

The Confessor's Tongue for December 25, A. D. 2022

28th Sunday After Pentecost; Nativity of Our Lord in the Flesh: Christ is born!

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.

December 25: Nativity of Our Lord in the Flesh

We celebrate the Feast of our Lord's incarnation by greeting each other with the greeting, "Christ is born!" and the response, "Glorify Him!". We do not fast again until January 5, the Eve of Theophany. We sing the troparion (before) and kontakion (after) of the Feast in place of our usual prayers before and after meals through the Leavetaking December 31.

Nativity, Troparion, tone 4

Thy Nativity, O Christ our God / hath shone upon the world the light of wisdom. / For by it, those who worshipped the stars / were taught by a star to adore Thee, / the Sun of Righteousness, / and to know Thee, the Orient from on high. // O Lord, glory to Thee!

Nativity, Kontakion, tone 3

Today the Virgin giveth birth to the Transcendent One, / and the earth offereth a cave to the Unapproachable One! / Angels with Shepherds glorify Him! / The wise men journey with the star: // since for our sake the eternal God was born as a little child!

God Has Entered the Bosom of Human Life

St. Justin of Chelije

Christ is Born!

Truly, God has been born as Man, on earth! Why? – "That we might live through Him" (I John 4: 9). For without the Incarnate God, the God-Man Lord Jesus Christ, human life is overall, a completely suicidal absurdity; death is truly the most obvious and awful absurdity on earth. To comprehend death is to comprehend life - all of the height and depth, the boundless eternity, of life. This is something accomplished only by the All-man-loving Lord, Who in His immeasurable love becomes man, while ever remaining God Incarnate, God-Man in the world of man. Human life acquires its eternal meaning, its purpose, as Divine-life, life in God. Outside of God, life is absurd and utter nonsense, filled to overflowing with offense and bitterness. Only in God, O man, does your life find its sole rational, logical meaning. And your intelligence, my brother, your human thought, finds its Divine and eternal meaning only in God, only as Divine-intelligence. It is only in the God-Man Lord Jesus Christ that Human thought becomes Divine intelligence. Likewise, only in God do your senses, O man, find their Divine, eternal purpose. Lacking that, your senses are but your most merciless torturer, constantly crucifying you on an eternal cross, with no resurrection to follow. And your conscience? Where do we people find this savage stranger? It is only through Divine-conscience that it unites itself with its divine, eternal, purpose. Without it, human conscience is also a savage and terrible

absurdity. And your death and mine, everyone's death overall: in all of Creation, is it not the cruelest torture within human existence? Yes, that is truly so. Yet even it achieves its eternal meaning and purpose only through the death and Resurrection of the God-Man, our Lord Jesus Christ, for through Him, through Him alone, is the victory over death accomplished, and does death in the human world have meaning. Likewise, it is only as the good and grace-filled God-Man, in the worshipping and all-quickening Body of Christ the Incarnate God – the Church - that all mankind, all humanity in its infinite variety, discovers its Divine, eternal, Godly and human higher meaning.

With His Incarnation, becoming Man, God entered most patently entered into the womb, the bosom of human life, entered into the blood, the heart, and the center of all existence. Through His Incarnation, by becoming Man, God, Whom man had voluntarily crowded out of the human world, out of the human soul, comes back into the world, into the body, into the soul. He becomes fully Man, and being Him, labors for man, makes his abode in the world, in the midst of His Creation; He saves Creation, exercises His Providence over Creation, sanctifies and saves Creation, transfigures and deifies Creation. God's Incarnation is the greatest, most staggering, and most providential event to have occurred either on earth or in Heaven, for in [the Incarnation] the miracle of miracles is accomplished. If, to date, the greatest miracle had been the creation of the world out of nothing, God's Incarnation as Man surely surpasses it as a miracle. If in the creation of the world, God's words were transformed into matter, in the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, God Himself took on a body and became matter, became flesh. Thus God's Incarnation became providential for each individual, for each creature throughout all Creation.

As for you: live in Him, live in God-Man, and you will be healed of all deaths, sins, passions, and of every work of the devil. Let your life become Divine-life. In that, O man, as soon as you become a member of the Church, a member of the Divine-human Body of Christ, rests all of the Mystery of Heaven on earth: And how does one live in the Church of Christ? Live by the Holy Mysteries and the Holy Virtues. This is why the Feast of the Nativity is preceded by a Fast. Fasting is the first among the virtues, and is always accompanied by prayer. Those two fundamental virtues lead man to God-Man, and through Divine Wisdom teach him how to live by Him and in Him. And what is to be done with the body given you by God? – Purify it, free it from all uncleanness, from all passion, from all evil, from every demon. What does that mean? It means to purify it of every sin, for the devil hides in any sin, in every sin the devil works without regard to your free will. In great sins, it is

prince of demons, in little sins, a little demon. You and I and everyone else, have been given all of the resources with which to defeat all of those demons, all of the passions, all of the sins, all of the deaths in us and in the world around us. First and foremost among those resources are prayer and fasting. From the truthful lips of the Lord Jesus Christ, who always speaks the real Truth, [we hear] the life-giving truth: "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." (Matthew 17: 21),- "this kind" of all manner of sins, all manner of passions, all manner of demons.

Lying before you and me, before all of us, brothers and sisters, is the Nativity: God is born as a person "so that we might receive life through Him" and so that through God we might perfect both soul and body. That is something easiest to achieve through prayer and fasting, which cleanse and purify both body and soul, so that the sweetest Divine Infant, our Lord Jesus, might joyously come to dwell in them, and that by God our human essence, in all its infinite variety might be fulfilled and perfected. For that was why your body and your soul, O man, were created, so that they might be fulfilled through God and [you] might live in God in God's kingdom above. Our God-given teachers in this matter are humble prayer and fasting with humility. They are sacred and fundamental virtues [found in the] Gospels. May they soar with us, may they anticipate and proclaim to us and to all people throughout Creation the all-salvific and all-joyous Good News: Christ is born! *The Nativity of Christ, 1970*

The Commandments of Christ

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

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Matthew 6:19-21

What are treasures? Treasures are those things we value and to which we are attached. "I treasure this ring," we say, which indicates our attachment to it. What constitutes treasure, then, will differ from person to person. Gold, silver, jewels are the stuff of our childhood notions of buried treasure, and some store up such treasures for themselves. Treasures can also take the form of clothing, exotic and fine foods, fast cars, technological gadgets, computers, and experiences of travel, sporting events, concerts, dining out, sex. Some people treasure gaining power over others and getting things done in this world or having leisure and free time to spend as they please. For others, treasure may be found in people, in family, friends, and children. Still others treasure praise, popularity, and attention from others. Then there are those whose treasure is found in obedience to God and carrying out His work on earth.

Treasures are of two types: those stored up on

earth, and those stored up in heaven.

Earthly treasures are subject to being taken from us through moth, rust, and thieves. Think about that sports car that was so impressive twenty years ago. Chances are, it quietly rusts away now in a junkyard. Moths eat clothes. They also lay eggs, and the hatched larva will infest and eat man's stored food. Other things decay. Our treasured computers decay quickly, their life-spans are short, and when they no longer serve us, they create a problem of toxic waste management. Our houses age, foundations shift, wood rots or is eaten by termites, bricks crumble, adhesives no longer adhere, roofs leak. That outfit that was so fashionable (and expensive) now hangs unworn in the closet, and even if the moths haven't eaten it yet, the moths of the fickle fashion gods have consumed its appeal and rendered it worthless. And things that do not readily tarnish, rust, or rot such as precious metals, precious stones, and land are still threatened by thieves and governments and unstable markets. Family members and friends are ultimately stolen from us by the thief Death. Even if we manage to hold on to our earthly treasures throughout our life, Death will still come for us, depriving us of all our treasures for good.

Heavenly treasures have the advantage that they do not rust, moths do not eat them, and no thieves can steal them. The investment is perfectly secure, and it pays dividends for eternity.

How do we store up earthly treasure? We think of our time, our energy, and our money as our own, and we use these God-given resources as we please, usually without asking His blessing or His guidance in our use of them. Or we may recognize our duty to God, but once we think we have discharged it, we claim the rest for ourselves ("I paid my tithe, the rest is mine!" or "I went to church on Sunday, the rest of the week is mine!").

How do we store up heavenly treasures? We begin by remembering that God will reward each man according to his works, and so we pursue those things we know are pleasing to God. Thus we invest our time, money, and energy in the work of God on earth. It is said that every penny given to a beggar is a deposit in our heavenly treasury. So is every good deed done for Christ's sake (rather than for the praise of men). To store up treasure in heaven means we live our lives in accordance with Christ's commandments. We make prayer a priority. We study the Scriptures to know God's will. We participate in our local parish and support it. We invest in ministries doing God's work of preaching the Gospel and serving those in need. We live frugally so that we always have something we may give beyond or basic tithe to those in need. We spend our time not in selfish pleasures that isolate ourselves from others, but we invest time in their lives to help them live more fully in Christ. We take time to instruct our children in the Faith and in training them in godliness. We share our energy and resources in helping those God puts in our lives—all for Christ's sake and in obedience to His commands, seeking to please Him, to do His will, and to further His work on earth.

May we all make more abundant deposits in the heavenly treasury this year and for the rest of our lives. *Fr. Justin Frederick*

Upcoming Events 2022

31 December New Year's Eve Vigil at 7:00 p.m.
1 January Feast of St. Basil, Circumcision of Christ

GLORY BE TO GOD FOR ALL THINGS!