

The Confessor's Tongue for January 29, A. D. 2023

33rd Sunday After Pentecost; Zachaeus Sunday; St. Ignatius of Antioch

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.

The Commandments of Christ

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

"This do in remembrance of me." Luke 22:19

Then Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.' John 6:53

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.' Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. And He said to them, 'This is My blood...'

Mark 14:23-24

Instituted by Christ for His Church, the Holy Eucharist is not a peripheral or optional part of our Faith. It is not an ancient rite maintained for sake of nostalgia. It is not a simple remembrance of what Christ has done for us, nor is it a mere symbol of Christian unity as we all partake of one loaf and one cup.

Christ's own words do not allow us to treat the Eucharist with such indifference or condescension. According to Christ, if we do not eat His flesh and drink His blood, we have no life in us. O, we may be physically alive, but at St. Justin of Chelije has expressed it, man without Christ is but a "walking corpse" who has an appearance of life but not the essence. Though there are other sources of grace, the Eucharist is the unique impartation of life to us by Christ's Body and Blood. The Early Church understood the uniqueness of the Eucharist by referring to it as the "medicine of immortality." Christ identifies His Body and Blood with the bread and wine He blessed and then offered to His disciples before His crucifixion, commanding them to "do this in remembrance of Me."

Our partaking of the Eucharist is the heart of our relationship with Christ. With it, we have life; without it, we lack His life. Excommunication is to be cut off from the life of Christ. We excommunicate ourselves when we neglect the Eucharist, cannot be bothered to come on time to church and do not prepare ourselves to partake, or simply do not bother to come. According to the canons, if we absent ourselves from the Divine Liturgy for three consecutive weeks without a good cause, we have excommunicated ourselves. Serious sin also prevents us from receiving Holy Communion until we have effected a good repentance. To go to Confession and to hear that one may not partaker of the Mysteries is not the arbitrary action of the priest to punish you, but is a simple declaration of the reality you have already embraced by choosing sin. In declaring your condition to you and the consequences of your actions, the priest serves as God's messenger to call you to repentance, cleansing, and restoration to fellowship in the Mysteries. Being severed from the Eucharist by choice or by sin is to be cut off from life; it is to abide in spiritual death.

The Eucharist is communal in nature. We gather together to celebrate it, and it cannot be celebrated by the priest alone. It is not something we can do privately in our homes; it is not something we can have without direct connection to the Church. There is no substitute in Bible reading, prayer, or good works or anything else for the Eucharist. Hence we cannot be Christians without attending Church and partaking of the Holy Mysteries!

The Eucharist is festal in nature. It is a 'giving of thanks' as we remember all that God in Christ through the Spirit has done for us and continues to do. It is taking time away from the demands of life in this world to remember and honor the One who made us and restores us to life through the sacrifice of His Body and Blood. The festal nature of the Liturgy is the reason it is not celebrated on weekdays of Great Lent.

Great is the good gift offered to us in the Eucharist, and great is our error and fault when we disdain it as something optional for spiritual life or when we are too lazy to attend the Liturgy regularly, or when do not make the effort to prepare ourselves to partake regularly through Confession, Prayer, and Fasting. Here is the medicine for what ails us, if we will come with faith and love to partake of our Master's good gifts. With this understanding of the Eucharist, how can we allow ourselves to be content with partaking infrequently? And how shall we answer Christ as to why we neglected the provision He made for us at great cost to Himself? *Fr. Justin Frederick*

The Philosophy and Religion of F.M. Dostoevsky *St. Justin of Chelije*

Dedicated to the intrepid Confessor of Orthodoxy, the Christ-inspired Great Martyr, His Holiness Tikhon, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia

This is the introduction to St. Justin's doctoral thesis at Oxford University, which was not accepted for a degree, because he refused to make certain changes in his critical assessments that his professors desired.

Introduction

Dostoevsky was not always modern, but always co-eternal. He is co-eternal when he reflects on a person, when he struggles with the problem of man, because he passionately rushes into his immeasurable depths and persistently searches for everything that is immortal and eternal in him; he is co-eternal when he solves the problem of evil and good, because he is not satisfied with a superficial, shallow solution, but is looking for an essential solution that explains the eternal, metaphysical essence of the problem; he is co-eternal when he is wise about the creature, about every creature, because he descends to the roots by which the creature is invisibly shortened in the depths of eternity; he is co-eternal when he is frantically struggling with the problem of suffering, when he passes through history with a restless soul and experiences its tragedy, because he stops not at the shaky human solution of problems, but at the eternal, divine, absolute; he is co-eternal when he explores the meaning of history in a martyr's way, when he wades through its meaningless chaos, because he rejects any temporary, transitory meaning of history, and accepts what is immortal, eternal, and God-human. For him, the Godman is the meaning and purpose of history; but not the all-man, made up of the echoes of all religions, rather the all-man, that is, the Godman.

The final solution to any problem cannot but depend on the ultimate, absolute purpose and meaning of the story. Any, even the smallest, problem, with its vital, inner nerve, goes into eternal problems, weaves itself into them, because every creature and every being are reflected in infinity, in eternity, by the secret of their essence. The

whole universe is clothed in mystery — the whole universe and every creature. Dostoevsky feels this painfully and watches over the mystery of the world with his thousand-strong soul, watches and constantly repeats: everything is a mystery, everything is a riddle, and all secrets are in organic connection with each other. All mysteries and all mysteries constitute one indivisible organ, the heart of which is God. *In ultima linea* [at the final boundary] all mysteries, all problems, — Dostoevsky believes — are reduced to two main "eternal problems": the problem of the existence of God and the problem of the immortality of the soul. They have an incredible amount of centripetal force in themselves, with the help of which they attract all other problems to themselves, fix them for themselves and condition their solution. The solution of all other problems depends on the solution of eternal problems," Dostoevsky teaches. The solution of one eternal problem contains the solution of another. They are always in direct correlation. If there is a God, the soul is immortal; if there is no God, the soul is mortal.

The solution of these eternal problems is the main task of all the negative and positive heroes of Dostoevsky. Through this, they carry out an approach to all other problems; without this, they are unthinkable, just as Dostoevsky himself is unthinkable. "The existence of God is the main question," writes Dostoevsky to Maikov, "with which [or "with whom"] I have been tormented all my life, consciously and unconsciously."

Dostoevsky's heroes are the embodiment of this main suffering, this main question. Their vital concern, their inevitable occupation, is to solve the main, eternal question: is there a God, is there immortality? Without this, they are not possible; without this, they lose themselves. "I can't think of anything else," Kirillov admits, "I've been thinking about one thing all my life. God has tormented me all my life..." The kind, unhappy Mitya cries, sobs and passionately complains to Alyosha: "God torments me. That's the only thing that torments me."

And all the others are tormented by God; all of them are eaten away by this terrible, this eternal torment. Indirectly or directly, they all reduce their whole life to solving the problem of the existence of God and the immortality of the soul. "The search for God", according to Dostoevsky, is the goal of all — not only personal, but also popular movements — the goal of the history of mankind.

The positive or negative solution of eternal problems predetermines the whole life of a person, his entire philosophy and religion, all morality, the whole meaning of life — this is the basic conviction of Dostoevsky. The negative solution of these problems, expressed in the words: "There is no God, there is no immortality", is the essence of all the negative heroes of Dostoevsky; and the positive solution: "There is God, there is immortality" — is the essence of his positive heroes. A negative solution to eternal problems inevitably entails negative solutions to all other problems; addressed to people, to the creature, it manifests itself as nihilism. Nihilism is nothing but applied atheism. The morality of nihilism inevitably follows from the philosophy of atheism. Dostoevsky proves this in a new and vividly effective way; with his brilliant psychological analysis, he forces us to admit that nihilism is an inevitable consequence of atheism. If there is no God, if there is no immortality, then there is no virtue; in that case, everything is allowed.

A positive solution to eternal problems psychologically provides a solution to all other problems; addressed to people, to the creature, it manifests itself as love. Love is a

close feeling of God and a feeling of personal immortality. The souls of Dostoevsky's positive heroes are woven from such feelings; therefore, their whole life is a beautiful, God-woven fabric. Their hearts are filled with God and immortality; and everything that comes from them is divine and immortal. If there is a God, if there is immortality, then true love is a real possibility; without this, true love is a psychologically and ontologically impossible possibility.

Dostoevsky conducts every feeling, every thought, every movement of the soul to the extreme limits, in order to merge them with eternal problems. Dostoevsky organically connects each problem that he conducts through his rebellious spirit with eternal problems and torments himself with them until he determines their significance from the point of view of eternity. Eternity gives meaning to time; the ultimate solution to any problem and the determination of the true significance of anyone or whatever is possible only *sub speciae aeternitatis* [from the standpoint of eternity], and never *sub speciae temporis* [from a temporal standpoint].

Eternal problems are not imposed on a person, but are immanent to the human spirit. A person by nature is as physical as he is metaphysical. In fact, nothing is as metaphysical as the physical. Translated into Dostoevsky's language, it would read: "There is nothing more fantastic than actuality, than reality". The roots of any physical process always remain hidden in the metaphysical essence of the cosmos. And physics itself is basically metaphysical, because it is based on the hypothesis of "aether", which is "«ungreifbar und unbeweglich, an und für sich überhaupt nicht wahrnehmbar» (intangible and immobile and in itself generally invisible). (1 Dr. A. Schmidt. Philosophisches Wörterbuch. Leipzig, 1919 (See: "Aether").)

As a result of a multidimensional and unique psychological analysis of human nature, Dostoevsky comes to the conclusion that the idea of God is immanent to human consciousness and that human self-consciousness is essentially God-consciousness. Being an analyst of the human mind stricter than Kant, and an analyst of the human will stricter than Chopin-Gower and Nietzsche, Dostoevsky discovers that man, by his mental organization, is constantly, internally, consciously and neo-consciously, tormented by the problem of God. In any case, for Dostoevsky and his heroes, God is suffering, passionate pain, and passionate torment. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God," [Heb. 10:31 AV] and a man — already because he is a man — falls and must fall. Undoubtedly, there is something in man that is constantly striving towards God — something that cannot be shackled or completely destroyed. If the idea of God, the memory of God, were not a substantial part of human self-consciousness, the God-fighters could easily destroy it in themselves and in all humanity. The idea of God, however, is at the center of human consciousness; this is the suffering of man, this is the greatness. And without a final solution to the problem of God, without a detailed definition of his relation to God, a person is ontologically unable with finality to solve any other problem.

Dostoevsky tries to solve these eternal, these "cursed questions" in numerous ways. He brings the souls of his heroes to the fire with these questions, who burn in them, suffering terribly. For them, God is not only an idea, but also a passion — a fire, a bitter or sweet passion. God may be an anemic idea for parched minds, but for Dostoevsky's heroes He is a physical and spiritual passion: they either fight God to the point of blood, or are dedicated to God. God for them — this is not a collection of texts that can be

read and studied, this is the Living God Who must live, this is suffering that must be suffered, this is pain that must be endured. They reduce the idea of God to passion, cultivate it, baptize it in blood; God torments them; they are sick with the problem of God, and their disease is transmitted to others. Anyone reading Dostoevsky can feel it. Their whole personality strongly demands an urgent solution to the cursed problem; and they are convulsively, ecstatically struggling to solve it — positively or negatively.

The psychological analysis of Dostoevsky's heroes allows us to divide them into two categories, into two groups. The first group consists of negative heroes - "antiheroes", who solve the eternal problem negatively or are inclined to a negative solution. The second group consists of positive heroes who solve this problem positively. The first are mortalists — because for them God does not exist, immortality does not exist, *ergo* — the whole person is mortal, without reservation; the second are immortalists, and, for them, God exists, and the immortality of the soul exists: by the immortal side of his being man is open to eternity and is mystically connected with it. The first are theomachists [fighters against God], the second are God-lovers; both the one and the other create their own philosophy, and defend their decisions sincerely, martyrally, and strenuously. The philosophy of the first is the philosophy of atheism and religious rebellion; the philosophy of the second is the philosophy of theism and religious humility. The first commit unprecedented and unheard-of rebellions, which the history of religious rebellion has not known. And there were rebellions in the ancient world: Solomon and Job rebelled, Prometheus rebelled; their rebellions were continued by Faust and Voltaire, Manfred and Shelley, Nietzsche, and Maeterlinck. All of them, taken together, appear to be no more than deaf-mute predecessors of Dostoevsky's heroes. Beaten by the whip of life's horrors, struck by the poisonous tragedy of the world, Dostoevsky's antiheroes commit rebellions, the accomplishment of which the supreme spirit of evil and destruction would accept for itself with joyful pride. Yes, and if he himself taught the philosophy of atheism, then he would not have been more terrifying and more rebellious than they. Faust's Mephistopheles is well-versed in atheism when his pupil is given a lesson on the philosophy of atheism; but the same Mephistopheles, without humiliating his dignity at all, could humbly listen to lectures on atheism from the "yellow-mouthed" [young, inexperienced, immature] Russian student Ivan Karamazov — **in them he would find the best justification for himself, by his "devildom" [diaboloditsey, Дьяволодицея]**. In general, all the old and new philosophies of atheism in comparison with the philosophy of Dostoevsky's book, as it seems to us, are nothing but "pleasant Sunday-afternoon literature" [Fr. Justin uses English in the original]. In the vision of God, they are all schoolchildren compared to Dostoevsky.

In the philosophy of Dostoevsky's antiheroes, the mystical horror of life has found its own style, its own expression. Nietzsche has rhetoric, but they do not have it. Struck by terrible suffering, overwhelmed by the terrifying mystery of life and its laws, they forget about all knowledge, about all laws, about all prudence and throw themselves passionately, martyred at the feet of suffering humanity, bowing down to its suffering. Out of terror, they confuse all laws and all values — they cross all the boundaries set by people and nature; in them, the *Umwertung aller Werte* [revaluation of all values] is truly

accomplished. They do not reconcile with suffering; for them, it is the greatest refutation of God. Our pathetic planet is mired in suffering. So is a justification of God possible in the face of senseless suffering? Is there really a God behind such a terrible world? And if He exists, how can He be justified? Dostoevsky's antiheroes remain faced with the fact: suffering exists everywhere, and it is pointless, between it stands between mankind and God as a disgusting monster; his antiheroes cannot eliminate it, cannot silently bypass it, and therefore do not accept a world that "rests in the absurd." For them, this world is worse than all possible worlds (meaning, the big question is: are better worlds possible at all?); if they are to accept it, they can accept it only as a cosmogonic proof of the existence of not of God, but of the devil; they can accept the history of mankind not as a theodicy, but as a "devildom". The senseless tragedy of the world opposes God and affirms the devil, it condemns the First while defending the second.

Is there a possible answer, a satisfactory answer, to such a revolt?

Yes, it is possible, — says Dostoevsky. — There is only one possible answer, and this answer is "The Most Luminous Face of the God-Man Christ." Rebels can destroy all systems, all principles, all laws, they can call the teaching of Christ false, condemned by modern science and economic theories, but the "Most Luminous Face of the God-Man, His moral inaccessibility, His wonderful and miraculous beauty" remains indestructible. The most difficult thing to fight is not with the teaching, but with the Most Luminous Personality of Christ Himself; and it is absolutely impossible to defeat It. "Galilean, You have won!" [Emperor Julian the Apostate's last words.] — Dostoevsky feels it, Dostoevsky knows it, and therefore, as an answer to the antiheroes who have been blown up, he presents the miraculous and miraculous Face of Christ, which acts directly or indirectly, through the Christian personalities of Zosima and Alyosha, Myshkin and Makar. With their wonderful Christ-like appearance they pacify rebellious spirits, soothe overwhelmed souls, calm rebellious fears. With their whole life, with their essence, they convince[others] that God exists, immortality exists. Their wonderful power is in their faces, in which their Christ-faced souls radiate and shine. They do not prove God, but show Him. They know that it is discursively and dialectically impossible to prove the existence of God and the immortality of the soul. This requires a personal inner conviction, acquired only by the experience of active love. The magnitude and strength of the conviction in the existence of God and in immortality depends on the magnitude of this experience. The richer a person is in this experience, the richer he is in faith in God. Through the experience of active love, a person acquires real, experiential knowledge of God and real self-knowledge, i.e., he really and experimentally knows that his soul is Christlike and immortal. The experience of active love as a method of the knowledge of God and of self-knowledge is the New Testament, apostolic method, the method of Orthodox philosophy, a method that is directly opposite to the scholastic method of mechanization of the life-giving truths of Christ and the Protestant method of rationalization of the supra-rational Christian truths.

The Christ-faced heroes of Dostoevsky preserve the greatest jewel of our planet — the Face of Christ, which at the right moments they show to the shaken souls in this world. They have only Him as an intermediary between themselves and all people and creatures. With their Christ-

faced souls, they attract everything that is Christlike in human souls, and find what is sinless even in the greatest sinner. They accept the world, but they do not accept the sins of the world; they love sinners, but they do not love their sins. Mediated by Christ, this world is the best of all possible worlds; however, people have made themselves the worst of all possible people. Dostoevsky's Christ-faced heroes accept the world from the hands of the God-Man Christ, Who mysteriously and meekly overcomes the sins of the world.

The wonderful and beautiful Person of Christ is the only thing that Dostoevsky worships unconditionally. It is for him "the one thing needful." It is the fullness and reality of all that is most sublime; It is the sweetness of his life. If the Name of Christ is mentioned in the presence of Dostoevsky, he trembles all over. "As soon as I uttered the Name of Christ," says Belinsky, "his (i.e., Dostoevsky's) face immediately changed, as if he wanted to cry..." Do not dare to blaspheme Christ in his presence, if you do not want him to burst into apocalyptic anathemas and bring them down on your head. Zeal for Christ consumes him. Dostoevsky cannot live without Him. He completes every aspiration with Him. The bitter mystery of the world becomes sweet and holy in Christ. The cruel mystery of suffering, carried through Christ, gradually turns into a quiet, tender joy. Dostoevsky felt and felt it, and that's why he so unconditionally surrendered to Christ. For him, Christ is an irreplaceable, absolute and eternal Truth, which is above all logical, discursive and scientific truths and truths. His love for Christ reaches the point of ascetic love for Christ. Here is his confession: "God sometimes sends me moments in which I am perfect but calm; at these moments I love and find that we are loved by others; and at such and such moments I composed a symbol of faith, in which everything is clear and holy to me. This symbol of faith is very simple, here it is: to believe that there is nothing more beautiful, deeper, prettier, smarter, more courageous and more perfect than Christ, and not only there is not, but with jealous love I tell myself that it cannot be. Moreover, if someone proved to me that Christ is outside the truth, and it would be real that the truth is outside of Christ, then I would rather stay with Christ than with the truth."

Thanks to such an undaunted confession of faith in Christ, Dostoevsky becomes a great confessor, the most typical and original representative of Orthodoxy and Orthodox philosophy of modern times. We say "Orthodox philosophy" because it differs significantly from non-Orthodox philosophies in that, for it, the last criterion of all truths and values is the Most Luminous Personality of the God-man Christ, and not His teaching. After all, there was something similar to Christianity before Christ; there were some Christian moral principles and dogmatic positions in Judaism, there are many similar Christian maxims in Buddhism, some can also be found in Mohammedanism; however, there is something that cannot be found among them — it is impossible to find "the one thing needful". They do not have the most important thing — they do not have the Personality of the God-Man Christ. And without the Person of Christ, all the Gospels, all the epistles, all the dogmatics, all the Christian faiths become lifeless, dead formulas. The person of Christ is the only living force, wonderful and miraculous; Dostoevsky found everything in Him and stands for Him in a confessional way, in a great martyr's way, boldly and fearlessly. In Him, only in Him, he sees the solution not only to all personal, but also to all social problems. Where there is the Face of Christ, there is for Dostoevsky true progress and enlightenment, true light and joy. If you ask Dostoevsky: "Where is the Face of Christ, where is it kept?" — Dostoevsky unequivocally answers: "In Orthodoxy, only in Orthodoxy." — "And Catholicism, and Protestantism?" — "Alas,"

Dostoevsky sighs, "Catholicism has disfigured the Face of Christ, he preaches the disfigured Christ; and Protestantism has long lost it."

The Christ-faced souls of Dostoevsky's heroes jealously preserve this beautiful Face and with their lives create a theodicy [a vindication of God in the face of the problem of evil], a Christodicy. Christian personalities are the only true Orthodox philosophers; their philosophy is experienced and Christ-woven; they are the only ones capable of creating a orthodox theodicy. Through them Dostoevsky develops the highest synthesis of personality and life; in them he embodies his Christ-loving and Christ-loving soul.

Both negative and positive heroes of Dostoevsky are fearless fighters for personhood. They are martyred in search of solutions to the ancient mystery of personhood and the terrible riddle of life. They have no rest in their bodies; the horrors of life strike them. Dostoevsky carries his stormy soul through them. He embodies the boundless mystery of his personality in them; he burns their blood with the fire of eternal problems; through them he comes to his "devilism" and theodicy; through them he sets and solves the painful riddle of life. But, solving the riddle of his very complex personality, many are tempted by him. And this is not surprising, because the greatest number of people are tempted by the biggest personalities. They are truly a stumbling block and a temptation for many. The person of Christ is the most revealing example of this. Dostoevsky, however, is undoubtedly the most mysterious "x" in the very complex equation of Slavic life. To the search for the meaning of this unusual "x", we also make our own impoverished efforts. To do this, Dostoevsky himself gives us courage, for he is infinitely merciful, although terrible in his greatness. For if you are sad, he also shares your sorrow with all his heart; if you are in despair, he is your friend, your brother, twin and comforter; if you are an atheist, he himself suffers with you, is tormented by your torments, protects atheism to the surprise of everyone, undermines you with rebellion and mad desperation, so that, in the end, both of you will throw yourself at the feet of Jesus with a cry. If you are a criminal, he will graciously take you under the shelter of his long-suffering soul, make your soul his own, get over your illness with you, tell you a stunning psychological diagnosis and history of your illness and cure you, because he himself is sick and accustomed to diseases. If you are tormented and tempted by terrible "cursed questions", he will embrace you as his own, because he himself was also tempted and therefore is able to help the tempted. If you are a believer, he will multiply your faith to the point of falling in love with Christ. If you are an optimist, he will lead you to even greater, higher and highest optimism; he will convince you that the miraculous Personality of the Godman Christ is the only real, the only eternal, and the highest optimism and evangelism.

Dostoevsky does not lend himself to study without tears, without sobs and tears. To study Dostoevsky means to be tormented by his lifelong torment, to be tormented by eternal problems. Many, many of them, having lost their reason, ask the question in despair: "How long, tell me, will you torment our souls?" "Until you solve the eternal problems," his answer reads.

We dare to enter into the study of those fundamental creative psychic laws by which the negative and positive characters of Dostoevsky were created and by which it is predetermined that they create an unthinkable devil and unsurpassed Orthodox theodicy.

Whoever is infected with the cheap optimism of countless modern "happiness-givers" of humanity, let him not enter the hell of "Orthodox Dante", because in the hellish depths of his devilism, all moth-like optimism will evaporate and all plans for the transformation of the world and man on the basis of the human principles of "pure reason" and "common sense" will burn.

Fr. Justin, translation

Upcoming Events 2023

26 February: Forgiveness Sunday
27 February Beginning of Clean Week
9-15 April Holy Week

GLORY BE TO GOD FOR ALL THINGS!