

# The Confessor's Tongue for October 16, A. D. 2022

18<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost; Fathers of the 7<sup>th</sup> Ecumenical Council

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.

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## Building Update from Adam Skelton

*What follows is Adam's update. We need to pray for God's guidance, will, and provision. If these objections to our plan stand, they may close the door to trying to build in front. Then our options are to build in back (and try to acquire the two properties behind us), find new land on which to build, or push hard on starting a second parish.*

I had productive conversations with both Civil Engineer Clay Cristy and Architect Andrew Gould yesterday [Oct 12] regarding [the city's comments](#) to our site plan submission. This email is to summarize our findings.

While the majority of the comments are nitpicky and presentation type comments, there are *three* potential project-killers that we have identified:

The most important comment only appears in one place on their documents and consists of a single sentence from the Transportation Department: "Dedicate right of way along Oak Street for a Secondary Arterial (55' from the centerline)."

A "secondary arterial" is a 4-lane road with a 110' total right of way width. Yes, you heard that right. Unless this is a mistake on the city reviewer's part, they intend to turn Oak Street into a 4-lane road in the future. Looking at the city's [current thoroughfare plan](#) still shows Oak St as a "collector", but they may be intending to change that.

This is much larger than the 30' dedication from street centerline that we currently have on the plans. Assuming the front setback stays the same (30'), this would push the new building back 25'. Obviously that won't work. Such a large right of way dedication would make it practically impossible to build in the front yard.

Andrew sees this as a pretty blatant land grab that will not fly in a historic district, but Clay is not as optimistic, since he has had another project die recently in Denton from the city's demand on Right of Way dedication. Clay has already asked for a meeting with the city to discuss.

The second potential killer comment is a requirement for "Landscape Buffers" of 15' width on the west, east, and north sides of the property. The north (back) is not a problem, but a 15' buffer on the east side would kill the current parking area, and a 15' buffer on the west side would push the building several feet over and would seriously impact or kill the bathroom building.

Neither of these comments or requirements was mentioned by the city in our predevelopment meeting in 2020.

The third potential killer is having to get another "Certificate of Appropriateness" from the Historic Landmark Commission, which you already know about.

## The Commandments of Christ

"If ye love Me, keep My commandments." (John 14:15)  
*Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Matthew 5:38-41*

The basic commands here may be summarized as "If struck, turn and offer the other cheek", "If sued for thy coat, give thy cloak as well," "If compelled to go one mile, go a second mile." The basic principle is that when the disciples of Christ are asked or compelled to do something they do not want to do, Christ commands them to do more than required.

We might well remember movies of yesteryear such as Laurel and Hardy in which one party slaps another on the cheek only to be slapped in turn. Back and forth it goes. This is probably the most primal response following the notion of doing to others what they do to you. To refrain from striking the striker is to break the cycle of violence and to apply the command "Do not return evil for evil". Just because you did wrong to me does not mean I must return the wrong to you. One might grudgingly (or in fear) restrain one's anger and not hit the hitter back. But Christ calls God's children to go still further. Not only are they not to return the blow, but they are to offer their other cheek for a blow. Who having had one cheek slapped would normally offer the other to be slapped? No one. But this is what Christ commands God's children to do. This demonstration of meekness and humility works on the wrongdoer to shame him and bring him to repentance.

Christ applies this not only to physical violence but to legal violence. When one is sued for one's coat, Christ says to give one's cloak also. Give more than the demand or the award. It does not matter if the demand or award seems unjust. It does not appear to matter who wins the case. Christ command does not permit an ongoing lawsuit. In another place, he urges us to make peace with our neighbor before it goes to court. Legal battles are not the place for the Christian. Who when sued by someone and having the judgment against him, normally would give his opponent even more than the judge awarded? No one. But so Christ commands.

In Palestine under the Roman occupation, a Jewish man could be conscripted to carry a Roman soldier's heavy pack for a Roman mile (1000 paces), but no more. To carry upon demand for one mile was his obligation, but after the mile he was free to go his way. One likely would carry the soldier's pack the required mile, resenting the imposition but having no way of avoiding it. But who would willingly carry the

pack of a foreign soldier occupying one's homeland further than one was obligated? No one. But Christ commands his disciples so to do.

To be this 'no one' is precisely what Christ commands His disciples. When forced to do something unpleasant against their will and seeming best interest, they are to rise above it by doing more than required for Christ's sake. The Christian overcomes evil by doing good, and obedience to this principle contains great power to transform ugly situations. Try it at work with your difficult customers or co-workers, going the extra mile for them against the thought in your heart that they aren't worthy of it. Try it with your wife: when she asks you to do a job for her, get to it quickly and cheerfully, and then ask what else you may do for her. Try it with your husband or with your in-laws or with a fellow parishioner. There is far more power in good than in evil, especially when we do it in obedience to Christ's command with faith in Him that His command is good and obedience to it will bring His rich blessing.

In one case, a man's wife wanted to divorce him. He had thought the marriage to be happy and was oblivious to what he did to make her unhappy. After the divorce, every time he had to pay alimony and child support, he felt great bitterness. Asking a counselor what to do about the bitterness, he was directed to this command of Christ and encouraged to give more in payments than he was required. This obedience delivered him from bitterness, helped him to love his former wife as never before, communicated to her that he was changing, and resulted in their being eventually reunited in marriage. God's ways, though so often not our ways, do work—in mysteriously powerful ways.

### **The Sayings of St. Anthony the Great 36**

*Abba Anthony also said, "Obedience with abstinence gives men power over wild beasts."  
Saying 36 Sayings of the Desert Fathers*

*Commentary:* We might incline first to think here of accounts of St. Gerasim and the lion or St. Seraphim and the bear, but the first wild beast to be tamed is ourselves. Our self will, our insistence on doing what seems best to us, what makes sense to us, what pleases us, is cut off by obedience to God and to the proper authorities He has placed in the life of each person.

In the desert, a monk submitted to his elder and to his brother monks. As Anthony puts it in the next two sayings, many monks fall away because of spiritual pride in trusting in their own works and not consulting with their spiritual father. Likewise, a monk should be able to tell his elders "how many steps he takes and how many drops of water he drinks in his cell, in case he is in error about it."

In the monastery, a monk submits to the abbot and to the monastery's particular way of life set by its *Typicon* (there is a saying that you do not bring your

own *Typicon* with you to another place). He presumes to do nothing without the blessing of his Abbot.

In the world, in the parish, we employ obedience, but it normally takes different forms from that in the monastery. Instead of getting a blessing for everything from a priest, we cut off self will by submitting to those God has put into our lives: the governing authorities, our parents, our teachers, our employer, our husband, our wife, our family, our bishop and priest, our local parish and its way of doing things, our Father-confessor, and the Church in general.

When we are young, our most important relationship is with our parents, and we should know that God never blesses disobedience or disrespect to them. One of the most important tasks of parents is to train their children in willing, humble obedience.

As adults, we cut off self will by obeying our boss at work. In the family, the wife submits to the husband; failure to do this can sabotage her marriage. Many marriages are damaged by the wife usurping her husband's headship and trying to correct him, repair him, lead him, and guide him. The husband also has to submit to his condition of being married and the responsibilities it requires of him. He must submit to God's command to love his wife as Christ loves the Church, command which demands right actions, not feelings. He can no longer live for himself first, but for his wife and children and what is best for them.

In the parish, we follow the guidance of our Confessor, our Priest, and our Bishop. They are not there to run every aspect of our lives, but they are there to care for our souls. As Paul writes, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you." (Hebrews 13:17) The obedience here is limited and specific, having to do with the services, parish life in general, and whatever is said to us in Confession. When we constantly resist the priest or our bishop and disregard their spiritual guidance, we lose an opportunity to tame the wild beast in us. Obedience freely chosen frees us from slavery to our whims and having to have it our way.

One note of caution must be sounded here. A parish priest is not an abbot and is rarely an elder. The obedience rendered to the priest is not comprehensive as is the obedience a monk renders his abbot. It happens occasionally that those who live in the world, inspired by monastic literature and feeling the need for intensive guidance, will try to get their priest to run their lives as a abbot does; sometimes it is a priest who goes beyond proper bounds in trying to be a 'spiritual father' to his flock. While a monk in a strict monastery may need a blessing to do anything, it is not so in the parish. By virtue of being married, for example, we have a general blessing to do everything needed to care for our families and spouses: we don't need to get a blessing from a priest every time we wish to go to the

grocery store, to change homeschooling curriculum, or to buy a car. We may request our priest's counsel in the significant decisions of our lives, but he is not there to make those decisions for us.

Obedience is to be supplemented with abstinence, which is another way of saying 'fasting.' Fasting is necessary to subject the body to the soul, so that the body does not tyrannize the soul through addiction to pleasure and the ensuing misuse of the good things God has given us. Instead of eating what we want (what will taste good to us at the moment), we limit our freedom by eating only fast-worthy foods; instead of eating when we want, we wait until the appointed time to eat, and then we eat a due measure avoiding excess. In fasting this way, we daily teach the body to be subject to the soul which rationally provides what the body needs for health and strength without letting the body enslave the soul to serve its desires.

Fasting is especially important in our time of general abundance, when, thanks to the global economy, we can eat just about anything we want all year long. We readily become accustomed to indulging our desires and whims for particular foods and tastes, having such abundance readily available and the means to purchase what we want. Few of us have the experience of having to 'tighten our belts' due to not having enough to eat or of eating the same two or three basic foods at every meal for a month at a time. The relative weakness of our faith in our time is due in large part to abundance and ease of life and our indulging our bodies.

While the monk abstains completely from sexual pleasure, this abstinence is also practiced by those who are married. The marriage bed is undefiled, and in marriage, the physical union between man and woman is blessed. But this relation is not the primary end or good of marriage, and not everything that can be done with two bodies is something worthy of people made in God's image. Thus, both what we do sexually and how often we do it are governed by God's purposes for us. We must learn to use these things correctly. As St. Maximus says, "He, therefore, who seeks in [sexual intercourse] only sensual pleasure uses it wrongly, for he reckons as good what is not good. When such a man has intercourse with a woman, he misuses her." The emphasis in the saint's words is on the "only". With the advent of contraception and legal abortion and the growing acceptance of unnatural relations, sensual pleasure has become the primary end for most and the only end for some.

Through obedience and fasting, the wild beast that is the man untamed by Christ's yoke gains power to govern himself and not live as a slave to passions and sins. Freedom in any meaningful sense is this ability gained to govern oneself so that one may carry out Christ's commandments. Self-government of this sort is not only essential to Christian life, it is also the only firm basis for freedom in society. If we fail to govern ourselves, a stronger authority will be needed to force us to keep in our place.

Having gained power over ourselves by obedience with abstinence, we may also have power over other wild men. The man in his right mind submitted to Christ has a power and authority that will also influence others. It is impossible to teach another with authority what one has not been able to accomplish for oneself. Those who teach the correct things without having acquired for themselves the practice of what they teach will not speak with the authority and wisdom needed to tame the wild beast in others. Those, whoever, who teach what they themselves have acquired in deed and practice will have great power to instruct others. May God give us all power over the wild beast within by obedience with abstinence. *Fr. Justin Frederick*

### **Please Read the Following Articles**

The following brief articles touch on various aspects of parish practice. Please read them, even if you think you know these things, and make sure that you are understanding and following our received practices.

### **Offerings of Temple Wine and Oil**

Olive oil is burned in the lampadas throughout the church and is also used for anointing at baptisms, at vigils, and at Unction. Altar Wine is used at the Divine Liturgy after Communion and at Litas, where it is blessed and consumed by the faithful. Both are Biblical symbols of the Holy Spirit.

In the Early Church, the faithful brought their offerings of bread, oil, wine, food, etc., to the temple, where the best was chosen by the deacons for use in the temple and the rest went to support the clergy and those in need.

In our time, these offerings may still be brought. Typically they are offered for the living in thanksgiving for God's blessings, on namedays, birthdays, for safe travel, healing in illness, general health & salvation, on an anniversary, for graduation, job seeking, special need, help in time of trouble, in honor of a saint, a special event. They may be offered for the departed for their blessed repose and eternal memory.

Offerings may be made for the benefit of Orthodox and non-Orthodox alike. The name of the those for whom the offering is made will be published in the bulletin for others to join you in prayer.

You may bring olive oil in any size for an offering, or a bottle of port wine. If you prefer to make a cash offering, an offering of olive oil is \$5; an offering of altar wine \$10. If you would like to make an offering of chalice wine, please see Fr. Justin.

An offering sheet for this purpose may be found on the candle table. Fill it out completely, including circling whether you offer wine or oil, and place it in the offering basket on the candle basket.

### **Commemorations at Proskomide**

Many of you fill out the commemoration sheets with the names of those you wish to be remembered before the Lord at the Proskomide (the Liturgy of Preparation) of the Divine Liturgy. The particles taken for those names after Communion are immersed in the chalice with the prayer "Wash away, O Lord, the sins of all those commemorated here, by Thy precious blood." This is a way in which we may pray for others and offer them to God.

Ideally, each person would have a commemoration book to put in the basket each week and to use at home to pray for the people inscribed therein. Ideally, commemorations would be submitted at Vigil the night before the Liturgy. We offer the commemoration sheets for those who don't have commemoration books.

To do this more efficiently, please observe the following guidelines.

1. Please use the baptismal name of each Orthodox Christian you wish to have commemorated: Anthony, not Collin or Tony; Katherine, not Kate, etc.
2. There is no need to include last names or additional details about a person (sick, pregnant, etc.) The Lord knows.
3. Monks and nuns should be recorded on the sheet as "Monk James" or "Nun Mary" or "Priestmonk Patrick".
4. Priests, Deacons, and Bishops should be recorded as "Priest John" (or Archpriest, etc., if you know), "Deacon Thomas", "Bishop Peter", "Archbishop Paul", "Metropolitan Tikhon", etc.
5. Please do not use "Fr. X" or "Matushka Y". Priest's wives do not need a title, just their baptismal name. "Father" is ambiguous as it could equally refer to a priest or a simple monk.
6. Please do not write, "The Smith Family"; rather write all the baptismal names. The priest commemorates people individually.
7. Please write neatly and not too small. That facilitates the reading of many names by the priest in a timely manner.
8. Non-Orthodox are to be indicated by an "n.o." in front of the name or placed in the non-Orthodox section. They are commemorated differently.
9. Lastly, be sure to include your monetary offering. At some times and in some places, people would have brought actual bread for this offering baked at home. Since we normally have trained, designated bakers, in place of bringing our own bread, we make a monetary offering. A dollar is the suggested offering. As it is a biblical principle not to offer to the Lord that which costs us nothing, we should be careful to make the offering for the commemoration. Parents should be attentive to this if their children are putting commemoration books or sheets into the basket.

Thank you for your cooperation in this. It will help the priest to commemorate your list with greater joy.

### Confession Mechanics

When we come for Confession, we place ourselves before the icon of Christ and the Cross; we cross ourselves and bow twice, kiss the cross and the icon, and then cross ourselves and bow a third time.

When our Confession is done and the Prayer of Absolution has been read, we again cross ourselves and bow twice, kiss the Cross and icon, and cross and bow a third time. We then turn, bow to the priest, and ask his blessing by holding out our hands in the form a cross, right over left, and then kiss the priest's hand when he finishes giving his blessing.

During Confession, we do not use other people's names. We may speak of our husband, our wife, our third child, our mother, our father, our friend, but we generally avoid using the names of others. This helps keep us focused on our sin and from speaking unnecessarily about others in our confession.

Confessions are normally scheduled to be heard after Vespers and Vigil in the evenings, and after Matins in the

morning. You may also make an appointment if these open times do not accommodate you. The priest does not normally hear Confessions before Divine Liturgy. You are expected to make the effort to come prior to that. Only in special, limited circumstances may a Confession be heard before Liturgy—except the Russian Liturgy the first Saturday of the month, when it is open Confession for Russian speakers.

When we come to confession, we come ready to name our sins as specifically as we can. Most of us would do best to have a list of things written down, which we have prepared beforehand to confess. We name our sins, our faults, our failures to love God with all our heart, our neighbor as ourself, our wives as Christ loved His Church. Any 'story' needed to give the context of the sin should be only what is needed to make the nature of the sin clear and not a long-drawn out detailed account. On the other hand, a bare list of sins is not really adequate. We name them, but should also give some indication of the context, the frequency, the seriousness of the offence. The inadvertent bringing home of a pen from work and a deliberate shoplifting are both theft, but should be distinguished in Confession. The confessor will ask for clarification if you are too vague or brief, but he may also have to ask you to get to the point if you are long-winded.

Longwindedness becomes particularly important as the parish grows and more people are needing to come to Confession. If you do due diligence and come prepared, the confession line can be kept moving for the benefit of all.

### Memorial Divine Liturgies

While every Saturday during the year is a day to remember the departed, several Saturdays each year are specially appointed for this purpose, when Vespers, Matins, and the Divine Liturgy focus on prayers and readings for the departed. One of those Saturdays is Demetrios Saturday, the Saturday after the Feast of the Great Martyr Demetrios of Thessalonica, this year falling on October 22.

But the Church does not limit services in memory of the departed to Saturday only. It is possible to serve a service any day of the week except for Sunday in their memory.

At St. Maximus, we have developed the custom of offering the Divine Liturgy for the departed at weekday Liturgies when there is a simple commemoration, the most basic, least festive level. That is a Liturgy at which no verses are appointed to be sung at the Beatitudes, and the Daily Antiphons are sung in place of the Typical Antiphons. Hence, at weekday Liturgies with simple commemorations, we add the appointed elements for commemorating the departed. These elements include a prokeimenon, an alleluia, an Epistle reading, a Gospel reading, and the Litany for the departed at which the names of departed faithful associated with our parish are read. The Kontakion for the departed, "With the saints give rest..." is also sung.

By this means, we pray more regularly for the departed in our parish, and we who may be new to this practice of the Church are given opportunity to be acquainted with it.

### 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!