

The Confessor's Tongue for October 23, A. D. 2022

19th Sunday After Pentecost; St. James, Brother of the Lord

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.

A Short Homily on Forgiveness

St. Mark the Ascetic

He who seeks forgiveness of his sins loves humility, but if he condemns another he seals his own wickedness. So, when you first become involved in something evil, do not say, 'It will not overpower me.' For to the extent that you are involved, you have already been overpowered by it. Again, if you do not want to suffer evil, do not inflict it, since the suffering of it inevitably follows its infliction. 'For whatsoever a man soweth, that also shall he reap (Galatians 6:7).

It is a great virtue to accept patiently whatever comes, and, as the Lord enjoins, to love a neighbor who hates you. Indeed, it is better to pray devoutly for your neighbor than to rebuke him every time he sins.' Now, the sign of sincere love is to forgive wrongs done to us. It was with such love that the Lord loved the world. Remember that we cannot with all our heart forgive someone who does us wrong unless we possess real knowledge. For this knowledge shows us that we deserve all we experience.

When harmed, insulted, or persecuted by someone, do not think of the present but wait for the future, and you will find he has brought you much good, not only in this life but also in the life to come. So, accept present afflictions for the sake of future blessings; then you will never weaken in your struggle. But again, pray that temptation may not come to you; but when it comes, accept it as your due and not undeserved. For he who suffers wrong and does not demand any reparation from the man who wronged him, trust in Christ to make good the loss; and he is rewarded a hundredfold in this world and inherits eternal life. As for the sinner, he cannot escape retribution except through repentance appropriate to his offense.

The Commandments of Christ

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

Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again. Luke 6:38

When we hear of "the economy", we think of money, gross national product, interest rates, employment, industrial production, trade, the stock market, and the like. For us, the economy is inextricably connected with money.

This was not always so. Years ago, most schools had course in "Home Economics" in which pupils would learn things such as sewing and baking. Distinct from the money economy, this was the household economy of the family, in which the members of the family worked to provide for one another's needs without the exchange of money. There is also a barter economy in which goods and

services are exchanged between acquaintances or strangers directly without money. The barter economy is how we may describe the natural exchange between family, relatives, friends, and neighbors. When one person needs help, the others come to his aid; and when the others have need, the first returns the assistance. No one keeps a strict tally, but each has a sense of duty and mutual obligation to help his neighbors. It is just part of the economy of caring for family, friends, and neighbors as people pass through this life.

Indeed, the Greek words from which our "economia" derives are *oikos*, "house" and "*nomia*" which is related to *nomos*, 'law', and *nemein* 'to distribute and becomes the suffix '-nomy' in English found in words such as "astronomy" and "taxonomy" used to indicate a science or the laws governing a certain field of knowledge. Hence "economy" means the laws or knowledge that govern the running of and provision for a household and the family and servants it contains. It is translated as "stewardship" or "dispensation" in the KJV New Testament. Theologically, it is used to describe God's action through the Son's taking human flesh and becoming man to effect the salvation of man. If the conception of "house" is extended to the nation state, it becomes clear why "economy" comes to mean the whole activity of production and the exchange of goods and services.

Christ's command well describes the economy of the Kingdom of God. "Give, and it will be given to you." Christians address their requests to God and desire Him to meet their needs. They desire joy, or peace, or comfort, or material provision. It is proper to bring requests for these things to God. Yet Christ's words here indicate that if the Christian wishes to receive, he may first have to give. God provided food for the woman of Zarephath and her son through the Prophet Elijah, but only after first gave the last of her food to feed him. Christ fed the five thousand in the wilderness after the boy who had the five barley loaves and two small fish surrendered them to Jesus. Christians expect God to provide for them, but this provision is promised if they will seek first His Kingdom and righteousness. This principle also relates to tithing: the Christian gives the first part, not the leftovers, of his income back to God in thanksgiving as part of his worship, and God gives back a blessing on the rest. It may be applied to almsgiving: I have a need, but I have the means to meet someone else's need, so I give for that purpose, trusting God to meet my need. It applies to prayer. As one of the Desert Fathers says, if you want your prayers for your own needs to be speedily heard and answered, first pray fervently for your enemies.

On second thought, giving so that we may receive is not so different from the economy as we generally

conceive of it. A man wishes to start a business. Before he can have sales and revenue, he must create something to offer for sale. To achieve this, he must generally spend money in acquiring the tools, labor, and raw materials he needs to produce his product. This expenditure is the initial investment. If he invests well and produces a product others desire, he will be able to sell it and gain revenue. The biblical sequence holds here: in order to receive (have sales), one must first give (invest). The same is true for a worker. If he wishes to receive a paycheck, he must first give his labor.

“Give, and it will be given unto you.” This is the economy of the Kingdom of God. Invest something in your neighbor, in the needs of another, especially in one who cannot repay you, and Christ promises it will be given to you, that you will receive from God what you need directly or through others. Christ indicates that how we give will determine how it is given unto us. If we measure out in short measure with stinginess, it will be measured back to us in similar fashion. But if we measure out to others with generosity, so it will come back to us. May God grant us faith to give so it may be given unto us. *Fr. Justin*

The Sayings of St. Anthony the Great 37

Abba Anthony said, “Nine monks fell away after many labors and were obsessed with spiritual pride, for they put their trust in their own works and, being deceived, they did not give due heed to the commandment that says, ‘Ask your father, and he will tell you.’” (Deuteronomy 32:7)

Saying 37 Sayings of the Desert Fathers

Commentary: It is often said that it is the condition in which Christ finds us at our death or at His return that will determine our eternal destiny. The best beginning to life in Christ will avail us nothing if we do not end well. Here Anthony speaks of nine monks who labored long and hard in prayer, fasting, vigils, poverty, almsgiving, labor and so on. Yet they fell away, and unless they later repented before the end, it was that state of fallenness that determined their destiny, not all their prior struggle and virtues. For this reason, at ever service in the Church, we pray for a Christian end to our lives and that we may end our life in repentance. Christian life begins with repentance, but unless it also ends in repentance, it will fall short of Christ.

Pride was the sin that brought about the fall of these zealous monks. Solomon writes in the Proverbs, “Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.” Pride is a luxury we cannot afford, for it will always bring us down. These monks looked at their lives and works, probably compared themselves to others who weren’t doing as much, were deceived into thinking that they were better than they were, and began to trust in themselves and their own virtue.

Anthony explains in what form their pride manifested itself: they did not follow the commandment to “Ask your father, and he will tell you.” Monks from early on have understood this to

mean that they cut off their self will by submitting to an abbot or an elder, and they do nothing without his blessing and they open their thoughts fully to him and hide nothing. These nine monks after considerable monastic experience had neglected to submit themselves fully to their abba. Perhaps it was small, seemingly insignificant matters that they did not ask him about at first, but as they neglected the command in little things, their neglect grew and with it the pride and self will that overthrew them.

The great nineteenth century abbot of Optina Monastery, St. Moses, had little tolerance for self-will in his monks. He expected them to ask for a blessing for everything they did and to do nothing on their own, knowing that self-will indulged would allow vainglory to grow in the soul and damage it.

“For example, Father Moses noticed on one occasion that the steward was giving certain direction on his own without asking Father Moses’s blessing, though he continued to come to the Superior daily for instructions. Without saying a word to him about this, the Father Archimandrite looked for an occasion to expose him in the normal course of events. While making the rounds of the monastery, he saw the steward, called him over, and asked, ‘There was a pile of trash lying over there, but I don’t see it any more—where did it go?’ ‘Oh, that—I told them to get rid of it, Batushka.’ ‘Why didn’t you ask me?—I had something in mind for that trash. You’re always doing things on your won without a blessing. You should ask before you do anything.’ And he went on so long about this insignificant pile of trash that it was brought home to the steward that the Superior kept track of everything, even though hi might not say anything. And from then on, the steward was careful to refrain from doing things on his own....

We may not be under obedience to an elder as monks are, but we have our parents, our husbands, our wives, our employers, our teachers, our clergy who serve in limited ways a similar role. Neglecting to get counsel from the wise people God has put in our lives and failing to submit to our authorities (parents, spouse, etc.) is always a recipe for spiritual disaster. *Fr. Justin Frederick*

Sayings of the Desert Fathers

Abba John the Dwarf prayed God to take his passions away from him so that he might become free from care. He went and told an old man this: ‘I find myself in peace, without an enemy,’ he said. The old man said to him, ‘Go, beseech God to stir up warfare so that you may regain the affliction and humility that you used to have, for it is by warfare that we make progress.’ So he besought God, and when war-fare came, he no longer prayed that it might be taken away, but said, ‘Lord, give me strength for the fight.’

Upcoming Events 2022

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!