

# The Confessor's Tongue for June 26, A. D. 2022

Sunday of All Saints of North America; Ven. David of Thessalonica

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.

---

---

## Saints of North America

On the second Sunday after Pentecost, each local Orthodox Church commemorates all the saints, known and unknown, who have shone forth in its territory. Accordingly, the Orthodox Church in America remembers the saints of North America on this day.

Saints of all times, and in every country are seen as the fulfillment of God's promise to redeem fallen humanity. Their example encourages us to "lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily besets us" and to "run with patience the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1). The saints of North America also teach us how we should live, and what we must expect to endure as Christians

Although it is a relatively young church, the Orthodox Church in America has produced saints in nearly all of the six major categories of saints: Apostles (and Equals of the Apostles); Martyrs (and Confessors); Prophets; Hierarchs; Monastic Saints; and the Righteous. Prophets, of course, lived in Old Testament times and predicted the coming of Christ.

The first Divine Liturgy in what is now American territory (northern latitude 58 degrees, 14 minutes, western longitude 141 degrees) was celebrated on July 20, 1741, the Feast of the Prophet Elias, aboard the ship Peter under the command of Vitus Bering. Hieromonk Hilarion Trusov and the priest Ignatius Kozirevsky served together on that occasion. Several years later, the Russian merchant Gregory I. Shelikov visited Valaam monastery, suggesting to the abbot that it would be desirable to send missionaries to Russian America.

On September 24, 1794, after a journey of 7,327 miles (the longest missionary journey in Orthodox history) and 293 days, a group of monks from Valaam arrived on Kodiak Island in Alaska. The mission was headed by Archimandrite Joasaph, and included Hieromonks Juvenal, Macarius, and Athanasius, the Hierodeacons Nectarius and Stephen, and the monks Herman and Joasaph. Saint Herman of Alaska (December 13, August 9), the last surviving member of the mission, fell asleep in the Lord in 1837.

Throughout the Church's history, the seeds of faith have always been watered by the blood of the martyrs. The Protomartyr Juvenal was killed near Lake Iliamna by natives in 1799, thus becoming the first Orthodox Christian to shed his blood for Christ in the New World. In 1816, Saint Peter the Aleut was put to death by Spanish missionaries in California when he refused to convert to Roman Catholicism.

Missionary efforts continued in the nineteenth century, with outreach to the native peoples of Alaska. Two of the most prominent laborers in Christ's Vineyard were Saint Innocent Veniaminov (March 31 and October 6) and Saint Jacob Netsvetov

(July 26), who translated Orthodox services and books into the native languages. Father Jacob Netsvetev died in Sitka in 1864 after a life of devoted service to the Church. Father John Veniaminov, after his wife's death, received monastic tonsure with the name Innocent. He died in 1879 as the Metropolitan of Moscow.

As the nineteenth century was drawing to a close, an event of enormous significance for the North American Church took place. On March 25, 1891, Bishop Vladimir went to Minneapolis to receive Saint Alexis Toth (May 7) and 361 of his parishioners into the Orthodox Church. This was the beginning of the return of many Uniates to Orthodoxy.

Saint Tikhon (Bellavin), the future Patriarch of Moscow (April 7, October 9), came to America as bishop of the diocese of the Aleutians and Alaska in September 1898. As the only Orthodox bishop on the continent, Saint Tikhon traveled extensively throughout North America in order to minister to his widely scattered and diverse flock. He realized that the local church here could not be a permanent extension of the Russian Church. Therefore, he focused his efforts on giving the American Church a diocesan and parish structure which would help it mature and grow.

Saint Tikhon returned to Russia in 1907, and was elected as Patriarch of Moscow ten years later. He died in 1925, and for many years his exact burial place remained unknown. Saint Tikhon's grave was discovered on February 22, 1992 in the smaller cathedral of Our Lady of the Don in the Don Monastery when a fire made renovation of the church necessary.

Saint Raphael of Brooklyn (February 27) was the first Orthodox bishop to be consecrated in North America. Archimandrite Raphael Hawaweeny was consecrated by Bishop Tikhon and Bishop Innocent (Pustynsky) at Saint Nicholas Cathedral in New York on March 13, 1904. As Bishop of Brooklyn, Saint Raphael was a trusted and capable assistant to Saint Tikhon in his archpastoral ministry. Saint Raphael reposed on February 27, 1915.

The first All American Council took place March 5-7, 1907 at Mayfield, PA, and the main topic was "How to expand the mission." Guidelines and directions for missionary activity, and statutes for the administrative structure of parishes were also set forth.

In the twentieth century, in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution, countless men, women, and children received the crown of martyrdom rather than renounce Christ. Saints John Kochurov (October 31) and Alexander Hotovitzky (December 4 and August 7) both served the Church in North America before going back to Russia. Saint John became the first clergyman to be martyred in Russia on October 31,

1917 in Saint Petersburg. Saint Alexander Hotovitzky, who served in America until 1914, was killed in 1937.

In addition to the saints listed above, we also honor those saints who are known only to God, and have not been recognized officially by the Church. As we contemplate the lives of these saints, let us remember that we are also called by God to a life of holiness. *oca.org*

### The Sayings of St. Anthony the Great 20

*A brother renounced the world and gave his good to the poor, but he kept back a little for his personal expenses. He went to see Abba Anthony. When he told Anthony this, the old man said to him, "If you want to be a monk, go into the village, buy some meat, cover your naked body with it, and come here like that." The brother did so, and the dogs and birds tore at his flesh. When he came back, the old man asked him whether he had followed his advice. He showed him his wounded body, and Saint Anthony said, "Those who renounce the world but want to keep something for themselves are torn in this way by the demons who make war on them." Saying 20 Sayings of the Desert Fathers*

*Commentary:* The first step to becoming a monk is renunciation of the world: of property, ties, titles, family, his name—everything that might hold him back from being fully devoted to Christ and from having faith in Christ alone for everything. Anything from the former life that the monk holds onto provides leverage for the enemy to wound him and torment him and overthrow his good intention to devote himself to Christ without distraction.

And what of us who live in the world as Christians, followers of Christ? Unless we learn to see all things that we have as belonging to God, our King, Master, Owner and ourselves as merely stewards commissioned to use His goods according to His purposes—including ourselves—we will be in the same condition as the wounded monk.

For example, we tithe to acknowledge Christ as Master over the fruits of our labor (He gives us the power to make wealth Deuteronomy 8:18) and to secure His blessing on the portion that remains to us. And of that portion that remains, part is for our use and the support of our lives, and part is for the relief of those in need. That this is so we may readily see in the marriage service, where we pray for the newly united man and woman that God grant them an abundance of good things, not so they can have financial security or live a comfortable life, but so that they may always have something with which to relieve the needs of the poor and may never have to turn someone away empty-handed because they don't have enough to share. Here God will surely judge us for our profligate spending, for our living beyond our means, for our enslaving ourselves financially through debt. Spending so much that our monthly payments consume our entire income will not excuse us before God for not tithing or giving alms. Rather, we will stand condemned for luxurious living. Even if we don't accumulate debt, but spend all that we make on

ourselves, we shall still find ourselves condemned before God: our checkbook and credit card statements will tell the tale of a life squandered in pursuit of this world's goods rather than spent to acquire of the Kingdom of God.

We must not, then, hold tightly to this world's goods as though they were our own or our lives were contained in them. We cannot afford to have a sense of entitlement, that God somehow owes us a certain standard of living, a certain level of comfort or ease, freedom from suffering, or anything else. Anything in this world we let our hearts get attached to can and will be used by our enemy to afflict us and hold us back from the kingdom of God.

Though the "love of money is the root of all evil", it is not money alone that holds us back. Unhealthy relationships we cling to pull us into sin. Caring for pets and possessions can tie us down. Jobs or positions can provide so much of our identity that we cannot let them go or walk away when God calls us to something else. The pursuit of pleasure so engrosses us that we cannot fast or pray and are retarded in spiritual progress. Trying to secure security in an insecure world keeps us from seeing our only true security in Christ. Worry—holding onto the idea that it all depends on us but not knowing what to do about it—keeps us from Christ. The anger that afflicts us and torments us most often has its source in our love of things that are not God: when someone else steps between us and the object of our desire, or threatens to deprive us of it, anger arises.

Giving ourselves to God is a continual process. The very services teach us this. At the end of dearly every Litany, we are called to "commend ourselves, each other, and all our life unto Christ our God." Doing it repeatedly in the services is practice for doing it repeatedly each day of our life. If anger begins to arise in our hearts because someone has disrupted our day, we must commend ourselves to God. The government passes a new tax law that threatens our financial security, we commend ourselves and our wealth to God. We start to worry about a member of our family, we commend him and ourselves to God. Constantly, every time we think of clinging to them or find ourselves in fear of losing them, we commend ourselves, our time, our family and friends and every relationship (and strangers too!), our money, our possessions, yea, our very life to Christ while giving thanks to God for the trials that beset us. In doing this, like the monk who renounces all, we sever the unhealthy connections that root us to the world that we may be free to follow Christ.

To accomplish this work in us, our Physician often uses sickness and impending death to get us to clarify our vision and to divest ourselves of the things we could not bring ourselves to let go of earlier in life, so we should not despair if we seem to make little progress. On the other hand, if we do not begin this process now, impending death may find us so firmly bound by the world that we cannot get free. Moreover, living a life bound by the world deprives us

of many gifts of grace and the joy of freedom in Christ that we might have enjoyed much sooner had we but applied ourselves.

### 300 Ascetical & Theological Chapters

*St. Justin of Chelije*

#### First Century

20. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," the fear of God (Proverbs 1:7). Prayers bring one into the wisdom of God by steps. Each creature is the Lord's: how shall I go into the Lord without fear, so I not profane, not lower the Lord, not deprive His creation of wisdom and meaning? From prayerful fear begins wisdom. It terrifies me, Lord, when my eye glances at the leaf of a rose, for the leaf lives by Thee and in Thee. The fear of wisdom, the trembling of wisdom -- the mysteries of God surround me, -- for Thou art the Master of wisdom; Thou art Master, Lord! while I am lowly, afraid to enter the treasure of Thy wisdom with a rotting soul, dressed in rags. The absence of the fear of God is the absence of wisdom, is madness, and stupidity; the devil—the loss of fear before God, is the embodiment of stupidity, falsehood, and madness. Without fear before things and phenomena, today's writers write, and because of this there is in them no wisdom.

#### The All Night Vigil: Concluding Thoughts

We have spent much time discussing the Vigil service because of its great importance in the liturgical and spiritual life of the Christian. It is an integral part of his preparation for meeting the Lord on the Lord's Day and is a vitally important part of his preparation for the Christian life in this world and the Kingdom to come.

The All-night Vigil is a "long" service. In our abbreviated parish form, it typically lasts about two and a quarter hours. Some may balk at spending this time in church. But since we spend most of our time in the world caught up in the cares of earthly life, it takes us some time "lay aside all earthly cares" and come into God's presence with undistracted attention. Typically it takes at least half an hour to remove the "din" of life from our consciousness so we are able to open ourselves to God and give ourselves fully to corporate worship. For some, it may take the full service! The Vigil offers us this possibility.

Like the athlete in his sport, the Christian must train for spiritual life. Athletic success and glory does not happen automatically, and it often involves great struggle and sacrifice. But the rewards for the athlete are far greater than any inconveniences or suffering. So it is in the spiritual life: 'no pain, no gain.' To put off the old man and to put on Christ takes effort on our part as we die to ourselves and learn to submit ourselves to God's will. As St. Paul put it, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us" (Romans 5:18). The small suffering and

inconvenience of the Vigil helps to train us for participation in God's glory.

The Vigil typifies the long, watchful waiting of the normal Christian life for the Coming of Christ in two senses: first, His glorious Second coming, and second, His visiting us in this life to raise us up and renew us (as in "visit me in my infirmity"). The neglect of the Vigil helps explain the spiritual collapse of modern man, who makes no time to be still before his Creator and wants everything now. Renewal of Christian life in today's world requires resisting earthly temptations, entertainments, etc., and rediscovering the life of prayer and worship in the Church. The pagan world reserves Saturday night for its pleasures. The Christian world reserves Saturday night for its Vigil of waiting on the Lord that we may renew our strength. There is a sharp distinction between this world as elusive pleasure and the Kingdom of God as the joyful Presence of the Lord.

If you truly desire to advance in the Christian life, learn to "watch and pray" as part of the Church militant, then make the Vigil part of your preparation for meeting Christ the Lord in Holy Communion.

#### 'Crazy John' and Dimitri

Young Dimitri was a boy in his early teens. He was going on fourteen and was in his second year of high school. He lived together with his brother, Paul, who was three years younger than himself, and his parents, just two apartment buildings down from where Crazy John lived. During the past year, unlike the other children his age, he had turned to God. His friends couldn't explain the huge turnaround. They all wondered what had happened to make the high-spirited Dimitri abandon his pranks and mischief and turn to studying and prudence. Even his parents had no idea what was behind his conversion. At first, they actually believed he had been brainwashed by a heretical organization.

But late, they realized that nothing of the sort was lurking behind their son's change. They also noticed that ever since their son turned to God, the problems in their family had begun to diminish. Quarrelling stopped. Teachers' praises at school had replaced their complaints about his mischief. Dimitri's turnaround had changed the family's course. His parents became even more surprised when they saw their son going to church every Sunday and reading the Holy Bible that Crazy John had given him as a gift.

Here is Dimitri's account of what happened: "One day, my mother sent me to Mr. Apostoly's bakery to buy bread. As I was buying the bread, I also did something bad—something that I often used to do with my friends. Well, I stole a chocolate bar," said young Dimitri, lowering his head with a kind of embarrassment. "Mr. Apostoly didn't notice, and I was sure that no one had seen me take it," he continued. "But from the next day on, as I left the house to go to school, I would find two similar chocolate bars outside our door, like the ones I had stolen. This went on for about twenty days. I asked my mother who kept putting the chocolates there, and she told me that every morning Crazy John usually rang the doorbells in the building.

"That guy does such crazy things," my mother said. That was when I realized that the fool must have spotted

me when I grabbed the chocolate, and this was how he was taking his revenge. I'll show that madman who's trying to make me feel bad for a measly chocolate that I stole—that was how I used to think, at the time.... The next day, I found chocolates again—one for me and one for Paul, my brother, along with a note that had the Ten Commandments written on it, with the commandment 'Thou shalt not steal' underlined. I became angry.

"So, as soon as school was out, I went straight to Crazy John's apartment building and rang his doorbell. He opened his door and said with a smile, 'I'm sorry, my Dimitri. I know you came here to give me a couple of punches for the chocolates. I'm a fool; I deserve those punches. Come one; hit me as hard as you can. Let your anger out.'

"I was at a loss and was going to leave. I got scared. How did the fool know that I had gone there to beat him, seeing I hadn't told anyone? As soon as this thought crossed my mind, he remarked, 'My dear boy, you must be wondering who told me you were coming here to beat me, aren't you?'

"I nodded affirmatively.

"Well, you see, just before you came, St. Dimitrios was here—who is your guardian—and the Holy Mother also, and they told me. You know, they love you very much, and they often talk about you. For example, yesterday, with your schoolmate Helen—when you slapped her for disagreeing with you—you made them very sad, and they were crying here, along with me.'

"That was an incident that I hadn't confessed to anyone.

"My dear Dimitri, I will tell you a big secret, under the condition that as long as I am alive, you will not tell it to anyone. Do you accept?'

"Yes', I replied, watching Crazy John, who was radiant with joy.

"Our Lord Jesus, dear Dimitri, wants to come over to your place, but every time He comes to visit you, He hears quarreling, and He departs very sorrowful. So, He told me to give you His commandments to read, to learn them well, and to observe them all, and only then will He return to live with you continuously. Do you know what it means to live in the same house together with Him who created the entire world? Now, leave, go home, because your mother will be getting worried.'

"I began to leave, but while walking me out, Crazy John said with a smile, 'Hey, where are you going, little Dimitri? You forgot to give me those punches!'

"I left for home as though flying on wings. As soon as my mother saw me, she asked me why I was late, and I told her that I was at the fool's house to tell him not to leave any more chocolates on the doorstep because I would get fat. I went to my room, thinking about everything that had happened at Crazy John's house. After a while I went back to my mother, 'Mom, give me thirty drachmas to give to Mr. Apostoly the baker because I bought something, but didn't have enough money to pay for it.'

"She gave me the money, and I went running to the bakery and handed it to Mr. Apostoly. He was surprised when I told him that I had taken a chocolate bar along with the bread, but had forgotten to pay for it.

"Well, I was indeed surprised, because I know you to be a mischievous one, dear Dimitri. But as soon as you made that move, I told myself I shouldn't condemn anyone, because you never know what kind of heart is inside each person. From that moment on, I became very fond of you," the baker explained.

The baker then pulled young Dimitri towards him and gave him a kiss, while patting him on the head. His mother, Polyxeni, and her husband, Panayiotis, who were witnessing the scene, were obviously emotionally moved.

Mrs. Polyxeni then decided to say her part. "To us, Crazy John was the support of our family. He was the one who contributed towards us making the turn towards Christ. Our life changed, and he made us partakers of the miracle of salvation. He brought blessings into our home, and with his meaningful interventions, he managed to break the wall of egotism that alienated us from our neighbor. To my, Panayiotis, and my children, he was a friend and a brother."

*from Crazy John: A Sainly Fool for Christ vol. 1, Athens, 2010.*

## On Remembrance of Death

*St. Ignatius Brianchaninov, The Arena*

A [Christian] should remember every day, and several times a day, that he is faced with inevitable death, and eventually he should even attain to the unceasing remembrance of death.

Our mind is so darkened by the fall that, unless we force ourselves to remember death, we can completely forget about it. When we forget death, then we begin to live on earth as if we were immortal, and we sacrifice all our activity to the world without concerning ourselves in the least either about the fearful transition to eternity or about our fate in eternity. Then we boldly and peremptorily override the commandments of Christ; then we commit all the vilest sins; then we abandon not only unceasing prayer but even the prayers appointed for definite times—we begin to scorn this essential and indispensable occupation as if it were an activity of little importance and little needed. Forget of physical death, we die a spiritual death.

On the other hand, he who often remembers the death of the body rises from the dead in soul. He lives on earth like a stranger in an inn or like a prisoner in gaol, constantly expecting to be called out for trial or execution. Before his eyes, the gates of eternity are always open. He continually looks in that direction with spiritual anxiety, with deep sorrow and reflection. He is constantly occupied with wondering what will justify him at Christ's terrible judgment and what his sentence will be. This sentence decides a person's fate for the whole of eternity. No earthly beauty, nor earthly pleasure draws his attention or his love. He condemns no one, for he remembers that at the judgment of God such judgment will be passed on him as he passed here on his neighbors. He forgives everyone and everything, that he may himself obtain forgiveness and inherit salvation. He is indulgent with all, he is merciful in everything, that indulgence and mercy may be shown to him. He welcomes and embraces with joy every trouble or trial that comes so him as a toll for his sins in time which frees him from paying toll in eternity. If the thought comes to him to be proud of his virtue, at once the remembrance of death rushes against this thought, puts it to shame, exposes the nonsense, and drives it away.... pp. 90-91

### Upcoming Events 2022

20-28 June: Apostles' Fast

29 June: Wednesday, SS Peter & Paul

30 June: Thursday, Synaxis of the Holy Apostles

GLORY BE TO GOD FOR ALL THINGS!