

The Confessor's Tongue, Sunday of the Samaritan, May 14, 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.

May 17: St. Eudokia of Moscow

On this day, the Orthodox Church commemorates the tonsure of Saint Euphrosynē of Moscow on May 17, 1407. We shall offer Divine Liturgy in her honor this Wednesday at 8:00 a.m.

After the death of her husband, Saint Dimitry Donskoy (May 19) from the wounds he received at the Battle of Kulikovo against the Tatar Mongols, the Holy Princess Eudokia refrained from participating directly in the affairs of state; but on her advice, the wonderworking Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos was transferred from Vladimir to Moscow (August 26, 1395) because of the invasion of Khan Tamerlane. Soon afterward, she established a convent in the palace, dedicating it to the Lord's Ascension.

Though inclined toward the monastic life, she did not become a nun at that time, since her sons were very young, and instead, she acted as regent. She dressed in royal splendor, attended banquets, and participated in councils. Beneath her expensive clothing, she wore iron chains, concealing her ascetic labors and acts of charity from those around her.

Shortly before her death, an Angel appeared to her and informed her that her earthly life would end very soon. Then she became mute. By signs and gestures she made it known that she wished to have an icon of the Angel painted. When it was finished, Eudokia venerated it, and asked for another one to be painted. Only after the icons of the Archangel Michael were completed did she recognize the Angel who had appeared to her, and then she regained her voice.

The Saint expressed a wish to be tonsured in order to spend her final days in seclusion and prayer. At that time she appeared to a blind man in a dream and promised to heal him.

On May 17, 1407, Princess Eudokia was on her way to the Convent, and the blind man was sitting by the roadside. Hearing her approach, he shouted: "Holy Great Princess, feeder of the poor! You always gave us food and clothing, and you never refused our requests! Do not disregard my petition now, but heal me of my blindness, as you promised in my dream! You told me, 'Tomorrow I will give you sight.' Now the time has come for you to fulfill your promise."

She continued on her way, seeming not to understand his words, but as she passed by, she brushed him, as if by accident, with the sleeves of her cloak. The man pressed them to his eyes and regained his sight. According to Tradition, thirty people were healed of various illnesses on that day.

Princess Eudokia was tonsured with the name Euphrosynē, which means "joy" or "gladness" in Greek. Her tonsure took place in the wooden church of the Ascension at the Convent.

The Saint reposed seven weeks after entering the

Convent, departing to the Lord at the age of fifty-four on July 7, 1407. At her own request, she was buried in the church which she had started to build in the Kremlin, which was dedicated to the Ascension of Christ. Her wonderworking relics remained there until 1929.

She had been buried under the floor of the church with a cover over the grave. In 1922, after the Revolution, this cover was stolen by the Soviets, while Saint Euphrosynē's relics remained in the grave under the floor. In 1929, the government decided to destroy the Ascension Convent. Thanks to the efforts of museum workers, her relics were saved along with the remains of other royal personages interred there. Her relics, however, have yet to be identified and separated from the others. The remains were interred in the Cathedral of the Archangel.

In 2006, construction of a church dedicated to Saint Euphrosynē began in Moscow. It is located on the site of Great Prince Demetrios's palace. When it is completed, there are plans to transfer her relics to this church.

Saint Euphrosynē is also commemorated on July 7, the day of her blessed repose.

The Commandments of Christ

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

"Have faith in God." Mark 11:22

Jesus delivers this command to Peter after He withers the fruitless fig tree and Peter expresses his amazement. "Have faith in God," Jesus responds, and "what things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."

"**Have** faith in God." Have it, possess it, hold it, keep it; do not be without it, do not let it go, do not lose it, do not let anyone steal it from you. It is your most precious possession.

"Have **faith** in God." Be assured of the good things you hope for that He has promised and be convinced that you will possess what you do not yet see; do not doubt God. Act as Abraham, who acted in faith on God's promises to him.

"Have **faith in** God." Believe Him as a faithful, reliable person who acts on your behalf for your good; do not just have faith about Him. Man cannot and does not live without faith; the question is always in what is his faith. Be convinced that there is no being or thing outside of God worthy of your faith. We are not to put our faith in unreliable men, only in the Godman. Why would we put faith in the everchanging flux of the material world that promises us only death rather than in the unchanging God who gives life?

"Have **faith in God.**" Trust and believe the one true living God revealed in Jesus Christ who is proclaimed and worshipped in His Church which He established.. Do not trust some generic "god" or your

own imagination regarding the divine. Have faith in God, not in man or in human institutions. Remember: man proposes, but God disposes. Remember: God rules the world and no one else. As Fr. John Krestiankin puts it, "The world is governed by God's Providence alone, and in this is salvation for one who believes; in this is the strength to endure earthly sorrows."

Believe that God is.

Believe that God rewards those who diligently seek Him.

Believe that God answers fervent prayer.

Believe that God made you.

Believe that God loves you.

Believe that God predestined you for glory.

Believe that no power can forcibly separate you from God's love.

Believe that no power can tear you out of God's hand.

Believe that Christ the unique Godman died for you.

Believe that God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked.

Believe that God wants to save you.

Believe that God is more powerful than any man or government.

Believe that God is more powerful than any phenomenon of nature.

Believe that God is more powerful than Satan and all the demons.

Believe that God is able to deliver you from any and all danger.

Believe that God is able to deliver your loved ones from any and all danger.

Believe that God loves your loved ones far more than you do.

Believe that He is better able to take care of them than you are.

Believe that God is able to bring eternal good for you out of any situation.

Believe that God always has your eternal well-being in mind.

Believe that God always keeps His Word.

Believe that God does not break His promises, nor is He a man that He should lie.

Believe that He will return to judge the world and to reward each man according to his deeds.

Believe that God actively holds the universe together and governs it.

Believe that God governs the affairs of men.

Believe that even in the most desperate situation, God is able to make a way out.

Believe that having faith in God pleases Him.

Believe that even a little faith in God is potent.

Believe that your faith can grow fuller, stronger, deeper.

Have faith in God.

Fr. Justin

The Three Degrees of Knowledge

St. Isaac the Syrian

So it is meet for us to know that the degree of the service of faith is superior to that of knowledge. And knowledge is made perfect by faith, so that it acquires the power to ascend and to perceive that which is above all perceptibility and to behold the splendour of Him that is not attained by the mind or the knowledge of the creatures.

Thus knowledge is the ladder on which a man ascends the height of faith, but which he does not use any more when he has reached faith. For now we know little out of much and we understand little out of much. But when perfection has come this little becomes useless.

So faith shows us as it were before our eyes the reality of that future perfection. By faith we are instructed about those unattainable things, not by investigation and the power of knowledge. All works of righteousness: fasting, alms, vigils, holiness and the others which are performed with the body; and neighborly love, humility of heart, forgiveness of sins, meditation upon beautiful things, investigation of the mysteries hidden in the holy scriptures, the occupation of the mind with the practice of good works, the keeping of the affections of the soul within the borders, and the other virtues which are accomplished with the soul: all these need knowledge as their regulating power. But all these are still degrees along which the soul ascends unto the elevated height of faith, and they are called virtues.

The first stage of knowledge. When knowledge accompanies the love of the body, it gathers provisions as: riches, vain glory, honor, elegant things, bodily comfort, means to guard the body against those things which are in opposition to nature, zeal for rational wisdom that serves to govern this world, and to be the originator of inventions in crafts and learning, and the other things which crown the body in this visible world.

To the properties of this knowledge belong those which have been enumerated above in opposition to faith. This knowledge is what is called simple knowledge, because it is bare of every godly thought. It imparts to the mind an unspeakable weakness because it dominates it with a bridle and because its whole thought is directed upon this world. Thus this degree of knowledge never imagines that there is at all an intelligible force and a hidden governor regarding man, or a divine care which provides for him. But it thinks that all good which happens to a man, and his being saved from injury and guarded against severe difficult accidents and against the numerous adversities which inhere to our nature openly or in secret, all happen by its own zeal and means.

This is the degree of knowledge which thinks in the way mentioned and its adherents say that there is no providential government in visible things. Consequently it is not able to desist from constant anxiety and fear regarding bodily things. Therefore [it

is accompanied by] pusillanimity, grief, despondency, fear of, demons, fear of men, rumors of robbers, tales about epidemics anxiety before sicknesses, fear of scarcity of food, fear of death, reptiles and beasts and other things of this kind. And at all times of the day and night knowledge is tossed about as the sea is by its billows, because it does not know to commit its care unto God with the trust of faith in Him.

So knowledge in all its circumstances uses means and artifices. And when by any cause its means are exhausted, because it does not see hidden providence, it scolds men as its hindrances and haters.

By this knowledge was planted the tree of good and evil, which is the eradicator of love. Knowledge examines the small stains in others and the shortcomings and weak points of men ; and in it are the disputations of learning-, and dialectics, and cunning artifices, and all the other means which dishonor man. In it are also presumption and haughtiness, because it reckons to its own credit and not to God's credit all things which happen, if they are wholesome.

Faith on the other hand attributes its deeds to grace. Therefore it cannot be haughty. As it is written: I can do all things through grace which strengthened me; and again: Not I, but grace which was with me; and what the blessed Apostle says: Knowledge puffeth up.

This he says concerning that knowledge which is not mingled with faith and trust in God, but not concerning true knowledge. Far be it! For true knowledge makes perfect by humility the souls of those who possess it, as Moses and David and Isaiah and Peter and Paul and the other saints who were deemed worthy of perfect knowledge, in accordance with the domain of nature. And because their knowledge is constantly enveloped by various visions and divine revelations and the supreme sight of spiritual things and unspeakable mysteries, their own person is in their eyes, as compared with these, dust and ashes.

That other knowledge must needs be puffed up, because it walks in darkness and it examines its subjects in analogy with earthly things without knowing that there is something more valuable. 372 But [even I those who are dominated by haughtiness because their behavior is in their own eyes] of greater importance than earthly and bodily things, and because they rely upon service without penetrating with their mind in unattainable things — when they come to meditate upon those waves of the glorious splendor of the godhead, and their service is on high, their mind then cannot deviate to think of impure things and idle deliberations. For those who walk in light cannot go astray. All those, therefore, who err from the light of the knowledge of God's son, and deviate from truth, walk in these ways.

This is the first stage of knowledge accompanying the bodily love. This we reject, calling it oppositional not only to faith, but to all works of excellence.

The second degree of knowledge. When knowledge

leaves this first state and turns towards meditation and psychic love, it performs those beautiful things which have been described above, through the cooperation of the psychic impulses with the bodily senses, by its natural light ; namely: fasting, prayer, compassion, recitation of the holy scriptures with a view to excellence, strife against the affections, and so on. All beautiful deeds and excellent distinctions which are seen in the soul, and the amazing stages which are administered in the church of Christ, are accomplished by the influence of the power of the Holy Ghost, in this middle stage of knowledge. The Ghost will level ways in our heart leading to faith. And by faith we shall gather provisions for this our true world.

And till this point knowledge is still of a bodily nature and composite, though it occupies itself with excellence and though it is the way conducting us to faith. For the latter is a degree higher than knowledge; and if knowledge is as it ought to be, it will be able by the help of Christ, to ascend [this higher way], when it bases its service upon seclusion from men and recitation of the holy scriptures and prayer. And the other good works will be made complete by these.

This is the second degree of knowledge, by which all beautiful works are performed. It is called knowledge of practice, because, as to its outward stage, it accomplishes its activity by deeds perceptible by the senses of the body.

The third degree of knowledge, which is the degree of perfection. How knowledge is subtilized and acquires spirituality so that it resembles the discipline of those invisible forces the service of which is not performed by the apperceptive practice of works but by the thoughts of the intellect — hear this now. When knowledge elevates itself above earthly things and above the thought of service and begins to try its impulses in things hidden from eyesight, and when it partly despises the recollection of [worldly] things from which proceeds the perversion of the affections, and when it stretches itself upwards and clings to faith by thinking of the world to be and love of the promises and investigation concerning the hidden things — then faith swallows knowledge, gives anew birth to it, wholly spiritual. Then it is able to direct its flight towards non-bodily places and to the depths of the inscrutable ocean of wonderful and divine government which directs intelligible and apperceptive beings, and to examine spiritual mysteries which are attained by the simple and by the subtle intellect. Then the inner senses awake to spiritual service, as the order of things which will be in the state of immortality and incorruptibility. For from here onwards they have received intelligible resurrection, symbolically, as a true sign of that universal renewal.

These are the three degrees of knowledge, in which the whole course of man is contained, that of body, soul and spirit. From the time that a man begins to distinguish between good and evil, till he

leaves the world, in these three degrees is contained the knowledge of himself and the accomplishment of all iniquity and wickedness and the summit of all righteousness; and the scrutiny of the depths of all spiritual mysteries is worked by one knowledge in these three degrees. Within these is the whole emotion of the mind that ascends or descends moving in good things or in evil things or between these. These three degrees are called by the Fathers the natural, the praeternatural and the supernatural. And these are the three directions in which the thoughts of the rational soul ascend and descend, as it has been said. Either it works righteousness in nature, or in the domain above nature, its thoughts wrapped up in contemplation towards God; or it will go out to feed the swine in the praeternatural domain, as one that has lost the riches of his intellect while serving with the herd of demons.

The first degree of knowledge makes the soul cold to works in the course of the good. The middle one excites in the soul fervor in its course in the degrees of faith. The third stage is the soul's desisting from service; and this is a symbol of the future, that the soul only finds delight in intellectual occupations, in the symbols of future goods. But as nature is not yet elevated above the stage of mortality and above the load of the flesh so as to abide totally in that spiritual state which is exempt from deviation, and because it is not able to administer complete perfection in the world of mortality and to abandon the nature of the flesh completely while it abides in it as yet, therefore it is in the former and in the latter stage alternately. Sometimes the soul in the middle degree of knowledge as a poor being is occupied with performing with all its power the virtues proper to nature, because of the nature of the body. And sometimes, as those who have received the spirit of adoption, it delights in the mysteries of freedom through the gift of the spirit, even as it pleases its giver. Then it turns again towards the poverty of its world, namely of the body, being on its guard against it, lest the latter should captivate it by the allurements which are found in its world through its troubled and easily deviating impulses. For as long as the soul is covered by the curtain of the flesh, it has no trust. For there is no perfect liberation in a non-perfect world.

The Virtues I

Fr. Thomas Hopko

In addition to the beatitudes of Jesus, there are many fruits of the Holy Spirit enumerated in the apostolic scriptures and referred to in the writings of the saints of the Church. These fruits of the Spirit are often called the Christian virtues, which literally means those powers and possessions of the mind and the heart which all men should have if they are truly human, fulfilling themselves as created in the image and likeness of God.

Generally speaking, all of the human virtues are attributes of God Himself. They are the characteristics of Jesus Christ, the divine Son of God in human flesh. They are the divine properties which should be in all human persons by the gift of God in creation and salvation through Christ.

It has been said, and it is true, that the Christian virtues are not all particularly "Christian" in the sense that only Christians know about them and are committed to

attain them. Most, if not all, of the Christian virtues have been honored, respected and recommended by all great teachers of the spiritual life. This in no way detracts from their Christian value and truth, for Christ and His apostles and saints have not taught and practiced something other than that which all men should teach and practice. As the fulfillment of all positive human aspirations and desires, it is quite understandable that Jesus Christ, the perfect "man from heaven" and "final Adam" (1 Cor 15:45-47, Rom 5:14), should fulfill and realize in Himself that which all men of wisdom and good-will have sought for and desired in their minds and hearts, enlightened by God.

For in truth, whatever is found in man to be good and beautiful and true, is found there because of God and is from God. This is the case, whether it is realized or not, "for every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights" (Jas 1:17), and it is Christ Himself, the eternal Son and Word of God, who is the light and the life of every man who has ever lived and been enlightened on this earth (cf. Jn 1:1-10). Thus the Apostle Paul has counseled Christ's faithful:

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about those things (Phil 4:8).

As we "think about those things," we will refer to the teaching of the apostle himself, and to all of the apostles and teachers of the Christian faith who have been enlightened and inspired by God through the Lord Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church.

The Four Cardinal Virtues--Thomas Aquinas

The Pagan Latins held "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.

Thomas Aquinas, the great Roman Scholastic theologian, describes treats of these same virtues from a Christian perspective, each virtue relating to a particular power or faculty of the soul.

"In the *intellect* is *prudence*; in the will is *justice*; in the sensitive *appetites* are temperance restraining pleasure, and *fortitude* urging on impulses of resistance to fear which would deter a *person* from strenuous action under difficulties; also checking the excesses of foolhardy audacity, as seen in some who gratuitously courted martyrdom in times of *persecution*. On the side of the formal object, which in all cases is rational good, we have the four specific variations. The rational good as an object for the action of *intellect* demands the virtue of *prudence*; inasmuch as the dictate of *prudence* is communicated to the will for exertion in relation to other *persons*, there arises the demand for *justice*, giving to every man his due. So far the actions are conceived; next come the passions: the concupiscible and the irascible. The order of objective reason as imposed on the *appetite* for pleasures demands the virtue of temperance; as imposed on the *appetite* which is repelled by fear-inspiring tasks, it demands *fortitude*."

Upcoming Events 2023

25 May Holy Ascension
29 May Memorial Day Picnic

GLORY BE TO GOD FOR ALL THINGS!