

The Confessor's Tongue for May 15, A. D. 2022

Sunday of the Paralytic, St. Pachomius

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.

300 Ascetical & Theological Chapters

St. Justin of Chelije

First Century

5. Prayer—this is the prosthomon mixed from tears and the heart. *21 August 1916*

6. Forgive me, God, but I love most of all God weeping. Is this not why I love Christ most of all? *26 August 1916*

7. "For all the promises of God in Him are "yes" and in Him are "Amen" (2 Cor. 1:20). In Him—yes; in Him—in Christ, the Godman—all the promises of God are in Him, not in man, not in culture, not in civilization. His is "yes," all the rest is enclosed/attached. Every pain is filled with promise. In Him—everything.

8. Prayer is the distiller of thought, a sieve, a smithy, a furnace smelting the image.

9. Psalm 50:19 The sacrifice to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart God will not despise. (*Translated from Russian by Fr. Justin Frederick*)

All-Night Vigil: Great Litany to Kathisma

At the conclusion of the Six Psalms, the Deacon exits the sanctuary to intone the Great Litany (*discussed previously at Vespers above*) before the Royal Doors, and the Priest re-enters the sanctuary. After the Litany, the Deacon makes the solemn proclamation, "The Lord is God and hath revealed Himself unto us. Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." At a Resurrectional Vigil, 'Thbe Lord is God' is then sung by the choir in the troparion tone of the week.

The first part of this proclamation is taken from Psalm 117, and the second part from the Gospel (Mt 21:9; Lk 13:35). All the verses are from the psalm. By the deliberate joining of the psalm with the Gospel, the prophecy and its fulfillment is made clear. "Lord" refers here to Christ; He is God and has come to us in the name of the Father for our salvation. The Lord, the God of Israel, has revealed Himself and dwelt among us in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ.

These words are solemn, but most joyous. In the words of the anaphora of the Divine Liturgy, God is "inexpressible, inconceivable, invisible, incomprehensible, ever in being, eternally the same." But in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is Himself God, the fullness of divinity dwelt and is revealed to us. Thus Christ can say to Philip, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." This proclamation is made at Matins, at the dawning of the new day, for the manifestation of God in the flesh brings the light of a new day to a dark world.

The proper troparia follow "God is the Lord." At a Resurrectional Vigil, normally the troparion of the Resurrection in the tone of the week will be sung twice, followed by Glory..., a troparion from the

Menaion for a saint or saints, Now and ever..., and a theotokion in the tone of the week.

The kathisma readings from the Psalter follow. Two kathismata are appointed for the Resurrectional Matins, the second (Psalms 9-16) and the third (Psalms 17-23). Local parish practice usually abbreviates them or leaves them out altogether. (*Our local practice is to read one stasis*). Each kathisma is followed by a Little Litany and two kathisma hymns, which treat the theme of the Resurrection, separated by a Psalm verse, and followed by Glory...now and ever...and a Theotokion. These kathisma (or sessional) hymns contemplate the empty tomb from the perspectives of the soldiers, the myrrhbearing women, Mary Magdalene, and the Angels, and well as the scene in Hades below when the God-man descends to that place of death. The empty tomb on the earth's surface contemplated by the Myrrhbearers and the Apostles not only proclaims Christ's personal resurrection, but is an image of Hell (Hades) once it has been visited by Christ: it has been emptied of every righteous soul and has no inherent right or power to hold any soul henceforward. Every grave on earth will one day resemble Christ's tomb: it will be empty, as every human who ever lived is reconstituted as a human being through the reunion of his soul and body that he might stand before the dread judgment seat of Christ to give an account of how he lived in the body on earth.

The Sayings of St. Anthony the Great 15

The brothers praised a monk before Abba Anthony. When the monk came to see him, Anthony wanted to know how he would bear insults, and seeing that he could not bear them at all, he said to him, "You are like a village magnificently decorated on the outside, but destroyed from within by robbers."

Saying 15 in *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*

Commentary: Outward appearances can be deceiving, and oft men praise and are impressed for slight cause. Here a monk had impressed some of the brethren in the desert. No doubt he fasted more strictly than most, prayed longer, prostrated more frequently, knew more scriptures by heart, lived more austere. The brethren were taken in by these outward signs of possible sanctity and praised him. St. Anthony was not taken in. Testing him by offering him insults, Anthony found him far from perfect for he was thereby was grieved and angered rather than dispassionate.

Like St. Silouan's test of love for enemies, the 'insult test' readily distinguishes between those who are nearing perfection and those who yet have far to go, regardless of how good they otherwise appear. To bear insults well, without grief or anger (i.e., with meekness), is a distinguishing mark of true sanctity.

An insult intentionally or unintentionally degrades its object, reduces its worth, "puts it down," creates a sense of psychological hurt. Thus a person feels insulted when others in their words or actions do not accord him the respect or recognition he thinks he merits, delivering a blow to his sense of self-respect and self-worth. The common response to insult is anger or grief, a feeling of 'being hurt' or offended.

The Christian is to bear insults without hurt or anger because he knows that God is his only judge and that human judgments are usually mistaken. Moreover, he has gained humility, so he can respond in accordance with the Stoic philosopher Epictetus' advice:

"If you are told that such an one speaks ill of you, make no defense against what was said, but answer, 'He surely knew not my other faults, else he would not have mentioned these only!'"

Knowing his own sins, the Christian accepts the sting of insult as a deserved correction and means of acquiring humility. Knowing that God is his only judge, the Christian learns indifference both to insult and to praise (which generally is more dangerous spiritually than insult).

From the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, we get a colorful description of how a Christian should respond to insult and praise.

"A brother came to see Abba Macarius the Egyptian and said to him, 'Abba, give me a word, that I may be saved.' So the old man said, 'Go to the cemetery and abuse the dead.' The brother went there, abused them, and threw stones at them; then he returned and told the old man about it. The latter said to him, 'Didn't they say anything to you?' he replied, 'No.' The old man said, 'Go back tomorrow and praise them.' So the brother went away and praised them, calling them 'Apostles, saints, and righteous men.' He returned to the old man and said to him, 'I have complimented them.' And the old man said to him, 'Did they not answer you?' The brother said, 'No.' The old man said to him, 'You know how you insulted them and they did not reply, and how you praised them and they did not speak; so you too, if you wish to be saved, must do the same and become a dead man. Like the dead, take no account of either the scorn of men or their praises, and you can be saved.'"

Those who learn to bear insult patiently must still learn to bear the greater challenge of praise, which, by feeding vainglory and pride, poses a subtler and greater danger. The Christian is called to be as indifferent to both as the dead are.

If we find ourselves oft insulted, we may gain great benefit. Abba Isaiah said, 'Nothing is so useful to the beginner as insults. The beginner who bears insults is like a tree that is watered every day.' Here is a stiff test of faith, of love, of forgiveness: a compulsion to pray for those persecuting with words in accordance with Christ's command to pray for and

do good to those who speak ill of us. Here, too, is a powerful antidote to pride and vainglory, to our inclination to think more highly of ourselves than we should.

Abba Agathon of the Desert Fathers offers us an example of bearing insults. "It was said concerning Abba Agathon that some monks came to find him having heard tell of his great discernment. Wanting to see if he would lose his temper, they said to him, 'Aren't you that Agathon who is said to be a fornicator and an proud man?' 'Yes, it is very true,' he answered. They resumed, 'Aren't you that Agathon who is always talking nonsense?' 'I am.' Again they said, 'Aren't you Agathon the heretic?' But at that he replied, 'I am not a heretic.' So they asked him, 'Tell us why you accepted everything we cast you, but repudiated this last insult?' He replied, 'The first accusations I take to myself, for that is good for my soul. But heresy is separation from God. Now I have no wish to be separated from God.' At this saying, they were astonished at his discernment and returned, edified."

Being insulted tests one's faith. But in our time, there is a widespread disease of the mind which causes those afflicted with it to find insult and offence where none was ever intended and then to cry "you hurt me, you offended me." This malady manifests itself when someone takes the intended compliment "You look nice today" as an insult "Are you saying I look bad on other days?" It manifests regularly in public life and social media, where it seems scarcely a week goes by but that some celebrity, athlete, business executive, or politician makes a comment that leaves social media screaming its rage at their offensive words and calling for a firing and a public apology. Sometimes the offense is clear and real; other times, it is clear that someone is just looking for an excuse to take offense and raise a stink. Surely here is a deadly disease eating away at civil society—people looking for reasons to be offended! To take offense easily is no virtue but is spiritually destructive. A Christian who finds himself often "hurt" and "offended" must realize that there is something amiss in his soul that needs healing from Christ and that he needs to become more like the dead men the monk insulted and praised to no effect.

This saying of St. Anthony elucidates Christ's command "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24), "for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (I Samuel 16:7). Man is expert in making himself look good outwardly to others, in creating Potemkin villages that look impressive but have no substance and are inwardly empty. The insult test reveals the man who cannot pass it as an outward appearance devoid of substance: "a village magnificently decorated on the outside, but destroyed from within by robbers." May God grant us true all true substance—even if it means our appearance is less impressive. *Fr. Justin Frederick*

Upcoming Events 2022

18 May: Midfeast Pentcost, Blessing of Water
30 May: Noon, Memorial Day Picnic

GLORY BE TO GOD FOR ALL THINGS!