the food that perishes but for that which endures to everlasting life which the Son gives you. John 6:27

30. Murmur not among yourselves. John 6:43
31. Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment. John 7:24
32. Walk while ye have the light. John 12:35
33. Believe in the light while ye have the light that ye may be children of light. John 12:36
34. Wash one another's feet. John 13:14
35. A new commandment: love one another as I have loved you. John 13:34, 15:12, 15:17
36. Let not your heart be troubled, believe in God and in Me. John 14:1, 14:27
37. Believe Me that I am in the Father and He in me. John 14:11
38. If ye love me, keep My commandments. John 14:15
39. Abide in Me and I in you. John 15:4, 15:9
40. Ask and ye shall receive that your joy may be full. John 16:24
41. Be of good cheer: I have overcome the world. John 16:33
42. Receive ye the Holy Spirit. John 20:22
43. Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. Matt 6:33, Luke 12:31
44. Forgive others if you wish to be forgiven. Matt 6:12, 14-15, Luke 6:37
45. Don't give alms to impress others, but give them secretly. Matt 6:3-4
46. Pray secretly in the closet, not in public to impress. Matt 6:7-8
47. Don't use vain repetitions in prayer.
48. Fast maintaining your normal appearance.
49. Don't lay up treasure on earth but do lay it up in heaven. Matt 6:25
50. Don't worry about your life what to eat or drink or wear. Matt 6:25, 34; Luke 12:22
51. Don't judge. Matt 7:1, Luke 6:37
52. Don't give holy things to dogs or pearls to swine. Matt 7
53. Keep asking, seeking, knocking. Matt 7, Luke 11:9
54. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Matt 7:14
55. Enter through the narrow gate, not the broad one. Matt 7:13, Luke 13:24
56. Beware of false prophets. Matt 7:15
57. Pray that the Lord of the harvest will send laborers into His harvest. Matt 9:38, Luke 10:2
58. Beware of men. Mat 10:17
59. Think not that I've come to send peace upon earth. Matt 10:34
60. Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden. Matt 11:28
61. Take my yoke upon you and learn of Me. Matt 11:29 or 39
62. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. Matt 15:14
63. Take heed and beware the leaven of the Scribes and Pharisees. Matt 16:6, Luke 20:6-7
64. Take heed not to despise one of these little ones. Matt 18:10
75. Take heed that no man deceive you. Matt 24:9, Luke 21:8, Mark 13:5
89. Take heed that the light in you be not darkness. Luke 11:35
101. Take heed lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares. Luke 21:34
65. If your brother sins, confront him privately, take witnesses, take it to church. Matt 18:15-27
66. Let not man put asunder what God hath joined together in marriage. Matt 19:6
67. Permit the little children to come to Me. Matt 19:14
68. Sell all, give to poor, follow me to be perfect. Matt 19:21, Luke 18:22
69. Whoever would be great, let him be your servant and ministry. Matt 20:26-28
70. Render to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's. Matt 22:21
71. Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart. Matt 22:36-40
72. Love your neighbor as yourself. Matt 22:36-40
73. Do what the Scribes and Pharisees say, not as they do. Matt 23:2-9
74. Call no man "father". Matt 23:9
76. Don't believe it when someone says "Christ is here or there." Matt 24:23
77. Let him who has ears to hear, hear. Mark 4:9, 4:23, 7:14, 7:16, Luke 8:8, 14:35
78. Have salt in yourselves and peace with one another. Mark 9:50
79. Have faith in God. Mark 11:22 42
80. Whatever you desire, pray, believe, receive. Mark 11:24
81. Condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned. Luke 6:37
82. Give and it will be given to you. Luke 6:38 18
83. Take heed therefore how ye hear: Luke 8:18
84. Let the dead bury the dead; go thou and preach the Kingdom of God. Luke 9:60
85. Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations. Luke 16:9
86. Rejoice not that the spirits are subject to you but that your names are written in heaven. Luke 10:20
87. Go and do likewise (as the Good Samaritan) Luke 10:37
88. When you pray, say the Lord's Prayer. Luke 11:1
90. Give alms of such things as ye have. Luke 11:41
91. Whom to fear and not to fear: Him who has power to cast into hell. Do not fear. Luke 12:4-7
92. Don't worry what to say when brought before courts. Luke 12:11-12; 21:14
93. Beware of covetousness. Luke 12:15
94. Don't seek food and drink or be anxious. Luke 12:29
95. Do not fear, it so God's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Luke 12:32
96. Be like servants awaiting their master. Be ready. Luke 12:35-40
97. Take the lowest place, let others exalt you. Luke 14:8-11
98. When you give a supper, invite the poor and crippled who cannot repay you. Luke 14:12
99. Take heed; rebuke sinning brother, forgive if he repents; even seven times a day. Luke 17:3-4
100. Render to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's. Luke 20:25
102. Let the little children come to me Luke 18:16
103. He who has ears to hear, let him hear. Luke 14:35
104. Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. Matthew 10:16
105. Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. John 5:45

Upcoming Events 2021

- 6 March Forgiveness Vespers, 5:00 p.m.
- 7-12 March Clean Week
- 18-23 April Great & Holy Week
- 24 April Holy Pascha, the Feast of Feasts

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!