

The Confessor's Tongue for August 13, 2023

10th Sunday after Pentecost: Leavetaking of Transfiguration; St. Maximus

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.

St. Maximus on Thoughts

From *400 Chapters on Love*

Christian life is spiritual warfare. Our enemy never rests. He constantly shoots flaming arrows of thought, attempting to fire our minds and bodies with sinful passions. We are called to "take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ." St. Maximus offers great help to us in this ongoing battle.

3.40 The intellect of a man who enjoys the love of God does not fight against things or against conceptual images of them. It battles against the passions which are linked with these images. It does not, for example, fight against a woman, or against a man who has offended it, or even against the images it forms of them; but it fights against the passions which are linked with the images.

3.41 The whole purpose of [our] warfare against the demons is to separate the passions from conceptual images. Otherwise [we] will not be able to look on things dispassionately.

3.42 A thing, a conceptual image and a passion are all quite different one from the other. For example, a man, a woman, gold and so forth are things; a conceptual image is a passion-free thought of one of these things; a passion is mindless affection or indiscriminate hatred for one of these same things. [Our] battle is therefore against passion.

3.43 An impassioned conceptual image is a thought compounded of passion and a conceptual image. If we separate the passion from the conceptual image, what remains is the passion-free thought. We can make this separation by means of spiritual love and self-control, if only we have the will.

3.44 The virtues separate the intellect from the passions; spiritual contemplation separates it from its passion-free conceptual images of things; pure prayer brings it into the presence of God Himself.

3.88 It is one thing to fight against a passion-free thought so that it will not stimulate a passion; it is another to fight against an impassioned thought so that there will be no assent to it. Both these two forms of counter-attack prevent the thoughts themselves from persisting.

3.89 Resentment is linked with rancor. When the intellect forms the image of a brother's face with a feeling of resentment, it is clear that it harbors rancor against him. 'The way of the rancorous leads to death' (Prov. 12:28. LXX), because 'whoever harbors rancor is a transgressor' (Prov. 21:24. LXX).

3.90 If you harbor rancor against anybody, pray for him and you will prevent the passion from being aroused; for by means of prayer you will separate your resentment from the thought of the wrong he has done you. When you have become loving and compassionate towards him, you will wipe the passion completely from your soul. If somebody regards you

with rancor, be pleasant to him, be humble and agreeable in his company, and you will deliver him from his passion.

August 13: St. Tikhon of Zakonsk

St. Tikhon is known for deriving deep spiritual insight from common experiences and turning common experiences into spiritual reflection. Here is a small sample.

Meditation: A Beautiful Person

You see a beautiful person, like unto an angel. Raise your mind from this to the inner person, that is to the soul, and think how much more beautiful is the soul, the image and likeness of God, which God put to dwell into an already beautiful dwelling. From this, learn to comprehend and honor the nobility of the soul, its beauty and splendor. Learn to adorn the immortal soul with good deeds faith, love, patience, and chastity, rather than adorning the body, which is dust and ashes. *True Christianity, vol. I*

Meditation: Repulsive Things Coming from the Body

You see that as long as saliva and other substances of food and drink are contained within the man, he is not repulsed by them; but once they are vomited forth, then everyone is repulsed by what he once had within himself. Sin is the same: as long as the sin is within a man and is being committed, the man is not repulsed by it; but once the man is rid of the sin by God's grace, and casts it out of his heart like vomit, then it is repugnant to him. Therefore it happens that man abhors every sin which he sees in others, even though he has the same sin within himself. Adultery is abhorrent to the adulterer, extortion to the extortioner, theft to the thief, deceit to the deceiver, envy to the envious one, malice to the malicious one, slander to the slanderer, and evil speech to the speaker of evil, when they are seen in one's neighbor.

The sinner has that same evil within himself, yet he does not abhor it; he does not abhor it, because he does not perceive that deadly poison. O, if the poor sinner was to see this monster, this dreadful monstrosity, within himself, and if he would smell its vileness, he would be more repulsed by it than he is repulsed by the excrement expelled from his own bowels! But this is our common blindness, poverty, and cursedness: that we do not perceive this abomination, and do not strive to perceive it. O beloved Christian, this is how Satan has infected our heart with his poison, and darkened our spiritual eye!

From the Service to St. Tikhon

Insults, sorrows and abuse, didst thou joyfully endure, O Tikhon, mindful that there is no crown without a victory no victory without a contest, no contest without battle, and no battle without a foe.

Through Creation to the Creator, Part II Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia

Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees.

-- Revelation 7:3

The saints embrace the whole world with their love.

-- St. Silouan the Athonite

God both is and is not; He is everywhere and nowhere; He has many names and He cannot be named; He is ever-moving and He is immovable; and, in short, He is everything and nothing.

What St. Gregory Palamas seeks to express through the essence-energies distinction, St. Maximus the Confessor indicates by speaking in terms of Logos and *logoi*, even though the specific concerns of Maximus, and the context in which he is writing, are not altogether identical with those of Palamas. According to Maximus, Christ the Creator-Logos has implanted in each created thing a characteristic logos, a "thought" or "word," which is the divine presence in that thing, God's intention for it, the inner essence of that thing, which makes it to be distinctively itself and at the same time draws it towards God. By virtue of these indwelling *logoi*, each created thing is not just an object but a personal word addressed to us by the Creator. The divine Logos, the Second Person of the Trinity, the Wisdom and the Providence of God, constitutes at once the source and the end of the particular *logoi*, and in this fashion acts as an all-embracing and unifying cosmic presence.

All nature is theophanic. Each created person and thing is a point of encounter with "the Beyond That is in our midst," to use Dietrich Bonhoeffer's phrase. We are to see God in everything and everything in God. Wherever we are and whatever we are doing, we can ascend through the creation to the Creator.

Anticipating Palamas, Maximus speaks of these *logoi*, as "energies," and at the same time he likens them to birds in the branches of a tree:

The Logos of God is like a grain of mustard seed: before cultivation it looks extremely small, but when cultivated in the right way it grows so large that the highest principles (*logoi*) of both sensible and intelligible creation come like birds to revive themselves in it. For the principles or inner essences (*logoi*) of all things are embraced by the Logos, but the Logos is not embraced by any thing.

According to the interpretation of Maximus, then, the cosmic tree is Christ the Creator-Logos, while the birds in the branches are the *logoi* of you and me and all the created things. The Logos embraces all the *logoi*, but is not Himself embraced or circumscribed by them. Here Maximus seeks -- as does Palamas in his use of the essence-energies distinction -- to safeguard the double truth of God's transcendence and His immanence.

Whether we speak, as St. Maximus does, of the indwelling *logoi*, or prefer to use the Palamite word "energies" -- and we can of course choose to employ

both terms -- our basic meaning and intention remain the same. All nature is theophanic. Each created person and thing is a point of encounter with "the Beyond That is in our midst," to use Dietrich Bonhoeffer's phrase. We are to see God in everything and everything in God. Wherever we are and whatever we are doing, we can ascend through the creation to the Creator.

After listening to our two Eastern witnesses, Maximus and Palamas, let us also hear a Western prophet, St. Hildegard of Bingen, who is equally definite about the "panentheistic" character of the universe. In *The Book of Divine Works* she affirms, "All living creatures are, so to speak, sparks from the radiation of God's brilliance, and these sparks emerge from God like the rays of the sun." Elsewhere in the same treatise she records the remarkable words addressed to her by the Holy Spirit:

I, the highest and fiery power, have kindled every living spark and I have breathed out nothing that can die ... I am ... the fiery life of the divine essence -- I flame above the beauty of the fields; I shine in the waters; in the sun, the moon and the stars, I burn. And by means of the airy wind, I stir everything into quickness with a certain invisible life which sustains all. For the air lives in its green power and its blossoming; the waters flow as if they were alive. Even the sun is alive in its own light ... I, the fiery power, lie hidden in these things and they blaze from Me, just as man is continually moved by his breath, and as the fire contains the nimble flame. All these things live in their own essence and are without death, since I am Life ... I am the whole of life -- life was not torn from stones; it did not bud from branches; nor is it rooted in the generative power of the male. Rather, every living thing is rooted in Me.

The approach adopted by Palamas, Maximus, and Hildegard has two important consequences for our understanding of God's creative power. First, when we speak of God creating the world, we are to envisage this, not as a single act in the past, but as a continuing presence here and now; and in that sense it is legitimate to speak in terms of continual creation. Second, and closely linked with the first point, we should think of God as creating the world, not as it were from the outside, but from within.

In the first place, when it is said, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1), the word "beginning" is not to be interpreted in a temporal sense. Creation is not a once-for-all event happening in the remote past, an initial act that constitutes a chronological starting point. It is not a past event but a present relationship. We are to think and to speak not in the past but in the present tense; we are to say, not "God made the world, once upon a time, long ago," but "God is making the world, and you and me in it, here and now, at this moment and always." "In the beginning" (en arche), then, does not signify, "God started it all off, billions of years ago, and since then He has left things to keep going by their own momentum." It

means, on the contrary, that God is at each and every instant the constant and unceasing *arche*, the source, principle, cause and sustainer of all that exists. It means that, if God did not continue to exert His creative will at every split second of time, the universe would immediately collapse into the void of non-being. Without the active and uninterrupted presence of Christ the Creator-Logos throughout the cosmos, nothing would exist for a single moment.

Secondly, it follows from this that Christ as Creator-Logos is to be envisaged, not as on the outside, but as on the inside of everything. It is a frequent fault of religious writers that they speak of the created universe as if it were an artifact of a Maker Who has, so to speak, produced it from without. God the Creator becomes the celestial Clock-maker Who sets the cosmic process in motion, winding up the clock, but then leaving it to continue ticking on its own. This will not do. It is important to avoid such images as the divine architect, builder or engineer, and to speak rather in terms of indwelling (without thereby excluding the dimension of divine transcendence). Creation is not something upon which God acts from the outside, but something through which he expresses Himself from within. Transcendent, He is also immanent; above and beyond creation, He is also its true inwardness, its "within."

Double Vision: If we adopt the sacramental understanding of the world implied in our "tale of two trees," we shall gradually find that our contemplation of nature is marked above all by two qualities: distinctiveness and transparency.

Distinctiveness: If we are to see the world as sacrament, then this signifies that, first of all, we are to discover the distinctive and peculiar flavor of each created thing. We are to perceive and to value each thing in and for itself, viewing that thing in sharp relief, appreciating what in the Zen tradition is called the special "Ah!" of each thing, its "is-ness," or *baeccitas*. The point is vividly expressed by Gerard Manley Hopkins:

As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame ...
each mortal thing does one thing and the same ... selves
-- goes itself; myself it speaks and spells; crying What I
do is me: for that I came.

To see nature as sacred is, in the first instance, to recognize how each thing "selves" and "speaks myself." We are to perceive each kingfisher, each frog, each human face, each blade of grass in its uniqueness. Each is to be real for us, each is to be immediate. We are to explore the variety and the particularity of creation -- what St. Paul calls the "glory" of each thing: "There is one glory of the sun, and another of the moon, and another glory of the stars; indeed, star differs from star in glory" (I Corinthians 15:41).

Transparency: Having evoked and savored the particular "is-ness" of each thing, we can then take a second step: we can look within and beyond each thing, and discover in and through it the divine

presence. After perceiving each kingfisher, each frog, each human face, each blade of grass in its uniqueness, in its full reality and immediacy, we are then to treat each as a means of communion with God, and so to ascend through the creation to the Creator. For it is impossible to make sense of the world unless we also look beyond the world; the world only acquires its true meaning when seen as the reflection of a reality that transcends it.

The first step, then, is to love the world for itself, in terms of its own consistency and integrity. The second step is to allow the world to become pellucid, so that it reveals to us the indwelling Creator-Logos. In this way we acquire Blake's "double vision":

For double the vision my Eyes do see,
and a double vision is always with me ...
May God us keep, from Single vision and Newton's
sleep!

It is vital not to attempt the second step without previously embarking upon the first. We need to recognize the solidity of the world before we can discern its transparency; we need to rejoice in the abundant variety of creation before we ascertain how all things find their unity in God. Moreover, the second level, that of theophanic transparency, does not in any way cancel out the first level, that of particularity and distinctiveness. We do not cease to value the "is-ness" of each thing because we also apprehend the divine presence within it. On the contrary, by a strange paradox the more a thing becomes transparent, the more it is seen as uniquely itself. Blake was right to speak precisely of double vision; the "second sight" that God confers upon us does not obliterate but enhances our "first sight." Created nature is never more beautiful than when it acts as an envoy or icon of the uncreated Beauty.

Never should it be imagined that this ascent through the creation to the Creator is easily accomplished, in a casual and automatic way. If we are to see God in all things and all things in God, this requires persistence, courage, imagination. In the words of the prophet Isaiah, "Truly You are a God Who hides Himself" (Isaiah 45:15). When we played hide-and-seek as children, did it not sometimes happen that we concealed ourselves in a marvelously secret spot, but then to our disappointment nobody bothered to come and look for us? After waiting for a long time, we came out crestfallen from our hiding place, only to find that the others had all gone home. As the Hasidic master Rabbi Barukh of Mezbizh observes, we disappoint God in exactly the same way. "I hide," God says in sorrow, "but no one wants to seek Me."

This, then, is God's word to us through His creation: Explore! *Finis*.

On Refusal to Judge our Neighbor

St. Dorotheos of Gaza

If we remember the saying of the holy fathers, brothers, and put them into practice all the time, it will be difficult for us to neglect ourselves. For if, as they used to say, we do not despise little things and think they are of no consequence to us, we shall not fall into great and grievous things. I am always telling you that bad habits are formed in the soul by these very small things—when we say, 'What does this or that matter,'—and it is the first step to despising great things. You know how great a wrong it is to judge your neighbor. What is graver than this? What does God hate and turn away from so much as from this? As the fathers say, what is worse than judging rashly? [1] Nevertheless, from things that appear negligible a man comes to such great evil. For by accepting a suspicion against the neighbor, by saying, 'What does it matter if I put in a word [about my suspicion]? What does it matter if I find out what this brother is saying or what that guest is doing?' the mind begins to forget about its own sins and to talk idly about his neighbor, speaking evil against him, despising him, and from this he falls into the very thing that he condemns. Because we become careless about our own faults and do not lament our own death (as the Fathers put it), [2] we lose the power to correct ourselves and we are always at work on our neighbor. Nothing angers God so much or strips a man so bare or carries him so effectively to his ruin as calumniating, condemning, or despising his neighbor.

There are three distinct things here: running a man down; condemning him unjustly; and despising him. Running a man down is saying that so-and-so has told a lie, or got into a rage, or gone whoring, or the like. A man has already committed calumny if he speaks about his brother's sins as if with sympathy. Condemning a man is saying, 'he is a wicked liar, or he is an angry man, or he is a fornicator. For in this way one judges the condition of his soul and draws a conclusion about his whole life, saying it is of such a kind and condemns him as such. This is a very serious thing. For it is one thing to say, 'He got mad', and another thing to say, 'He is bad-tempered', and to reveal, as we said, the whole disposition of his life. It is serious to judge a man for each one of his sins. As Christ himself says, 'Hypocrite, first take the board from your own eye, then you can see to take the splinter out of your brother's eye.' [3]

You see, he compares your brother's sin to a splinter and your rash judgment to a board. Very nearly the most difficult of all sins to deal with is judging our neighbor! That Pharisee who was praying and giving thanks to God for his [own] good works was not lying but speaking the truth, and he was not condemned for that. For we must give thanks to God when we are worthy to do something good, as he is then working with us and helping us. Because of this he was not condemned, as I said, not even because he said, 'I am not like other men', but [he was

condemned] because he said, 'I am not like this tax-collector'. [4] It was then that he made a judgment. He condemned a person and the dispositions of his soul—to put it shortly, his whole life. Therefore, the tax-collector rather than the Pharisee went away justified.

Nothing is more serious, nothing more difficult to deal with, as I say repeatedly, than judging and despising our neighbor. Why do we not rather judge ourselves and our own wickedness which we know so accurately and about which we have to render an account to God? Why do we usurp God's right to judge? Why should we demand a reckoning from *his* creature, *his* servant? Ought we not to be afraid when we hear about a brother falling into fornication said, 'He has acted wickedly!' If you know what it says about this in the Book of the Ancients, it would make you shudder. For an angel brought [Isaac the Theban] the soul of someone who had fallen into sin, and said to him, 'Here is the person you have judged. He has just died. Where do you order him to be put, into the Kingdom or into eternal punishment?', [5] Can you imagine a more terrible situation to be in? What else could the angel mean by these words than, 'Since you want to be the judge of the just and the unjust, what do you command for this poor soul? Is he to be spared or to be punished?' The holy old man, frightened beyond measure, spent the rest of his life praying with sighs and tears and continuous hard work to be forgiven this sin, and this in spite of having fallen on his knees before the angel and been forgiven, for the angel said to him, 'You see, God has shown you how serious a thing it is to judge; you must never do it again.' [6] This was the way he granted forgiveness but the soul of the old man would not allow him to be completely comforted from his pain and repentance until he died.

Why are we so ready to judge our neighbor? Why are we so concerned about the burden of others? We have plenty to be concerned about, each one has his own debt and his own sins. It is for God alone to judge, to justify or to condemn. He knows the state of each one of us and our capacities, our deviations, and our gifts, our constitution and our preparedness, and it is for him to judge each of these things according to the knowledge that he alone has. For God judges the affairs of a bishop in one way and those of a prince in another. His judgment is for an abbot or for a disciple, he judges differently the senior and the neophyte, the sick man and the healthy man. Who could understand all these judgments except the one who has done everything, formed everything, knows everything? I remember once hearing the following story: a slave ship put in at a certain port where there lived a holy virgin who was in earnest about her spiritual life. When she learned about the arrival of the ship she was glad, for she wanted to buy a small serving maid for herself. She thought to herself, 'I will take her into my home and bring her up in my way of life so that she knows nothing of the evils of the world.' So she sent and enquired of the master of the

ship and found that he had two small girls who he thought would suit her. Whereupon she gladly paid the price and took one of the children into her house. The ship's master went away. He had not gone very far when there met him the leader of a dancing troupe who saw the other small girl with him and wanted to buy her; the price was agreed and paid, and he took her away with him. Now take a look at God's mystery; see what his judgment was. Which of us could give any judgment about this case? The holy virgin took one of these little ones to bring her up in the fear of God, to instruct her in every good work, to teach her all that belongs to the monastic state and all the sweetness of holy commandments of God. The other unfortunate child was taken for the dancing troupe, to be trained in the works of the devil. What effect would teaching her this orgiastic dancing have, but the ruin of her soul? What can we have to say about this frightful judgment? Here were two little girls taken away from their parents by violence. Neither knew where they came from; one is found in the hands of God and the other falls into the hands of the devil. Is it possible to say that what God asks from the one he asks also from the other? Surely not! Suppose they both fell into fornication or some other deadly sin; is it possible that they both face the same judgment or that their fall is the same? How does it appear to the mind of God when one learns about the Judgment and about the Kingdom of God day and night, while the other unfortunate knows nothing of it, never hears anything good but only the contrary, everything shameful, everything diabolical? How can he allow them to be examined by the same standard?

Wherefore a man can know nothing about the judgments of God. He alone is the one who takes account of all and is able to judge the hearts of each one of us, as he alone is our Master. Truly it happens that a man may do a certain thing (which seems to be wrong) out of simplicity, and there may be something about it which makes more amends to God than your whole life; how are you going to sit in judgment and constrict your own soul? And should it happen that he has fallen away, how do you know how much and how well he fought, how much blood he sweated before he did it? Perhaps so little fault can be found in him that God can took on his action as if it were just, for God looks on his labor and all the struggle he had before he did it, and has pity on him. And you know this, and what God has spared him for, are you going to condemn him for, and ruin your own soul? And how do you know what tears he has shed about it before God? You may well know about the sin, but you do not know about the repentance.

But there are times when we not only condemn but also despise a man; for it is one thing to condemn and quite another to despise, as I have said. Contempt adds to condemnation the desire to set someone at nought—as if the neighbor were a bad smell which has to be got rid of as something disgusting, and this is worse than rash judgment and exceedingly destructive.

Those who want to be saved scrutinize not the shortcomings of their neighbor but always their own and they set about eliminating them. Such was the man who saw his brother doing wrong and groaned, 'Woe is me; him today—me tomorrow!' You see his caution? You see the preparedness of his mind? How he swiftly foresaw how to avoid judging his brother? When he said 'me tomorrow' he aroused his fear of sinning, and by this he increased his caution about avoiding those sins which he was likely to commit, and so he escaped judging his neighbor; and he did not stop at this, but put himself below his brother, saying, 'He has repented for his sin but I do not always repent. I am never first to ask for forgiveness and I am never completely converted.' Do you see the divine light in his soul? Not only was he able to escape making judgment but he humiliated himself as well. And we miserable fellows judge rashly, we hate indiscriminately and set people at nought whether we see something, or hear something, or even only suspect something! And what is worse, we do not let it stop at harming ourselves, but we go and look for another brother and say, 'Here is what happened!' We harm him and put sin into his heart also and we do not fear the saying, 'Woe to the man who gives his neighbor something dark and dangerous to drink!' But we do the devil's work and are not one bit concerned about it. What else has the devil to do but knock us down and harm us? We are found to work with him for our own destruction and that of our neighbor, for a man who harms his own soul is working with, and helping, the devil. The man who seeks to profit his soul is co-operating with the angels.

How can we put up with these things unless it is because we have no true love? If we have true love with sympathy and patient labor, we shall not go about scrutinizing our neighbor's shortcomings. As it is said, 'Love covers up a multitude of sins', [7] and again, 'Love thinks no evil ... hides everything,' etc. [8] As I said, if we have true love, that very love should screen anything of this kind, as did the saints when they saw the shortcomings of men. Were they blind? Not at all! But they simply would not let their eyes dwell on sins. Who hated sin more than the saints? But they did not hate the sinners all the same time, nor condemn them, nor turn away from them, but they suffered with them, admonished them, comforted them, gave them remedies as sickly members, and did all they could to heal them. Take a fisherman: when he casts his hook into the sea and a large fish takes the bait, he perceives first that the fish struggles violently and is full of fight, so he does not try to pull it in immediately by main force for the line would break and the catch would be lost in the end. No! He plays out the line

and, as he says, allows the fish to run freely, but when he feels the line slacken and the fish struggles have calmed down, he takes up the slack line and begins, little by little, to draw him in. So the holy fathers, by patience and love, draw the brother and do not spurn him nor show themselves unfriendly

towards him, but as a mother who has an unruly son does not hate him or turn away from him but rules him with sweetness and sometimes does things to please him, so they always protect him and keep him in order and they gain a hold on him so that with time they correct the erring brother and do not allow him to harm anyone else, and in doing so they greatly advance towards the love of Christ. What did the blessed Ammon do when those brothers, greatly disturbed, came to him and said, 'Come and see, Father. There is a young woman in brother X's cell!' [9] What tenderness he showed to the erring brother. What great love there was in that great soul. Knowing that the brother had hidden the woman in a large barrel, he went in, sat down on it, and told the others to search the whole place. And when they found nothing he said to them, 'May God forgive you!' And so dismissing them in disgrace, he called out to them that they should not readily believe anything against their neighbor. By his consideration for his brother he not only protected him after God but corrected him when the right moment came. For when they were alone he laid on him the hand with which he had thrown the others out, and said, 'Have a care for yourself, brother'. Immediately the other's conscience pricked him and he was stricken with remorse, so swiftly did the mercy and sympathy of the old man work upon his soul.

Let us, therefore, strive to gain this love for ourselves, let us acquire this tenderness towards our neighbor so that we may guard ourselves from wickedly speaking evil of our neighbor, and from judging and despising him. Let us help one another, as we are members one of another. Which of us, having a wound on his hand or foot, or any other member, would despise it and cut it off, even if it turned septic? Would he not rather bathe it and take away the poison and put a plaster on it, sign it with the cross, apply a relic, and pray and beg the saints to pray for its cure, as Abbot Zosimos used to say [10]—to put it simply, not to turn aside or run away from our own members even those of bad reputation but to do all we can to cure their disease. In this way we ought to bear one another's burdens, to help one another and be helped by others who are stronger than ourselves, to think of everything and do everything that can help ourselves and others, for we are members one of another,' as the Apostle says. If we are one body each is a member of the other. If one member suffers, all the others suffer with it. [12] What does our 'cenobia', our community life mean to you? Do you not reckon that we are one body, and all members of one another? Those in charge are the head; those who supervise and correct are the eyes; those entrusted with instruction are the mouth; those who listen and obey are the ears; those who do the work are the hands; those who run messages, who have outside ministries, are the feet. Are you the head? Fulfil your charge. Are you the eyes? Be in touch and consider. Are you the mouth? Speak and give help. Are you the ear? Listen. The hand? Work. The foot? Do your

errands! Let each one give assistance to the body according to his ability and take care to help one another, whether it is a matter of teaching and putting the word of God into the heart of a brother, or of consoling him in time of trouble or of giving a hand with work and helping him. In a word, as I was saying, each one according to his means should take care to be at one with everyone else, for the more one is united to his neighbor the more he is united to God.

And now I give you an example from the Fathers. Suppose we were to take a compass and insert the point and draw the outline of a circle. The centre point is the same distance from any point on the circumference. Now concentrate your minds on what is to be said! Let us suppose that this circle is the world and that God himself is the centre; the straight lines drawn from the circumference to the centre are the lives of men. To the degree that the saints enter into the things of the spirit, they desire to come near to God; and in proportion to their progress in the things of the spirit, they do in fact come close to God and to their neighbor. The closer they are to God, the closer they become to one another; and the closer they are to one another, the closer they become to God. Now consider in the same context the question of separation; for when they stand away from God and turn to external things, it is clear that the more they recede and become distant from God, the more they become distant from one another. See! This is the very nature of love. The more we are turned away from and do not love God, the greater the distance that separates us from our neighbor. If we were to love God more, we should be closer to God, and through love of him we should be more united in love to our neighbor; and the more we are united to our neighbor the more we are united to God. May God make us worthy to listen to what is fitting for us and do it. For in the measure that we pay attention and take care to carry out what we hear, God will always enlighten us and make us understand his will.

Endnotes

1. Apo Nau 97; ROC (1907) 402.
 2. Apo Moses 18; PG 65: 289; CS 59: (2) 119, Apo Poemen 6; PG 65:320D; CS 59: 139.
 3. Lk 6:42.
 4. Lk 18: 11.
 5. Apo Isaac; PG 65:240; CS 59: 93.
 6. Ibid.
 7. 1 P 4:8.
 8. 1 Cor 13:5-6.
 9. Apo Ammonas 10; PG 65:121; PO 11:408; CS 59:24.
 10. Zosimos, PE 2, 37: 119. Cf. PG 78:1693A.
 11. Rom 12:5.
 12. 1 Cor 12:26.
- From *Dorotheos of Gaza: Discourses and Sayings*, trans. Eric P. Wheeler (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1977), pp. 131-139.

Upcoming Events 2023

- 15 August Dormition of the Theotokos
- 1 September: Church New Year
- 24 September: Annual Meeting

GLORY BE TO GOD FOR ALL THINGS!