

The Confessor's Tongue for October 9, A. D. 2022

17th Sunday After Pentecost; St. Tikhon of North America; Apostle James of Alphaeus
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.

October 9: St. Tikhon

Saint Tikhon, Confessor and Patriarch of Moscow, was born Vasily Ivanovich Bellavin on January 31st (January 19th o.s.), 1865. His father was Ioann Belavin, a rural priest of the Toropetz district of the Pskov diocese. From his early years he displayed a particular religious disposition, love for the Church as well as rare meekness and humility. From 1878 to 1883, Vasily studied at the Pskov Theological Seminary. His fellow students liked and respected him for his piety, brilliant progress in studies, and constant readiness to help comrades, who often turned to him for explanations of lessons, especially for help in drawing up and correcting numerous compositions. In 1888, at the age of 23, he graduated from the Saint Petersburg Theological Academy as a layman. He then returned to the Pskov Seminary and became an instructor of Moral and Dogmatic Theology. In 1891, at the age of 26, he took monastic vows and was given the name Tikhon in honor of St Tikhon of Zadonsk. Tikhon was consecrated Bishop of Lublin on October 19th, 1897. On September 14th, 1898, he was appointed Bishop of the Aleutians and Alaska. As head of the Russian Orthodox Church in America he reorganized the diocese and changed its name from "Diocese of the Aleutians and Alaska" to "Diocese of the Aleutians and North America" in 1900. While living in the United States Archbishop Tikhon was made a citizen of the United States.

He had two vicar bishops in the United States, Bishop Innocent (Pustynsky) in Alaska, and Bishop (Saint) Raphael (Hawaweeny) in Brooklyn. In June 1905, Archbishop Tikhon gave his blessing for the establishment of St Tikhon's Monastery in Pennsylvania. On May 22nd, 1901, he blessed the cornerstone for St Nicholas Cathedral in New York. He was also involved in establishing other churches in North America. On November 9th, 1902, he consecrated the church of St Nicholas in Brooklyn for the Syrian immigrants. Two weeks later, he consecrated St Nicholas Cathedral in New York.

In 1907 he returned to Russia, and was appointed Bishop of Yaroslavl. He was transferred to Vilnius, Lithuania December 22nd, 1913, and on June 21st, 1917, he was elected the ruling bishop of Moscow by the Diocesan Congress of clergy and laity. On August 15th, 1917, Archbishop Tikhon was raised to the dignity of Metropolitan of Moscow. On November 5th of the same year, after an election as one of the three candidates for the reinstated Moscow Patriarchate, Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev announced that, after a prayerful drawing of lots, Metropolitan Tikhon had been selected for the position as the new Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church.

During the Russian Civil War the Patriarch was widely seen as anti-Bolshevik and many members of the Orthodox clergy were imprisoned or executed by the new regime. Patriarch Tikhon openly condemned the killings of the tsar's family in 1918, and protested against violent attacks by the Bolsheviks on the Church.

During the famine in 1922 the Patriarch was accused of being a saboteur by the Communist government, for which he was imprisoned from April 1922 until June 1923 in Donskoy Monastery. Among acts incriminating him was his public protest against nationalization of the property of the Church. This caused international resonance and was a subject of several notes to the Soviet government.

Under pressure from the authorities, Patriarch Tikhon issued several messages to the believers in which he stated in part that he was "no longer an enemy to the Soviet power". Despite his supposed declaration of loyalty, he continued to enjoy the trust of the Orthodox community in Russia. In 1923 Patriarch Tikhon was "deposed" by a Soviet-sponsored council of the so-called Living Church, which decreed that he was "henceforth a simple citizen—Vasily Bellavin." No canonical church has ever recognized this deposition as an act of the Russian Orthodox Church.

When the sewer system under the hastily erected Mausoleum of Lenin was damaged and a leak occurred, St Tikhon remarked, "The balm accords with the relics". The phrase was widely quoted.

In 1924 the Patriarch fell ill and was hospitalized. On April 5th, 1925, he served his last Divine Liturgy, and died two days later, on April 7th (March 25th o.s.), the Feast of the Annunciation. He was buried on April 12th in the winter church of Donskoy Monastery in Moscow. From the time of his death, he was widely considered a martyr or confessor for the faith.

Patriarch Tikhon was glorified (canonized) a saint by the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia in conjunction with the great glorification of the New Martyrs and Confessors of the Soviet Yoke on November 1st (October 19th o.s.), 1981. He was later glorified by the Moscow Patriarchate during the Bishop's Council of October 9th to 11th, 1989. This later canonization process is generally considered an example of the thaw in Church-Soviet relations during the Glasnost era.

St Tikhon's relics were believed lost, but on February 19th, 1992 (or, according to another source, February 22nd), they were discovered in a concealed place in the Donskoy Monastery and were found to be almost entirely incorrupt. The relics were placed in a reliquary and on April 5th (March 23rd o.s.), 1992, fifty bishops solemnly transferred them to the

Katholikon (main church) of the Donskoy Monastery in a place of honor by the soleas.

Perhaps his own words best sum up his life: "May God teach every one of us to strive for His truth, and for the good of the Holy Church, rather than something for our own sake."

The Sayings of St. Anthony the Great 35

Abba Anthony said, "Whoever hammers a lump of iron, first decides what he is going to make of it, a scythe, a sword, or an axe. Even so, we ought to make up our minds what kind of virtue we want to forge, or we labor in vain."

Saying 35 Sayings of the Desert Fathers

Commentary: In forging a metal object, the smith must know ahead of time what he is making. Not only does he need to know how to form it, but also how hot to heat the metal, what type of metal to use, and how to quench the hot metal to achieve the desired quality of hardness. The process a good sword requires will not work for a hammer or a chisel.

St. Anthony likens the acquisition of the virtues to this process. If we take a general approach to forging a virtue, for example, just going to Church, praying, reading, fasting, receiving the Holy Mysteries, and so forth but without any more precise focus, we may not succeed to gaining any of the virtues. What are the virtues? Humility, liberality, chastity, mildness, temperance, happiness, diligence, faith, hope, and love are among them. Providing needed focus, St. Justin of Chelye recommends that each day we seek to put aside one sin and put on one virtue. St. Theophan the Recluse advises us to discern what our controlling passion is and to fight against it by putting on the virtue that opposes it, and having prevailed in this struggle, we shall much more readily prevail over our other vices and acquire the other virtues.

Warring against a particular passion most often means obedience to a particular command of Christ that counteracts the passion and develops the virtue. For example, avarice and love of money are counteracted by almsgiving: obedience to Christ's command "Give to them that ask of thee, and from them that would borrow from thee turn thou not away." The sinful passion is cut away by obedience to Christ's command and working to acquire the virtue of generosity. If we struggle with lust, we must learn to guard not only our eyes and thoughts but also our stomachs by fasting. If pride is our controlling passion, we seek to acquire the virtue of humility by serving others, putting others first, doing without recognition the dirty jobs no one else wants to do. "Whoever wishes to be first among you, let him be the servant of all," as Christ has said, and "If you are invited to a feast, take the lowest place." "He who exalteth himself will be abased, but he that humbleth himself will be exalted" (Luke 14:11, 18:14). Humility leads to the spiritual heights. If you struggle with anger, hatred, remembrance of wrong, and unforgiveness, seek to put on love by obeying Christ's

command to not return evil for evil, but to overcome evil with good by doing good to those who harm us, blessing those who curse us, and praying for those who persecute us and whom we experience as enemies. *Fr. Justin Frederick*

The Commandments of Christ

"If ye love Me, keep My commandments." (John 14:15)

But I say unto you, swear not at all . . . but let your communication be Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil. Matthew 5:37

With this command, Christ calls His followers to keep their word and to do what they say. Many people resort to swearing to convince others that they will do what they say: "I swear I'll do it!"; the more important the matter, the more important the thing by which they swear. Of course, when no oath is given, then all bets are off as to whether such a person will keep his word.

Christ keeps His word. He does what He says He will do; He does not do what He says He will not do. He does not resort to swearing oaths to convince us that He is serious. He simply says He will do it, and He does. 'Yes' in Christ's mouth means 'yes' and not 'maybe'. So should it in our mouths.

We speak far too carelessly, treating our words as light, trivial things. We say we will do things to please others with words while having little intention of carrying them out; or we say 'yes' to something and promptly forget. But the person who heard our 'yes' will not forget that word as quickly as we do. Our word has created an expectation in him, and our failure to keep our word brings him disappointment.

The command to let our yes be yes and our no, no, is more important than we adults might think. Very often, it is a parent's failure to keep his word, to let his yes be yes, that allows bitterness and the beginning of estrangement to creep into a child's heart. A child hears his father promise to take him fishing. He is excited. He anticipates. The day arrives, and no fishing. Dad had some business come up and felt he could release himself from his promise to attend to it. How does the child feel? He is disappointed, and the possibility of a root of bitterness springing up in his heart that will hinder free relations with his father is now present.

But what about those things that "come up" to interfere with things we told others we would do? In Psalm 14 (15):4, we read that a righteous man "swears to his own hurt and does not change." In other words, once a righteous man gives his word, he keeps it, even though it is not to his immediate advantage so to do.

There is a story told about the young Thomas Jackson, long before he became known as "Stonewall". He had agreed with a local man to bring him a fish once a week or so for a certain price. One day in his fishing for his employer, he caught a whopper. He brought the princely fish to the man to fulfill his bargain, who on seeing the size of the fish, wanted to pay Thomas more for it. Thomas refused, saying he

had agreed to bring a fish for such and such a price and he couldn't accept more.

In the case above, the father would need to tell the business associates that he had a prior engagement that day that he could not break and that he'd meet another time for business.

A flourishing society depends upon honesty and men keeping their given word. When the aphorism of Miguel de Cervantes, "An honest man's word is as good as his bond" is generally true, people can trust each other, rely on each other, and there is little need for much oversight by the state. But when men swear and do not keep their word, then the legal machinery needed to try to protect the innocent must grow, and cynicism increases with it.

May God help us keep to saying simply "yes" and "no" and to doing what we say we will do.

Fr. Justin Frederick

Homily on the Sunday of Orthodoxy, 1903

by St. Tikhon, delivered in San Francisco

This Sunday, brethren, begins the week of Orthodoxy, or the week of the Triumph of Orthodoxy, because it is today that the Holy Orthodox Church solemnly recalls its victory over the Iconoclast heresy and other heresies and gratefully remembers all who fought for the Orthodox faith in word, writing, teaching, suffering, or godly living.

Keeping the day of Orthodoxy, Orthodox people ought to remember that it is their sacred duty to stand firm in their Orthodox Faith and to keep it carefully. For us it is a precious treasure: we were born and raised in it; all the important events of our life are related to it, and it is ever ready to give us its help and blessing in all our needs and good undertakings, however unimportant they may seem. It supplies us with strength, good cheer and consolation, it heals, purifies and saves us.

The Orthodox Faith is also dear to us because it is the Faith of our Fathers. For its sake the Apostles bore pain and laboured; martyrs and preachers suffered for it; champions, who were like unto the saints, shed their tears and their blood; pastors and teachers fought for it; and our ancestors stood for it, whose legacy it was that to us it should be dearer than the pupil of our eyes.

And as to us, their descendants - do we preserve the Orthodox Faith, do we keep to its Gospels? Of yore, the prophet Elijah, this great worker for the glory of God, complained that the sons of Israel had abandoned the Testament of the Lord, leaning away from it towards the gods of the heathen. Yet the Lord revealed to His prophet, that amongst the Israelites there were still seven thousand people who had not knelt before Baal (3 Kings 19). Likewise, no doubt, in our days also there are some true followers of Christ. "The Lord knoweth them that are His" (2 Timothy 2:19). We do occasionally meet sons of the Church, who are obedient to Her decrees, who honour their spiritual pastors, love the Church of God and the beauty of its exterior, who are eager to attend to its

Divine Services and to lead a good life, who recognize their human failings and sincerely repent of their sins.

But are there many such among us? Are there not more people, "in whom the weeds of vanity and passion allow but little fruit to the influence of the Gospel, because of the increase of their sins, who renounce the gift of the Lord and repudiate the grace of God" (a quotation from the Service of Orthodoxy). I have given birth to sons and have glorified them, yet they deny Me, said the Lord in the olden days concerning Israel. And today also there are many who were born, raised and glorified by the Lord in the Orthodox Faith, yet who deny their Faith, paying no attention to the teachings of the Church, they do not keep its injunctions, do not listen to their spiritual pastors and remain cold towards the divine services and the Church of God.

How speedily some of us lose the Orthodox faith in this country of many creeds and tribes! They begin their apostasy with things which in their eyes have but little importance. They judge it is "old fashioned" and "not accepted amongst educated people" to observe all such customs such as praying before and after meals, or even morning and night, to wear a cross, to keep icons in their houses and to keep church holidays and fast days. They even do not stop at this, but go further: they seldom go to church and sometimes not at all, as a man has to have some rest on a Sunday ... in a pub; they do not go to confession, they dispense with church marriage and delay baptizing their children. And in this way their ties with the Orthodox Faith are broken! They remember the Church on their deathbeds, and some don't even do that!

To excuse their apostasy they naively say: "This is not the old times, this is today, and consequently it is impossible to observe all the demands of the Church." As if the word of Christ is of use for the old times only and not for always. As if the Orthodox Faith is not the foundation of the world. "Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel into anger" (Isaiah 1:4).

If you do not keep the Orthodox Faith and the commandments of God, the least you can do is not humiliate your hearts by inventing false excuses for your sins! If you do not honour our customs, the least you can do is not to laugh at things that you do not know or understand. If you do not accept the motherly care of the Holy Orthodox Church, the least you can do is to confess you act wrongly, that you are sinning against the Church and behave like children! If you do, the Orthodox Church can forgive you, like a loving mother, your coldness and slights, and will receive you back into her embrace, as if you were erring children.

Holding to the Orthodox Faith, as to something holy, loving it with all their hearts and prizing it above all, Orthodox people ought, moreover, to endeavour to spread it amongst people of other creeds. Christ

the Saviour has said that "neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candle stick, and it giveth light unto all that are in the house" (Matthew 5:15). The light of Orthodoxy was not lit to shine only on a small number of men. The Orthodox Church is universal; it remembers the words of its Founder: "Go ye into the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Luke 16:15), "Go ye therefore and teach all nations" (Matt. 28:19). We ought to share our spiritual wealth, our truth, light and joy with others who are deprived of these blessings, but often are seeking them and thirsting for them.

Once "a vision appeared to Paul in the night, there stood a man from Macedonia and prayed him, saying, come over into Macedonia, and help us" (Acts 16:9), after which the apostle started for this country to preach Christ. We also hear a similar inviting voice. We live surrounded by people of alien creeds; in the sea of other religions, our Church is a small island of salvation, towards which swim some of the people, plunged in the sea of life.

Are we to remain deaf and insensible to them? God save us from such a lack of sympathy. Otherwise woe unto us, "for we have taken away the key of knowledge, we entered not in ourselves, and them that were entering in we hindered" (Luke 11:52).

But who is to work for the spread of the Orthodox Faith, for the increase of the children of the Orthodox Church? Pastors and missionaries, you answer. You are right; but are they alone? St Paul wisely compares the Church of Christ to a body, and the life of a body is shared by all the members. So it ought to be in the life of the Church also. "The whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Ephesians 4:16).

At the beginning, not only pastors alone suffered for the faith of Christ, but lay people also, men, women and even children. Heresies were fought against by lay people as well. Likewise, the spread of Christ's faith ought to be near and precious to the heart of every Christian.

In this work every member of the Church ought to take a lively and heartfelt interest. This interest may show itself in personal preaching of the Gospel of Christ. And to our great joy, we know of such examples amongst our lay brethren. Needless to say, it is not everybody among us who has the opportunity or the faculty to preach the Gospel personally. And in view of this I shall indicate to you, brethren, what every man can do for the spread of Orthodoxy and what he ought to do.

The Apostolic Epistles often disclose the fact that, when the Apostles went to distant places to preach, the faithful often helped them with their prayers and their offerings. Saint Paul sought this help of the Christians especially. Consequently, we can express the interests we take in the cause of the

Gospel in praying to the Lord that He should take this holy cause under His protection, that He should give its servants the strength to do their work worthily, that He should help them to conquer difficulties and dangers, which are part of the work, that He should not allow them to grow depressed or weaken in their zeal; that He should open the hearts of the unbelieving for the hearing and acceptance of the Gospel of Christ, that He should impart to them the word of truth, that He should unite them to the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church; that He should confirm, increase and pacify His Church, keeping it forever invincible.

We pray for all this, mostly with lips, but seldom with the heart. Don't we often hear such remarks as these: "What is the use of these special prayers for the newly initiated (the catechumens)? They do not exist in our time; let them pray for such where there are any; as to us, such prayers only needlessly prolong the service which is not short by any means, as it is." Woe to our lack of wisdom! Woe to our carelessness and idleness!

Offering earnest prayers for the successful preaching of Christ, we can also show our interest by helping it materially. It was so in the primitive Church, and the Apostles lovingly accepted material help to the cause of the preaching, seeing in it an expression of Christian love and zeal. In our days, these offerings are especially needed, because for the lack of them the work often comes to a dead stop. For the lack of them preachers cannot be sent out or supported, churches cannot be built or schools founded, the needy amongst the newly converted cannot be helped. All this needs money and members of other religions always find a way of supplying it. Perhaps, you will say, these people are richer than ourselves. This is true enough, but great means are accumulated by small, and if everybody amongst us gave what he could towards this purpose, we also could raise considerable means.

Accordingly, do not be ashamed of the smallness of your offering. If you have much, offer all you can, but do offer, do not lose the chance of helping the cause of the conversion of your neighbours to Christ, because by so doing, in the words of St James, you "shall save your own soul from death and shall hide a multitude of sins" (James 5:20).

Orthodox people, in celebrating the day of Orthodoxy, you must devote yourselves to the Orthodox Faith not in word or tongue only, but in deed and in truth.

St. Tikhon, Patriarch of Moscow, Enlightener of North America

Upcoming Events 2022

16 October, Sunday: Octoberfest, 3:00 p.m.

31 October, Monday: All Saints Party, 6:00 p.m.

13 November, Sunday: 3:00 p.m. Thanksgiving Meal

GLORY BE TO GOD FOR ALL THINGS!