

# The Confessor's Tongue for June 18, 2023

2nd Sunday after Pentecost: All Saints of North America, Martyr Leontius

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.

## Sunday of All Saints of North America

This second Sunday after Pentecost, we remember all the Saints who have blossomed in our land just as the Russian Church remembers all the Saints of the Russian land on this day.

We remember St. Herman, the monk who came to Alaska as one of the original missionaries in 1794 and lived there on Spruce Island until his repose in 1837, teaching the Christian Faith to the native Alaskans. We remember St. Innocent, who first came as a married priest to Alaska in 1824, was made the first bishop of the area in 1840 after the death of his wife, and served there as a tireless missionary and translator of the Scriptures and services of the Church into the native tongues until he was called back to Moscow in 1868 to become Metropolitan of Moscow and all Russia.

We remember the first martyrs of our land, St. Peter the Aleut, and Aleut lad who was tortured to death for his faith by Jesuits wanting him to convert in San Francisco in 1815, and St. Juvenaly, a Russian priest-monk and missionary who was martyred by natives near Lake Iliamna in Alaska in 1796.

We remember St. Tikhon, who served as bishop in America from 1898 to 1907 and was instrumental in seeing the services of the Church translated into English to make her worship and faith accessible to the English speakers of America, and who as Patriarch of Moscow from 1917 until his death in 1925, stood firm against the atheist Bolsheviks who sought to destroy the Church.

We remember St. Jacob Netsvetov of Alaska, the first native priest to be ordained to serve the Alaskan peoples, who labored as a missionary priest from 1828 until his repose in 1864.

We remember St. Alexis of Wilkes-Barre, an Eastern-rite Roman Catholic Priest (Uniate), who returned to the Orthodox Church in 1891 bringing 361 others with him, and who from then until his repose in 1909 labored tirelessly to reconcile Uniate Catholics with the Orthodox Church, himself personally bringing in about 15,000.

We remember St. Raphael, the first Arabic speaking bishop to labor in North America as an auxiliary to St. Tikhon in 1904, and, who established more than 30 Syrian and Lebanese parishes, and who founded *The Word* journal in Arabic (which continues to be published to this day, in English now) before his repose in 1915.

We remember two priests, Alexander Hotovitsky and John Kochurov (St. John of Chicago) who labored in America for a time and who both were martyred back in Russia by the Bolsheviks, St. John being the first of many priest-martyrs under communism in 1918; St. Alexander died in the Solovki labor camp in 1930.

Finally, we remember two beloved hierarchs, St. Nikolai of Zicha and St. John of San Francisco. St. Nikolai was a Serbian bishop, known as a second Chrysostom for his powerful preaching and inspired writings. After suffering during the Second World War at the hands of the Nazis in the Dachau death camp, he came to America and taught at St. Tikhon's seminary until his repose in 1956 (possibly poisoned by Communist agents). St. John of Shanghai and San Francisco was a Russian bishop who escaped the Bolsheviks, for a time was in Serbia, and who later served the Russian emigre community in Shanghai, China with special care for orphans until Mao's communists drove them out; he brought his orphans to the United States and ended his life as Bishop in California. He is much beloved and is known as a wonderworker.

We remember St. Sebastian, an American-born Serbian Hieromonk. Ordained in 1892, he took over St. Mary's parish in Minneapolis from St. Alexis of Wilkes Barre. He labored in North America under St. Tikhon until 1910, when he went to serve in Serbia. He reposed at St. Sava Monastery in Zicha in 1940. His relics were later transferred the Serbian church he founded in California, St. Sava in Jackson.

These are but the Saints known to us who labored in North America. Doubtless there are others known to God. O all ye Saints of North America, pray to Christ God for us!

## The Eight Deadly Vices from St. John Cassian Conference 5

*This is a summary of St. John's Fifth Conference, which is one everyone should read.*

1. Gluttony. There are three kinds of gluttony: eating before the scheduled hour, eating to excessive fullness, and being a picky eater, desiring 'refined and delicate foods.'
2. Fornication. There are three kinds of fornication: sexual relations with another person not one's spouse, self-abuse or masturbation ('impurity' in Scripture), and indulgence in lustful looks, thoughts, and fantasies.
3. Avarice, or Love of Money. There are three kinds of Avarice: the first hinders us from giving away wealth and property, the second persuades us to take back what we have given away, and the third 'demands that we long for and acquire what in fact we did not possess before.'
4. Anger. There are three kinds of anger: an internal blazing up called *thumos* in Greek, a breaking out in word and deed called *orge* in Greek, and a long-simmering resentment called *menis*.
5. Sadness. There are two kinds of sadness. "The first is begotten once anger has ceased, or from some hurt that has been suffered or from a desire that has

been thwarted and brought to naught. This can include a sadness, or envy, that others have what one does not possess oneself. The other comes from an unreasonable mental anguish or despair.

6. Accidia (Acedia). There are two kinds of acedia: one puts us to sleep (sloth), so we don't work; the other causes us to give up our work.

7. Vainglory (Boastfulness). There are two basic kinds of vainglory: feeling lifted up and wanting to be noticed because of externals (possessions, appearance, ability), and desiring the empty praise of others for our spiritual and hidden virtues and deeds.

Sometimes, however, vainglory has the benefit of restraining us from the destructive sins of fornication.

8. Pride. There are two kinds of pride: the first is bodily (carnal), thinking ourselves superior to others over physical things and our own appearance and ability. The second is spiritual and more dangerous, for it attacks those who have made progress in the virtues, leading them to look down on those who have not made their progress and to judge them.

All other sins, and their number is legion, arise out of these basic eight.

In comparison, the "Seven Deadly Sins" in the West, dating to St. Pope Gregory the Great in 590, differ just a bit: Lust, Gluttony, Avarice (Greed), Acedia (Sloth), Anger, Envy, Pride.

Sins may be classified according to which power of the soul they relate. Sins of concupiscence (the soul's power to desire), or appetite, include Gluttony, Fornication, and Avarice; sins of irascibility (another power of the soul properly directed against evil) include Anger; while sins of the intellect, or *nous*, include Pride, Vainglory, Acedia, and Sadness.

Some of these vices are natural, in the sense that they are tied to natural functions of the body. Others are unnatural, in that they have no necessary place in us. Natural vices include gluttony and fornication. The others are unnatural. Some such as gluttony and fornication require bodily action to be accomplished; others reside in the soul or mind alone without the body, such as pride and vainglory. Some, such as avarice and anger, are motivated from without; others, such as acedia and sorrow, are motivated from within.

Carnal passions, connected to the body, require a two-fold remedy involving both soul and body. Those passions which are spiritual, "those that, having arisen at the prompting of the soul alone, not only give no pleasure to the flesh but even inflict it with serious sufferings and merely provide the sick soul with the food of a miserable enjoyment", admit "the medicine of a simple heart" to cure them.

### **Practical Spiritual Counsel on Judging, etc.**

*St. Sergius of Kasimov*

If you have a sinful habit of judging and condemning your neighbor, then here you are, the Great Fast has arrived, lay down a good beginning and pitch out this habit. But if out of weakness you forget,

if you condemn someone, then give yourself the rule to make three prostrations that day with the prayer: "O Lord, save and have mercy on \_\_\_ (say the name of the person you judged), and by his prayers have mercy on me, a sinner." Do this always, whenever you judge someone. If you fulfill this, the Lord will see your fervor and will deliver you for good from this sinful habit. And if you don't judge anyone, then God, too, will never judge you, and so you will receive salvation.

Act exactly the same way with everything else. Has an unchaste thought visited your heart? Make three prostrations with the words, "O Lord, forgive me the prodigal," and consider yourself a prodigal. For you know the Lord considers even an unchaste glance to be an unclean action. Have you deceived someone? Go and apologize to him, admit your falsehood, and ask forgiveness. Have you taken something belonging to someone else? Go and return it to him; but if this is impossible, then give double its value to a person in need. Have you offended someone? Go and make peace with him. Meanwhile, the spirit of pride will whisper, "How is this possible? It's disgraceful! what will people think of me?" Answer it: "You can't fool God; He knows and sees everything. I wasn't ashamed to sin; I won't be embarrassed to repent also. Help me, O Lord!"

And—may God have mercy—if you fall into any major sin, then bring to God special repentance, confess your sin to your spiritual father as soon as possible, ask him for the kindness of giving you a penance, and carry it out willingly, with great joy, knowing that in this lies your salvation: you have both repented and also wish to bring forth fruit worthy of repentance. Without fail, begin to act in this way and pray constantly: "O Lord our God! Even thou I have done nothing good in Thy sight, grant me henceforth to make a good beginning."

### **On the Septuagint & Mary's Virginit**

*St. John Chrysostom, Homily V on Matthew*

4. But if, when their mouths are stopped on this point, they should seek another, namely, what is said touching Mary's virginit, and should object to us other translators, saying, that they used not the term "virgin," but "young woman;" in the first place we will say this, that the Seventy [translators of the Greek Old Testament, the Septuagint] were justly entitled to confidence above all the others. For these made their translation after Christ's coming, continuing to be Jews, and may justly be suspected as having spoken rather in enmity, and as darkening the prophecies on purpose; but the Seventy, as having entered upon this work an hundred years or more before the coming of Christ, stand clear from all such suspicion, and on account of the date, and of their number, and of their agreement, would have a better right to be trusted. But even if they bring in the testimony of those others, yet so the tokens of victory would be with us. Because the Scripture is wont to put the word "youth," for "virginit," and this with respect not to

women only, but also to men. For it is said, "young men and maidens, old men with younger ones." And again, speaking of the damsel who is attacked, it saith, "if the young woman cry out," meaning the virgin.

And what goes before also establishes this interpretation. For he doth not merely say, "Behold, the Virgin shall be with child," but having first said, "Behold, the Lord Himself shall give you a sign," then he subjoins, "Behold, the Virgin shall be with child." Whereas, if she that was to give birth was not a virgin, but this happened in the way of marriage, what sort of sign would the event be? For that which is a sign must of course be beyond the course of common events, it must be strange and extraordinary; else how could it be a sign?

5. "Then Joseph, being raised from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him." Seest thou obedience, and a submissive mind? Seest thou a soul truly wakened, and in all things incorruptible? For neither when he suspected something painful or amiss could he endure to keep the Virgin with him; nor yet, after he was freed from this suspicion, could he bear to cast her out, but he rather keeps her with him, and ministers to the whole Dispensation. "And took unto him Mary his wife." Seest thou how continually the evangelist uses this word, not willing that that mystery should be disclosed as yet, and annihilating that evil suspicion? And when he had taken her, "he knew her not, till she had brought forth her first-born Son." He hath here used the word "till," not that thou shouldst suspect that afterwards he did know her, but to inform thee that before the birth the Virgin was wholly untouched by man.

But why then, it may be said, hath he used the word, "till"? Because it is usual in Scripture often to do this, and to use this expression without reference to limited times. For so with respect to the ark likewise, it is said, "The raven returned not till the earth was dried up." And yet it did not return even after that time. And when discoursing also of God, the Scripture saith, "From age until age Thou art," not as fixing limits in this case. And again when it is preaching the Gospel beforehand, and saying, "In his days shall righteousness flourish, and abundance of peace, till the moon be taken away," it doth not set a limit to this fair part of creation. So then here likewise, it uses the word "till," to make certain what was before the birth, but as to what follows, it leaves thee to make the inference. Thus, what it was necessary for thee to learn of Him, this He Himself hath said; that the Virgin was untouched by man until the birth; but that which both was seen to be a consequence of the former statement, and was acknowledged, this in its turn he leaves for thee to perceive; namely, that not even after this, she having so become a mother, and having been counted worthy of a new sort of travail, and a child-bearing so strange, could that righteous man ever have endured to know her. For if he had known her, and had kept her in the place of a wife, how is it that our Lord commits her,

as unprotected, and having no one, to His disciple, and commands him to take her to his own home?

### On the Ringing of Church Bells

The ringing of the bells serves two functions in the Orthodox Church. The first is for calling the faithful to divine services, and the second is to announce the beginning of various parts of the services to those faithful who are absent from the church. The different manners or ways of ringing are:

1) *Blagovest* - literally "Good News." This is the measured striking of one bell for the beginning of a service.

2) *Zvon* - literally "Peal." This is the ringing of all bells.

3) *Dvuzvon* - literally "Double Peal." This is the ringing of all bells then an interval of silence, followed by a second ringing of all bells. Simply put, this is the ringing of all bells twice.

4) *Trezvon* - literally "Treble Peal." This is the ringing of all bells three times.

5) *Perezvon* - "Chain-peal." This is the striking of each bell several times beginning with the largest bell and proceeding to the smallest bell. This chain is repeated as long as necessary. This is used before any Blessing of Water.

6) *Perebor* - "Chain-toll." The slow striking of each bell once beginning from the largest bell and proceeding to the smallest bell. After the chain, all bells are rung together. This is repeated several times. This is also called burial or funeral ringing.

At the All-Night Vigil, the *blagovest* is rung before the service and is immediately followed by the *trezvon*. At the beginning of the reading of the Six Psalms or before it, the *dvuzvon* takes place. Right before the reading of the Gospel, the *zvon* takes place. During the Magnificat the bell is struck nine times. At the end of the Vigil, the *trezvon* is rung.

At the Divine Liturgy, the *blagovest* is rung at the appointed time and ceases at the beginning of the Hours. At the end of the 6th hour the *trezvon* is rung. At the end of the Creed, which consists of 12 parts, the bell is struck 12 times in a unhurried fashion to inform those Christians who are absent that the time of the Consecration of the Holy Gifts approaches. After the Liturgy the *trezvon* is rung.

We hope to acquire some proper bells for our new church along with some people properly trained to ring them. God willing, there will be an opportunity to sponsor the acquisition of bells and an opportunity to train to ring them.

### Translations: On the Singing of Many Years

In the Church, we invoke this blessing of "many years" on people at significant times: at marriages, at ordinations, on namedays and birthdays, at the end of moliebens.

The priest or deacon intones the following: "Grant, O Lord, a prosperous and peaceful life; health, salvation, and furtherance in all good things,

unto thy servant(s) N., and preserve him/her/them for many years."

In Russian (Church Slavonic) the people's response echoes the end of what the priest has just intoned: "Many years, many years, many years." To do this literally doesn't sing well in English to the Russian melody, which we use. "Many years" has all of three syllables; "mnogoye lyeto" in Russian has five. Thus to make it sing better, more of the words that are intoned by the priest or deacon are echoed in our English setting: "God grant him/her/them many years."

Yet, in the most American common way of singing 'many years', in adding additional words to fit the music, we have distorted our echo of the priest. The priest intones the words addressed to God as a prayer: "Grant O Lord...unto Thy servant, and preserve him for many years." For some reason, in the common English version, when the people, who should be echoing the priest, instead sing "God grant *you* many years." This, however, is no longer an echo of the original prayer directed to God, but has been transformed into a wish directed to the person.

Moreover, a proper echoing of the priest's prayer in English "God grant him many years" can naturally be sung even when the person being honored or prayed for is not present. It does not work well to sing "God grant *you* many years" when the person being honored is not there.

Though we do not sing in the second person here at St. Maximus, many around the country do. This mistake, however, should be changed, no matter how popular it may be. Put the mistaken "God grant you many years" into permanent retirement where that crippled translation belongs. Another solution would be for our musicians to compose a pleasing setting for singing the words "many years" only without added words.

*Fr. Justin Frederick*

### **A Letter of Elder Vitaly of Tbilisi (+1992)**

Christ is risen!  
Your Reverence, Fr. N!

The Lord created man not for destruction, but for salvation. You need to believe this like a child, and to labor. The Lord will reward you in His mercy. On this earth, we have labors, but afterwards there will be a reward and consolation. When you watch children, you're amazed. He, a child, doesn't know anything at all like an adult does, but is always in a state of delight and joy, cheerfulness and gladness, zeal and watchfulness.

When we think, we have to look at everything, to consider that God is everywhere and in all places, and that there is nowhere where God is not present. This thought will be connected with divine contemplation, prayer, and a grateful sense of the omnipresence of God. Our words and deeds should alternate between God, Holy Scripture, the sign of the Cross, and blessings. St. John of Kronstadt spoke of how this is absent among us, and that it is for this reasons that

the Sun of Righteousness, Christ, is covered by fog and clouds. May He bless you and grant you the Holy Spirit. To Him be glory forever, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Amen. Bless me. I am always with you in prayer. Forgive me.

### **Elder Vitaly on the Important Things**

An elder wrote to his disciple, "pray for those who offend you. They are your friends, for through them the Lord gives you crowns. If you grumble against them, and even offend them yourself, then you deprive yourself of crowns." Consequently, avoid curiosity, gossip, and everything superfluous that does not relate to you. Every day, prepare yourself for temptations, sorrows, and all kinds of offenses, slanders, and the like. Know that this is God's mercy coming toward you. By enduring all these things, you will stand among the ranks of martyrs, and without other ascetic labors you will be found worthy of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Remember the most important things:

1. Consider every day to be the last day of your life and lead it in the fear of God and with contrition of heart. Curtail vanity, avoid idle talk. Remember God and call out to Him with repentance.
2. Do not judge and do not condemn anyone; otherwise, you will condemn yourself. Do not pay attention to other people's thoughts, actions, slander, and idle tales. Go right past it: this is the enemy trying to dissipate you and distract you from prayer.
3. Know God, keep His Commandments, and heed your spiritual father. With regard to your neighbor, accept only what is good into your soul, and what is in agreement with the Divine Commandments. Try to be attentive concerning yourself and to condemn no one, and not to notice other people's defects—we have many of our own. Turn away from abusive, lustful, and hurtful thoughts, and all kinds of thoughts in general, and do not pay any attention to them. Try to love everyone, to embitter no one, not to gossip, and to yield to everyone. Be peaceful and indulgent toward everyone.

To those who maintained that in our time there cannot be such great ascetics as in past centuries, Batushka Vitaly would reply, "The power of grace is the same as it was during apostolic times; the whole problem is with ourselves.

### **Upcoming Events 2023**

12-28 June Apostles' Fast  
26 June -- 14 July, Priest on Vacation

**GLORY BE TO GOD FOR ALL THINGS!**