

The Confessor's Tongue for May 29, A. D. 2022

Sunday of the Blind Man, St. Theodosia of Tyre, Blessed John of Ustiug, Fool for Christ

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.

The Ascension of Our Lord

The Great Feast of the Ascension is commemorated on the fortieth day after Pascha, which always falls on a Thursday. It has a post-feast of nine days, concluding on the Friday before Pentecost.

It is preceded on Wednesday by the Leavetaking of Pascha, which marks the end of the forty-day Paschal season. On the Leavetaking of Pascha, all the services of the Church are celebrated as they were celebrated during Bright Week. (In general, services of Leavetakings of Great Feasts are the same as the services of the feast itself—with the omission of a few festal features to distinguish it from the feast itself.)

The Ascension marks the end of our Lord's earthly work and his triumphal return to Heaven.

On a deeper level, the Ascension marks the first entrance of human nature into God's Kingdom in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ's glorification in the Ascension is also our glorification, for it is the elevation of human nature. Man's nature now shares Divine honor as Christ our brother by His humanity enters Heaven in human form. The Feast leads us to consider seriously the nature of our true home in God's plan of salvation. Too often we think of the Kingdom of God as an afterlife, a postscript to our existence in this world. In reality, our true home is not on this fallen planet, but in the perfect and eternal Heavenly Kingdom. As St. Paul writes to the Colossians:

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.
(Colossians 3:1-4)

Our life is hidden with Christ in God in heaven.

It is there and there alone where God desires us to live in common union with Him to its fullest. If we indeed have the vocation to become saints, to share in the Divine nature, we must be prepared to inhabit the abode God has prepared for us, which was first experienced in the flesh by our Lord Jesus Christ after His Ascension. Our Lord has prepared the way for us to participate fully in God's Divine plan for our salvation. We glorify Him for establishing us as heirs to the Heavenly Kingdom and prepare ourselves in holiness to become worthy citizens of it.

St. John Chrysostom proclaims in his homily on the Feast, "Today, the human race is completely reconciled with God. The ancient battle and enmity have disappeared. We, who were unworthy to live even on earth, are now lifted up to Heaven. Today, we become heirs to the Kingdom of Heaven, we, who do not even deserve earth, we ascend to heaven and inherit the throne of the King and Lord. Human

nature, against which the cherubim guarded paradise, is now raised up above all the cherubim."

During the nine days of the Ascension, we say or sing the troparion and kontakion of the Feast at meals and during our usual morning and evening prayers.

Ascension, Troparion, tone 4

Thou hast ascended in glory, O Christ our God, / granting joy to Thy disciples by the promise of the Holy Spirit. / Through the blessing they were assured / that Thou art the Son of God, / the Redeemer of the world.

Ascension, Kontakion, tone 6

When Thou didst fulfill the dispensation for our sake, / and unite earth to heaven; / Thou didst ascend in glory, O Christ our God, / not being parted from those who love Thee, / but remaining with them and crying: / I am with you and no one will be against you!

Do Not Be Distressed by Events in the World

Fr. John Krestiankin

Written after the fall of destructive Communism in the midst of rebuilding, Fr. John's words well apply to us in our time.

My Dears!

Unsettledness, uncertainty, and continual falling to our knees will hound us for a long time to come, for by God's Providence it has fallen to our lot to be re-creating what was razed to its foundation. Not only stones were destroyed, but more importantly, souls. The world is sick with the disease of unbelief, atheism, and spiritual delusion, and such an illness can not be cured in an instant.

Therefore, the difficult task of patient endurance awaits the next few generations of Orthodox Russians. We will, we must endure outward unsettledness, as well as our personal unsettledness. For now, all our attention is on our faith in God, and our trust in God's Providence.

Let us not be distressed, let us not waver when we see the events going on around.

The sinner watcheth the righteous one (and the one who wishes to live in the Righteousness and Truth of God's laws) and seeketh to slay him. But the Lord will not abandon him to his hands, nor in any way condemn him when He judgeth him. Wait on the Lord and keep His way, and He shall exalt thee to inherit the earth . . . (Psalm 36:33-35).

Here is the truthful testimony and understanding of saints: "If they think that disaster *did not come by the way of truth and the Lord's mercy*, which punishes evil and turns to it to the good, then I ask: How then did disaster come into the world?

Did it sneak in?

--No. God is omniscient.

Did it force its way in?

--No! God is omnipotent.

Through some blind action of the powers of nature?

—No. The all-wise and all-beneficent God governs them.

No matter where you look and guess, you will be forced from all sides to return to the one indisputable truth, that if some disaster has been somehow allowed into the world, it is allowed in no other way than as a means of Providence, for punishment, or for correction, and sometimes to test or perfect—as the Truth and Mercy of the Lord's ways." (Holy Metropolitan Philared [Drozdov]).

My dears, let us believe in God, in His love and mercy. We must believe. In *May God Give You Wisdom!*, pp. 348-9.

Where Does Humanistic Culture Lead? *St. Justin of Chelije*

St. Justin Popovic (April 6, 1894-April 7, 1979) survived two world wars in Serbia, and in this treatise on European culture he discerns the problems with the European worldview that led to such a human disaster, and touches upon the probable future.

Theanthropic culture transfigures man from within, and thereby likewise influences his external condition. It transfigures the soul, and by way of the soul, it transfigures the body. According to this culture, the body is the temple of the soul, and it lives, moves and has its being through the soul. Take away the soul from the body and what will remain other than a stinking corpse? The God-man first of all transfigures the soul, and subsequently also the body. The transfigured soul transfigures the body; it transfigures matter.

The goal of Theanthropic [divine-humna] culture is to transfigure not only man and humanity, but also all of nature through them. But how is this goal to be attained? Only by Theanthropic means: through the evangelic virtues of faith and love, hope and prayer, fasting and humility, meekness and compassion, love of God and neighbor. It is by means of these virtues that Theanthropic Orthodox culture is fashioned. Pursuing these virtues, man transfigures his deformed soul, making it beautiful; it is transformed from something dark into something light, something sinful into something holy, something with a dark countenance into something Godlike. And he transfigures his body into a temple that can accommodate his Godlike soul.

It is through the ascetical labor of acquiring the evangelic virtues that man acquires power and authority over himself and over nature around him. Banishing sin both from himself and from the world that surrounds him, man likewise banishes its savage, destructive, ruinous force; he fully transfigures himself and the world, and subdues nature, both within and without and around himself. The finest examples of this are the saints: having sanctified, having transfigured, themselves through the ascetical labor of attaining the evangelic virtues, they likewise sanctify and transform nature around them. There are many saints who were served by wild beasts and who, simply by the mere fact of their appearance, could subdue and tame lions, bears and wolves. They treated

nature prayerfully, mildly, meekly, compassionately, and gently, being neither harsh, nor stern, nor hostile, nor ferocious.

It is not an external, violent, mechanical imposition thereof, but an inner, good-willed, personal assimilation of the Lord Jesus Christ through the ascetical labor of the Christian virtues that establishes the Kingdom of God on earth; establishes Orthodox culture—for the Kingdom of God does not come externally or visibly, but internally, spiritually, imperceptibly. The Savior says: *The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you* (Lk 17:20-21). It is within the God-created and Godlike soul, sanctified by the Holy Spirit, *For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit* (Rom. 14:17). Yes, in the Holy Spirit, and not in the spirit of man. It can be in the spirit of man to the extent that man fills himself with the Holy Spirit by means of the evangelic virtues. Wherefore the very first and very greatest commandment of Orthodox culture is: *Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you* (Mt. 6:33), that is, everything will be added unto you that is needed for supporting the life of the body: food, clothing, and shelter (Mt. 6:25-32). All these things are but the appurtenances of the Kingdom of God, yet Western culture seeks these appurtenances first of all. This is where its paganism to be found, for, in the words of the Savior, it is the pagans who seek these appurtenances first of all. In this lies the tragedy of Western culture, for it has starved the soul in its concern for material things, whereas the sinless Lord has stated once and for all: *Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you* (Mt. 6:25, 32-33; Lk. 12:22-31).

Great is the extent of those necessities that modern man passionately creates in his imagination. In order to satisfy these senseless needs men have turned our wondrous Divine planet into a slaughterhouse. But our philanthropic Lord has long since revealed "the one thing needful" for each man and for all of humanity. And what is this? The God-man, Jesus Christ, and everything that He brings with Him: divine truth, divine justice, divine love, divine goodness, divine holiness, divine immortality and eternity, and all the other divine perfections. That is "the one thing needful" for man and for humanity, and all the rest of man's necessities, in comparison with this are so insignificant that they are almost unneeded. (Luke 10:42)

When man seriously, and in accordance with the Gospel, contemplates the mystery of his own life and of the life around him, then he must of necessity conclude that the most pressing need is to reject all necessities and follow decisively after the Lord Jesus

Christ, to unite with Him by way of perfecting evangelic [according to the Gospel] ascetical labors. Without having done this, man remains spiritually unfruitful, senseless, lifeless; his soul dries up, crumbles away, disintegrates, and he gradually grows insensate, until he finally dies completely; for Christ as divine did say: *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned* (Jn. 15:4-6).

It is only through a spiritually organic unity with the God-man Christ that man can continue his life into life eternal, and his being into one of eternal existence. A man of Theanthropic culture is never alone: when he thinks, he thinks through Christ, when he acts, he acts through Christ, when he feels, he feels through Christ. In a word: he constantly lives through Christ-God, for what is man without God? At first he will be half a man, and in the end, no man at all. It is only in the God-man that man finds the completeness and perfection of his own being, his Prototype, his perpetuity, his immortality and eternity, his absolute worth. The Lord Jesus Christ, alone among men and all beings, proclaimed the human soul to be the greatest treasure of all worlds, of those both above and below. *Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known* (Mt. 10:26).

All the stars and planets are not worth a single soul. If a man wastes away his soul in sins and vices, he will not be able to redeem it, even were he to become master of all the stellar systems. Here man has but one way out—the God-man Christ, Who is the only One Who grants immortality to the human soul. The soul is not freed from death by material things, but enslaved; and it is only the God-man Who frees man from their tyranny. Material things have no power over the man who belongs to Christ; rather, he has power over them. He sets the true value of all things, for he values them in the same way as did Christ. And whereas the human soul, according to the Gospel of Christ, has an incomparably greater worth than all the beings and all the things in the world, Orthodox culture is therefore primarily a culture of the soul.

Man's greatness is only in God—that is the motto of Theanthropic culture. Man without God is seventy kilograms of bloody clay, a sepulcher prior to the grave. European man has condemned to death both God and the soul, but has he not thereby also condemned himself to that death following which there is no resurrection? Try dispassionately to grasp the essence of European philosophy, of European science, politics, culture, civilization, and you will see that in European man they have killed God and the immortality of the soul. And if one seriously ponders the tragedy of human history, then it is possible to see

that Deicide always ends with suicide. Remember Judas: first he killed God, and then he destroyed himself—such is the inevitable law of the history of our planet.

The structure of European culture, erected without Christ, must crumble away, and crumble away very quickly, prophesied the insightful and astute Dostoyevsky one hundred years ago, and the mournful Gogol over one hundred years ago. And before our very eyes are the prophecies of these Slavic prophets coming to pass. For ten centuries has the European Tower of Babel been building itself, and now a tragic picture meets our gaze: what has been constructed is a huge nothing! General perplexity and confusion have begun: man cannot understand man, nor soul understand soul, nor nation understand nation. Man has risen up against man, kingdom against kingdom, nation against nation, and even continent against continent.

European man has reached his destiny—determining and head-spinning heights. He has set the superman at the summit of his Tower of Babel, seeking therewith to crown his structure, but the superman went mad just short of the apex and fell from the tower, which is crumbling away and collapsing in his wake, and being broken down by wars and revolutions. *Homo europaeicus* had to become a suicide. His “Wille zur Macht” (lust for Power) became “Wille zur Nacht” (longing for night). And night, an onerous night, descended upon Europe. The idols of Europe are crashing down, and not far distant is that day when not a stone will remain upon a stone of European culture—a culture that builds cities and destroys souls; which deifies creatures and casts away the Creator...

The Russian thinker [Alexander] Herzen, enamored of Europe, lived there a long time. But in the sunset of his life, one hundred years ago, he wrote: “For quite some time did we study the worm-eaten organism of Europe. In all its strata, everywhere, we saw the signs of death... Europe is advancing toward a frightful catastrophe... Political revolutions are collapsing beneath the weight of their inadequacy. They have wrought great deeds, but have not accomplished their task. They have destroyed faith, but have not secured liberty. They have kindled in men's hearts such desires as were not fated to come to pass... Before all others, I turn deathly pale and am frightened of the impending night... Farewell, dying world! Farewell, Europe!”

The heavens are empty, there is no God in them; the Earth is empty, there is no immortal soul upon it. European culture has turned all its slaves into corpses and has itself become a graveyard. “I want to journey to Europe,” said Dostoyevsky, “and I know that I am going to a graveyard.” (F. M. Dostoyevsky, *Winter Notes On Summer Impressions*).

Prior to the First World War, Europe's impending perdition was sensed and foretold only by melancholic Slavic seers. Following it, some Europeans also take notice of and sense this. The

boldest and most sincere of them, doubtless, was [Oswald] Spengler, who shook the world with his book *Untergang des Abendlandes* (O. Spengler, vol. 1, *Image and Actuality*) In it, through all the means that European science, philosophy, politics, technology, art, religion, etc., could provide him, he shows that the West is perishing. Ever since the First World War, Europe has been emitting her death-rattle. Western, or Faustian, culture, which according to Spengler had its origins in the tenth century, is now passing away and crumbling down, and is destined to perish completely in the twenty-second century. [At present it would seem that this process has become accelerated.] In the wake of European culture, Spengler foresees the coming of the culture of Dostoyevsky, the culture of Orthodoxy.

With each new cultural discovery, European man grows ever more mortified and dies. European man's love affair with himself—that is the grave from which he neither desires to, nor, consequently, can be resurrected. Its infatuation with its reason is the fatal passion that desolates European humanity. The only salvation from this is Christ, says Gogol. But the world, throughout which “are dispersed millions of glittering objects that scatter one's thoughts in all directions, has not the strength to meet with Christ directly.”

The type of European man has capitulated before the fundamental problem of life; the Orthodox God-man has solved all of them, each and every one. European man has solved the problem of life through nihilism; the God-man, has solved it through eternal life. For the Darwinian-Faustian man of Europe, the main object of life is self-preservation; for the man of Christ it is self-sacrifice. The first says: sacrifice others for yourself! while the second says: sacrifice yourself for others! European man has not resolved the pernicious problem of death; the God-man has resolved it through Resurrection.

Doubtless, the principles of European culture and civilization are theomachic [having the nature of war against God]. Long did the type of European man become what he is, until such a time as he replaced the God-man Christ with his philosophy and science, with his politics and technology, with his religion and ethics. Europe made use of Christ “merely as a bridge from uncultured barbarism to cultured barbarism; that is, from a guileless barbarism to a sly barbarism” (St. Nikolai [Velimirovich], “A Sermon On Everyman”).

In my conclusions about European culture there is much that is catastrophic, but let this not astonish you, for we are speaking about the most catastrophic period of human history—the apocalypse of Europe, the body and spirit of which are being rent asunder by horrors. Without a doubt, volcanic contradictions are implanted in Europe, which, if they are not removed, can be resolved only by the final destruction of European culture. Where does humanistic culture lead?

The Sayings of St. Anthony the Great 17

*One day some old men came to see Abba Anthony. In the midst of them was Abba Joseph. Wanting to test them, the old man suggested a text from the Scriptures, and, beginning with the youngest, he asked them what it meant. Each gave his opinion as he was able. But to each one the old man said, ‘You have not understood it.’ Last of all, he said to Abba Joseph, ‘How would you explain this saying?’ Abba Joseph replied, ‘I do not know.’ Then Abba Anthony said, ‘Indeed, Abba Joseph has found the way, for he has said: “I do not know.”’ Saying 17 in *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers**

Commentary: It is said that ‘a little knowledge is a dangerous thing.’ Even more dangerous is to think one has knowledge when one doesn’t—which is really what having a only a little knowledge about something readily leads one to think. St. Paul writes, “If any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know” (I Corinthians 8:2). Pride in what we think we know leads us to speak when we should be still and to interject our opinions even where they have not been solicited. Paul adds, “Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth” (I Cor. 8:1). Knowledge, or supposed knowledge, quickly makes us proud, especially if it is not tempered with love for God and others.

The path to true knowledge begins with humility, with the ability to say, “I don’t know.” Having a teachable spirit, recognizing that one is ignorant and needs to be taught, is the beginning point for learning. He who thinks he already knows and is full of himself and of his cherished opinions and supposed knowledge can be taught little or nothing.

St. Anthony, as a wise elder, tests his disciples, seeking to teach them a needed lesson. In response to his question, the younger monks in their zeal and pride of their own opinion speak readily. The eldest, Abba Joseph, on the other hand, confesses his ignorance. Anthony declares this to be the way to understanding the Scripture and to knowledge of God: to admit our ignorance, that whatever we think we know, we really know nothing as we should know it. A little honest reflection on God as uncreated, without beginning, eternal, and without limit in contrast with our own created existence should persuade us of this.

We should not take this to mean that the Truth cannot be known, or that we must always abide in ignorance. Knowledge is the virtue of the mind, whereas ignorance is a vice. We are to know the Truth that the Truth may set us free. We are to learn the Faith, summarized in the Creed, and hold to it, ever growing in it. We dare not spend our whole lives sampling a religious smorgasbord as so many do, “always learning, but never coming to a knowledge of the Truth” (2 Timothy 3:7). Rather, we hold to the Truth we have received in the Church from the Apostles (Tradition), living in it, *doing* it—and by doing it we grow in knowledge. But we should never be ashamed to say “I don’t know” as we recognize how far short our knowledge of Christ falls of the

reality, as we recall that we shall have eternity to go ever deeper into knowing Him without ever exhausting Him. *Fr. Justin Frederick*

All-Night Vigil: Sessional Hymns to the Gospel

After the singing of "Blessed Art Thou, O Lord, Teach Me Thy Statutes" (or the Magnification for a festal vigil), come the Sessional Hymns, otherwise known as the Hymns of Ascent (Anabathmoi). These hymns (Psalms 119-133) were the most festal part of the Jewish liturgy and have been used by the Church since the beginning. Each of the eight tones for Sunday has different sessional hymns. The best known is the festal Hymn of Ascent in the fourth tone: "From my youth, many passions have fought against me..." These hymns are generally centered on the Holy Spirit and draw on the eighteenth kathisma of the Psalter, Psalms 119-133, for their thematic inspiration.

The Prokeimenon follows, announced by the Deacon. It is the select Psalm appropriate for understanding the feast or that part of the service. The main theme of the prokeimenon of Sunday Matins is the Resurrection, as Sunday is always the day of the Resurrection, a "Little Pascha." Today, only the key verse of the Psalm is sung, (and another read by the reader) a practice based on the assumption that every good Christian knows the Psalter more or less by heart and can, upon hearing the prokeimenon, recall the whole Psalm to mind. The Matins prokeimenon is also a preparation for the reading of the Gospel and is sung in the tone of the week.

Tone 1: Now will I arise, saith the Lord. I will set myself for salvation; I will speak boldly thereof. (Psm 32)

Tone 2: Rise up, O Lord my God, in the precept which Thou hast commanded, and the congregation of the people shall compass Thee. (Psm 117)

Tone 3: Say it among the nations: that the Lord hath become King; for He hath established the world, which shall not be moved. (Psm 46)

Tone 4: Arise, O Lord, help us, and redeem us for Thy name's sake. (Psm 103)

Tone 5: Arise, O Lord my God, let Thy hand be lifted up, for Thou art King unto the ages. (Psm 11)

Tone 6: O Lord, arouse Thy power and come to save us. (Psm 27)

Tone 7: Arise, O Lord my God, let Thy hand be lifted up; forget not Thy needy ones til the end. (Psm 28)

Tone 8: The Lord shall be King forever; Thy God, O Zion, from generation to generation. (Psm 75)

The word "prokeimenon" is from the Greek, meaning, "what is set forth," that is, what is appointed to be read. It is always from the Psalms.

A priestly exclamation and "Let Every Breath Praise the Lord" follow the prokeimenon. Then the Deacon exclaims, "And that He may vouchsafe unto us to hear the holy Gospel, let us pray to the Lord God." To be able to hear the Gospel, which implies acceptance and obedience, is a gift not to be taken lightly. It is not automatic. Hence, before we hear the Gospel, we pray that God will enable us to hear it, understand it, and do it, rather than just listening to the words and not responding.

The cycle of Eleven Matins Gospels of the Resurrection, read every Saturday evening at the Vigil, extend the celebration of Pascha to the entire year. The Matins Gospels are read from the Royal Doors of the iconostasis, a ceremonial rubric which may have its origin in the Church of Jerusalem. Already in the 4th century, the Gospel of the Resurrection was not read from the Ambo,

but from the Sepulchre, as if the celebrant, standing at the entrance of the Sepulchre, would turn to the faithful like the Angel to the women: "Ye came to seek Jesus, but He is not here, He is risen!" In the Greek tradition, the Resurrectional Gospel is read at the altar (which represents the tomb), from the right hand side, as the Gospel account tells us that the Angel stood to the right and announced the Resurrection.

The successive appearances of the risen Lord are the subject of the Eleven Matins Gospels. The regular cycle of the Resurrectional Gospels starts with the first Sunday after Pentecost; the order for the seven Sundays of Pascha differs slightly.

The reading of the Gospel is not just the reading of a lesson, but is part of the total proclamation of the Gospel. After the Gospel is read, it is brought out for veneration by the faithful to the center of the church in solemn procession during the singing of the hymn "Having Beheld the Resurrection of Christ." We ourselves have become eyewitnesses to the Lord's Resurrection. Preaching makes Christ present, but Matins has no sermon because the whole service is preaching. All leads to the Gospel. All that follows is from the Gospel. The Gospel is the Presence of the Risen Lord.

The role of the Gospel Book in the Resurrectional Vigil is the role of the Icon of the Feast. (Indeed, a small icon of the Resurrection is on the front of the Gospel Book.) The liturgical use of the icon comes from the liturgical use of the Gospel, for the first icon of Christ the Word is the Book of the Gospels.

St. Basil the Great Homily on Anger Against Those Who Are Prone to Anger

Anger has always afflicted man, but today it is a raging problem in our land. Many treat it nearly as a virtue and delight to live in outrage. In this, something God made as an essential part of the human being is corrupted and turned to evil and destruction, though the proper use of anger is a defense against evil and a spur to pursue what is good. In our context of road rage, electronic lynchings of people who offend the tender sensibilities of some, and outrage against those of a different political persuasion, St. Basil's Homily Against Those Who Are Prone to Anger is highly relevant in our struggle with anger. It is necessary reading to understand with what we contend and how to overcome provocations to anger and redeem that power of the soul for good. In the homily, Basil first graphically depicts the evil of affliction of anger, establishes that this fire cannot be fought with fire, gives practical guidance on how to prevail against the provocation to be angry, and then describes the proper use of anger.

Here are a few selections from this homily: first, the problem.

When medical precepts are to the point and accord with the art's teachings, their usefulness is demonstrated above all from experience; likewise with spiritual injunctions, above all when the precepts receive testimony from their outcome, then they are manifest as wise and useful for the correction of life and the perfection of those who comply with them. For we have heard Proverbs explicitly declare, "Anger destroys even the prudent" [Prov 15.1], and we have also heard the apostolic injunction, "Put

away from you all anger and temper and clamor, with all malice" [Eph 4.31], and the Lord's saying that one who is angry without purpose at his brother is subject to judgment [Mt 5.22]. Now, when we have come to experience this passion, not arising in ourselves but assaulting us from outside like some unexpected tempest, then above all we discover the excellence of the divine precepts. When we make space for the anger, like an outlet for a violent river, while quietly observing the undignified confusion of those overpowered by the passion, we discover from their actions that these words are to the point: "An angry man is not dignified" [Prov 11.25].

For whenever, once reason has been pushed aside, the passion takes control of the soul for itself, it makes the human being entirely like a wild beast; it does not allow him to be a human being, since he no longer has the help of reason. For as venom is in venomous animals, so temper becomes in those who are provoked. They are maddened like dogs, they strike like scorpions, they bite like snakes. Scripture also acknowledges this in calling those ruled by this passion by the name of wild beasts, to whom they have made themselves akin through evil. For it calls them dumb dogs [Is 56.10], and snakes, a generation of vipers [Mt 23:33], and the like. For those prepared to destroy each other and harm those of their own kind would be appropriately counted among the wild beasts and venomous animals, in whom is present by nature an irreconcilable hatred toward human beings.

Because of anger tongues are unbridled and lips are unguarded; unrestrained hands, outrages, reproaches, slanders, blows, and other such things that cannot be numbered, are offspring of the passions of anger and temper. Through temper also a sword is sharpened; a human hand dares to kill a human being. Through this brothers have become ignorant of each other, and parents and children have forgotten their natural bond. For angry persons are first ignorant of themselves, then indeed of all their friends as well. For as mountain torrents rushing together toward the valleys sweep away whatever is in their path, so the violent and ungovernable attacks of angry people likewise sweep through everything...

What is the proper use of Anger?

How, then, can we flee the damage caused by anger? We can persuade temper not to act before thought, but let us first take care that it never runs ahead of reason; let us keep it like a horse under a yoke, and let it obey reason as if it were a kind of bridle, never stepping outside its own place, but being led by reason wherever it guides it. Further, the soul's faculty of temper is useful to us in many of the acts of virtue. When like a soldier who has placed his arms in the custody of his commander, it readily offers help in what is ordered, it can perhaps be an ally to reason against sin. For the temper is a sinew of the soul, producing vigor in it for the accomplishment of good actions. When the soul is relaxed through pleasure, as when iron is hardened by tempering, this faculty leads it from being soft and slack to become austere and courageous. If your temper is not roused against the Evil One, you will not be able to hate him as much as he deserves. For I hold that it is necessary to have equal zeal for the love of virtue and for the hatred of sin. For this above all temper is useful. Whenever like a dog beside a shepherd it follows the rational faculty closely, it remains meek and tame toward those helping it, and readily available at the call of reason, while it is savage toward the strange voice and face, even if he seems to provide a service, but bows down when called

by a companion or friend. The cooperation of the faculty of temper with the prudent part of the soul is most excellent and appropriate. For such a person will be irreconcilable and implacable toward things plotted against him, never accepting fondness toward what is harmful, but like a wolf ever howling and tearing to pieces the proposed pleasure. Such indeed is the usefulness of temper for those who know how to handle it.

For by the way it is used each of the other faculties also becomes either evil or good for the one who possesses it. As for the soul's faculty of desire, one who uses it for the enjoyment of the flesh and the consumption of impure pleasure is disgusting and licentious, while one who turns it toward the love of God and the longing for eternal good things is enviable and blessed. And again, as for the rational faculty, one who handles it well is prudent and intelligent, while one who sharpens his mind for the harm of his neighbor is a worker of mischief and evil.

...Therefore, let us not make the faculties given us for salvation by the Creator into starting points of sin for ourselves. So also, indeed, the temper, moved when it is necessary and as it is necessary, produces courage and perseverance and self-restraint; but when acting against right reason it becomes insanity. . . .

Redirect your temper onto the murderer of human beings, the father of lies, the worker of sin; but sympathize also with your brother, because if he continues in sin, with the devil he will be delivered up to eternal fire.

300 Ascetical & Theological Chapters St. Justin of Chelije

We celebrate St. Justin's feast this week with the Leavetaking of Pascha.

First Century

11. All of you who fight against Christ resemble wax soldiers attacking fire. Nietzsche melted into insanity when the white-hot finger of the burning heavenly Wisdom touched him. "As wax melteth at the face of fire, so sinner will perish before the face of God" (Psalm 67:3).

12. The whole planet stinks of sin, death, the devil, and man. At midnight, the soul with sweet-breathing prayers ascends from misery to an unearthly sweet fragrance of the creature in Christ. (*Midnight, 21 September 1919, Athens*)

I bore midnight in the eye of my soul, midnight in all my senses, and He all-mercifully, led me out from life's poisonous thickets and horrors onto His wonderful path, where every midnight turns into a three-sunned noon and every death into an immortal life. Therefore we owe him thousands of lives; if I had a thousand eternities, I would never be able to repay Him; let me have a thousand souls—if only He would conduct everything along His wonderful, wonderful path. (*Translated from Russian by Fr. Justin Frederick*)

Upcoming Events 2022

30 May: Noon, Memorial Day Picnic
1 June: Leavetaking of Pascha
2 June: Holy Ascension

GLORY BE TO GOD FOR ALL THINGS!