

# The Confessor's Tongue for Sunday of the Paralytic, May 7, 2023

Christ is Risen! Indeed, He is Risen!

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)

*Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.. Matthew 15:13, 14 (62)*

This command of Christ is scarcely likely to come to mind in a discussion of His commands, but it retains importance for us today. But how can it be otherwise? Every word of Christ is true and remains. As He said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Mt 24:35).

"Leave them" or "leave them alone" Christ commands his disciples, who brought Him word that the Pharisees were offended that Jesus had called them hypocrites and exposed their hypocrisy. This means that that should let them do what they want and not to be troubled by them anymore. The context of this command is important, as always. Here is the full passage from Matthew 14:1-20.

Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.

But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.

Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable. And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding? Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.

The Pharisees accused Jesus's disciples of breaking their tradition of washing their hands before eating. This was not commanded in the law, but was a tradition what had been developed by their elders. Jesus accuses them of breaking God's law with their

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later tradition of excusing children from using their goods to support their elderly parents if the children had consecrated those goods to the service of the temple. They apparently could use the goods while they lived but upon death they would go to the temple. Here Jesus reminds the scribes and Pharisees that God's law supersedes their traditions and names them "hypocrites".

Jesus's words offended the Pharisees, and His disciples reported this to Him. Here He delivers the command: "Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind." The disciples are not to be governed by the Pharisees' sense of offense. They are not to engage with proud hypocrites who do not have the humility to learn.

So too for us. Many in the world declare themselves "offended" by the Truth. While we Christians are not to seek to offend others, we must know that sinners find truth offensive, and giving offense to them will be unavoidable. We are not to allow them to control us by their sense of being offended. Being offended is always a sign of pride, and pride hinders true learning. Rather, we are to let them alone; do not engage them if they show themselves unable or unwilling to learn. Our time is better spent elsewhere. *Fr. Justin*

## Virtue

Virtue is the general term that describes what human goodness and excellence is. What does it mean to be man made in the image of God? The word *virtue* itself derives from the Latin word *vir*, which means "man".

We often hear of virtues such as faith, love, humility, and chastity. We also often hear of the various vices, or sins. But as we have never done a systematic exploration of the virtue or the virtues in these pages, we shall endeavor to do so over the next weeks, so that we may better perceive what God has made us to be and what He desires us to become. The ideal they portray for us we find wholistically in the lives of the Saints and ultimately and most perfectly in Christ. Here we shall take a more analytical approach.

The list of virtues varies. Traditionally in the West, three theological virtues are listed--faith, hope, and love--and four cardinal virtues--temperance, fortitude, prudence, and justice. Today, we'll start with the Greeks and their concept of the four cardinal virtues.

## The Four Cardinal Virtues

The origin of the fourfold system is traceable to Greek philosophy; other sources are earlier, but the [Socratic](#) source is most definite. Among the reporters of [Socrates](#), Xenophon is vague on the point; [Plato](#) in "The Republic" puts together in a system the four

virtues adopted later, with modifications by St. Thomas. (In "The Laws", Bk. I, 631, Plato recurs to his division: "Wisdom is the chief and leader: next follows temperance; and from the union of these two with courage springs justice. These four virtues take precedence in the class of divine goods".)

Wishing to say what justice is, the Socratic Plato looked for it in the city-state, where he discovered four classes of men. Lowest was the producing class—the husbandmen and the craftsmen; they were the providers for the bodily needs, for the carnal appetites, which require the restraint of temperance (*sophrosune*). Next came the police or soldier class, whose needful virtue was fortitude (*andreia*) [or 'manliness'; we get the name "Andrew" from this word].

In this pair of cardinal virtues is exhibited a not very precise portion of Greek psychology, which the Scholastics have perpetuated in the division of appetites as *concupiscible* and *irascible*, the latter member having for its characteristic that it must seek its purpose by an arduous endeavour against obstacles. This is a Scholastic modification of *tò epithumetikòn* and *tò thumoeidès*, neither of which are rational faculties, while they are both amenable to reason (*metà lògou*); and it is the latter of them especially which is to help the reason, as leading faculty (*tò egemonikòn*), to subdue the *concupiscence* of the former.

This idea of leadership gives us the third cardinal virtue, called by Plato *sophia* and *philosophia*, but by Aristotle *phronesis*, the practical wisdom which is distinguished from the speculative. The fourth cardinal virtue stands outside the scheme of the other three, which exhaust the psychological trichotomy of man; *tò epiphumetikòn*, *tò thumoeidès*, *tò logikòn*. The Platonic justice of the "Republic", at least in this connexion, is the harmony between these three departments, in which each faculty discharges exactly its own proper function without interfering in the functions of the others. Obviously the senses may disturb reason; not so obviously, yet clearly, reason may disturb sense, if man tries to regulate his virtues on the principles proper to an angel without bodily appetites. In this idea of justice, viz., as concordant working of parts within the individual's own nature, the Platonic notion differs from the Scholastic, which is that justice is strictly not towards self, but towards others. Aristotle, with variations of his own, describes the four virtues which Plato had sketched; but in his "Ethics" he does not put them into one system. They are treated in his general discussion, which does not aim at a complete classification of virtues, and leaves interpreters free to give different enumerations.

The Latins, as represented by Cicero, repeated Plato and Aristotle: "Each man should so conduct himself that fortitude appear in labours and dangers: temperance in foregoing pleasures: prudence in the choice between good and evil: justice in giving every man his own. This is a departure from the idea prominent in Platonic justice, and agrees with the

Scholastic definition. It is a clearly admitted fact that in the inspiration of Holy Scripture the ministerial author may use means supplied by human wisdom. The Book of Wisdom is clearly under Hellenic influence: hence one may suppose the repetition of the four Platonic virtues to be connected with their purpose. In Wis., viii, 5, 6, 7, occur *sophia* or *phronesis*, *dikaiosune*, *sophrosune*, *andreia*. The same list appears in the apocryphal IV Maccabees, v, 22, 23, except that for *sophia* is put *e'usèbeia*. Philo compares them to the four rivers of Eden. *Catholic Encyclopedia*

### Homily on How Men Must Be as Children to Be the Sons of God

St. Nicholas of Zicha (+1956)

*"Verily I say unto you; except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matt. 18:3).*

Thus speaks the Lord, and His word is holy and true. What sort of primacy to children have over adults? They have a threefold primacy: in faith, in obedience, and in purity. Children question their parents about everything, and believe whatever reply their parents give. A child is obedient to his parents and easily subjects his will to theirs. A child is pure and, although he quickly becomes angry, he quickly forgives. The Lord demands these three things of all men: faith, obedience, and purity. He seeks that men should believe in Him unconditionally, that they should be pure in their bearing towards another, not remember evil and not returning evil for evil.

Faith, obedience, and purity are the chief characteristics of a child's soul. Added to these are also passionlessness and joy. A child is not greedy, nor lascivious, nor ambitious; he has an eye untroubled by vice and a joy undisturbed by cares.

O my brethren! Who can make us children again? None but the one Christ. He is able to make us children once more, and to aid our rebirth by His example, His wisdom, and the power of His Holy Spirit.

O Lord Jesus, perfect in obedience and purity, the eternal Child of the heavenly Father: help us to be as infants by faith in Thee, by obedience to Thee, and by purity towards one another. To Thee be glory and praise for ever. Amen.

### Upcoming Events 2023

25 May Holy Ascension  
29 May Memorial Day Picnic

GLORY BE TO GOD FOR ALL THINGS!