

# The Confessor's Tongue for June 19, A. D. 2022

Sunday of All Saints; Apostle Jude

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 Sayings of St. Anthony the Great 19

*The brethren came to Abba Anthony and said to him, 'Speak a word; how are we to be saved?' The old man said to them, 'You have heard the Scriptures. That should teach you how.' But they said, 'We want to hear from you too, Father.' Then the old man said to them, 'The Gospel says, "If anyone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also." They said, 'We cannot do that.' The old man said, 'If you cannot offer the other cheek, at least allow one cheek to be struck.' 'We cannot do that either,' they said. So he said, 'If you are not able to do that, do not return evil for evil,' and they said, 'We cannot do that either.' Then the old man said to his disciple, 'Prepare a little brew of corn for these invalids. If you cannot do this, or that, what can I do for you? What you need is prayers.'*

Saying 19 in *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*

*Commentary:* "Give me a word" was a common request among the monks in the Egyptian desert put to a monk who stood out for his wisdom and experience. To make such a request profitably, a monk had to approach the elder with faith that God would speak through the elder and a willingness to do what he said. Anthony on at least one occasion refused to give a word to one who asked because he knew the one asking had no intention of doing what he said but desired only, out of vainglory, to repeat Anthony's words to others.

Anthony answers the brothers by pointing them to the Holy Scriptures, which they have heard in church, as a guide to salvation. Indeed the Scriptures are given to us for this purpose, that we may know God and His will for us, which is expressed generally in His commandments. The Scripture and the Church are the first place to apply when seeking to know how to be saved, and if one cannot be bothered with making use of these readily-available sources of help, one probably should not presume to ask an elder for a specific, personal word.

When the brethren express a desire to hear something from Anthony in addition to what they have heard in the Scriptures, he responds by giving them a scripture, a well-known command of Christ from the Sermon on the Mount: turn the other cheek when struck on the first (Matthew 5:39). By giving one of Christ's commands in the Gospel, Anthony is able to determine how far advanced they are and what sort of answer to give them.

As it turns out, far from needing a word more specific than what Christ commands in the Scriptures, the brethren are not even doing what is clearly commanded. "We cannot do that," they say honestly. Anthony, seeking to find their level of practice, gives them the same command at half strength: "At least allow one cheek to be slapped" if you cannot turn the other. They cannot do that

either, so he reduces the strength of the command still more: at least "do not return evil for evil." They profess they cannot carry out the command at the most elementary level of not taking revenge. Hereby Anthony perceives them to be spiritual invalids and feeds them with physical food saying, "What can I do for you?"

Christ, through His commands in the Gospel, calls man to participate in divine life. The commandments in their fullness are daunting. (For example, who of us can love all men as Christ has loved us? St. Maximus, recognizing the difficulty of loving as Christ does, says, if you can't do that, at least, as a start, do not hate anyone.) As a good physician applying the remedy to a fatal sickness, St. Anthony, as did Christ, seeks to meet the brethren at their level and give them the command in a form they can carry out in their present condition and which will lead them to higher levels of obedience as they keep it. From not taking revenge, they will progress to allowing one cheek to be slapped and then to actually turning the other cheek. Hereby we see the Christian life as a path that begins in the dark of the fallen, sinful world but shines brighter and brighter until the full day of the glory of the Kingdom. God meets us where we are in our infirmities and gently leads us where we need to go.

Yet these brothers claim to be unable to take even that first step. Invalids they truly are, if they cannot refrain from taking revenge when insulted or wronged! Unable to minister to them on a spiritual level, Anthony shows love to them by providing food for their bellies, thereby showing them he does not reject nor despise them. Only by "prayers"—their own prayers for themselves and for their enemies (those striking them), and the prayers of more experienced brothers—by beseeching God to give them grace to do what they have no strength or desire to do themselves—could they hope to escape their extreme weakness and begin to keep Christ's commands at an elementary level.

Christ's commands in the Gospel mark the path of salvation for all of us; they show us what it is to be a Christian; they set the faith we claim into action; they cleanse and purify our thoughts and actions. If we are not yet up to turning the other cheek to be slapped, allowing the one to be slapped, or not taking revenge on the slapper, at the very least we can pray for our enemies and ourselves and ask more experienced brethren to pray for us in our infirmity.

## 300 Ascetical & Theological Chapters *St. Justin of Chelije*

### First Century

19. Personhood: integrity=self-awareness=God-like self-awareness,=God-consciousness,- penetrates through all the physical structures of personhood

which before the fall extended organically to the whole world of the creature. Adam senses the whole aggregate creation as his own body, as his expanded nature, enlivened, supported by the cosmic all-unifying grace of God-like self-consciousness. The sinful fall of Adam: rupture, tearing away, diminution of personhood: the creation becomes not its own, not personal, impersonal, alien . . . *Vranje, 8 Sept 1920*

### The All Night Vigil: Exapostilaria to 1<sup>st</sup> Hour

At the conclusion of the canons, a Little Litany is taken, followed by "Holy is the Lord our God" and the Exapostilarion, also known as the "Hymn of Light." This is a short hymn sung after the Canon, and its name means "a sending out." Originally a singer was sent out from the choir to sing a solo in the center of the nave which served as a sort of dismissal hymn. A particular exapostilarion exists for every feast. The exapostilarion for Sunday is "Holy is the Lord our God." An additional exapostilarion for Sunday Matins explains the Matins Gospel. Hence there are eleven of these exapostilaria, one for each of the eleven Matins Resurrectional Gospels. The most famous exapostilarion for the whole year is "The Wise Thief," sung at the Matins of Great and Holy Friday.

"The Praises," which follow the Exapostilarion, mark the beginning of the third and last part of Matins. The Praises consist of Psalms 148, 149, and 150, though they are often abbreviated. The first verses are sung by the choir, then the reader chants the rest. Towards the end, hymns called "stichera" are interspersed between the verses of the psalms, just as is done at Vespers at "Lord, I have cried..." These stichera honor the event or saint of the day. Hence, for the Resurrectional Vigil, the stichera (in the tone of the week) speak of the Resurrection.

At every Vigil of the Resurrection, the same Theotokion (hymn to the Theotokos) concludes the Praises. This wonderful hymn in tone 2 is known by all, since it is repeated every week:

Thou art most blessed, O Virgin Theotokos! For through the One who was born of thee, Hell hath been captured and Adam recalled! The curse hath been annulled and Eve set free! Death hath been slain, so we are given life: Blessed is Christ our God, whose good will it was, glory to Thee!

At the singing of the Theotokion, the Royal Doors are opened and all the lights in the temple are put on [in some practices; we no longer do this]. If Matins has been served as originally appointed, the night will have advanced and the first glimmer of dawn will have appeared. As the natural light begins to appear in the eastern sky, we prepare to greet this light as an icon of the True Light, Christ our God. It is time for the Great Doxology. The Priest, with outstretched arms raised to the heavens cries out: "Glory to Thee, who hast shown us the light!" And with that, the choir and people sing the Great Doxology.

The Doxology begins, as did Matins, with the Angelic song "Glory to God in the highest, and on

earth peace, good will towards men," and concludes with the singing of the Trisagion, "Holy God..." The Great Doxology is always sung due to its celebratory and festive nature. It is to be distinguished from the Lesser Doxology, which is similar (but not identical), and is chanted by the reader at Compline and Daily Matins.

The Great Doxology is very ancient, dating at latest to the third century. It is *par excellence* the morning hymn of the Church.

After the Doxology, the Troparion (Resurrectional or Festal) is sung, followed by the Augmented Litany, and the Morning Litany. The content of these litanies is the same as their counterparts at Vespers and has already been discussed. Only here they come at the end of the service. The lights are then extinguished, and the All-Night Vigil concludes with the reading of the First Hour. [We omit the First Hour in our parish practice. The priest has chosen to use the time to serve Matins more fully.]

### Head of the Church & the Body of Christ

St. Nicholas of Zicha (+1956)

*"And gave Him to be the head of the Church which is His body" (Ephesians 1:22-23)*

Headless humanity is given a Head in the Lord Jesus, risen from the dead. The Body, [formerly] severed from the Head, begins to knit together with that Head, bit by bit and part by part. Not all men are the Body, but only those who believe in Christ the Lord; all are called, but only those who respond are received under the Head. Those who respond compose the Body that is called the Church, of which the Lord is the Head. But, as the risen and glorified man, Jesus is exalted within the Holy Trinity above each and all on earth and in heaven, so also will His Church, His Body, be raised up to its Head, above each and all. The whole Church will stand at the right hand of the Holy Trinity, for, where the Head is, there is the Body. To such an exaltation, greatness and glory will the gathered repentant sinners attain, who had sometime been enemies of God, wandering astray like the Prodigal Son and headless as a dead body, but now adopted through Christ and for Christ, and clad in the beauty of divine life and light.

It is a great thing, my brethren, for the Son of God to be incarnate on earth, and for Him to suffer on the Cross and die for our sakes. His sojourn on earth brought a vast change in the destiny of man and in the meaning of all created things. He changed all things and made them new. Therefore, my brethren, let us not live and conduct ourselves as the old man, but as the new; let us not live in sin but in righteousness; let us not conduct ourselves according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. Let us merit that exaltation, greatness, and glory to which we are called by our Head.

O Lord Jesus, the holy Head of Thy holy Church, make us worthy to be members for ever of Thy most pure Body. To Thee be glory and praise for ever. Amen.

### Upcoming Events 2022

20-28 June: Apostles' Fast

21 June: Tuesday, 6:30 p.m. Holy Unction

GLORY BE TO GOD FOR ALL THINGS!