

The Confessor's Tongue for September 3, 2023

13th Sunday after Pentecost: St. Nektarios of Aegina, Hieromartyr Anthimos

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.

Annual Meeting & Parish Council

Uniform Parish Bylaws of the DOS

A Parish Council will be elected at the annual meeting from among adult members of the parish who have been members for at least a year. According to our parish bylaws, a council member is

A voting member of the Parish who has been a member of the Parish for one year is eligible for election to the Parish Council. A Council member who has served two consecutive terms may not be elected to a third consecutive term. He becomes eligible again, however, after he has been off the Council for one year. The Parish Council will elect its three principal officers, that is, the Warden (or Senior Warden), the Treasurer, and the Recording Secretary only from those members of the Council who have been members of the Parish for at least two years. In addition to the technical qualification of one-year membership in the Parish, members of the Parish Council must be zealous for the Orthodox Faith; regular communicants at the Eucharist; active in the Parish; willing to work for the improvement, both spiritual and temporal, of the Parish; not contentious and rebellious against the authority of the Church; not motivated to seek office out of pride, but only out of a strong desire to work for the Lord and for the upbuilding of His Church. Specifically, no one who fulfills only the minimum requirement of receiving the Sacraments; who is known to be rebellious against the Church, the Diocese, the Bishop, or the rector or priest-in-charge; who promotes divisions and factions among the membership; who is a member of the Masonic lodge, the Rosicrucians, or any similar secret or esoteric society; and who is not regular in his attendance at church services should ever be elected to a position of leadership in the Parish."

Concerning those able to participate in the Annual Meeting: "The Parish (Annual) Meeting is the highest authority of the Parish as a civil corporation. All members of the Parish as defined in Article III, Section 1, who have been members for a period of six months and are at least eighteen years old may attend and vote at the Parish Meeting."

Members of the Parish are those persons who:

(a) have been baptized and chrismated, or otherwise canonically received, into the Church and who consciously uphold and profess the Orthodox Faith;

(b) are regular communicants, that is, frequent participants in the Holy Mysteries of Confession and Communion. Members ideally partake of the Mysteries weekly, but in any case, no one can be a member of the Parish who fails to comply with this obligation at least once a year;

(c) fulfill the financial obligations established by the Parish. All members are urged to make a yearly commitment for financial support of the Parish in the form of a pledge, the standard of which is a tithe (one-tenth) of their income; and

(d) declare their intention to be members.

The Annual (Parish) Meeting has competence in the following matters:

(a) the approval of the annual operating budget submitted by the Parish Council (Article X);

(b) the election of the Parish Council members, the auditing committee, and the lay delegates to the Diocesan Assembly and the All-American Council, if the latter is to be convened in that current year;

(c) hearing and approving annual or special reports by committees and Parish organizations;

(d) matters concerning the purchase, improvement, or sale of real property; investment of Parish funds (other than in savings accounts); and the transfer of any interest in or change of ownership and the incurring of indebtedness or otherwise encumbering Parish funds or property;

(e) proposal of resolutions to the Diocesan Assembly provided that these be submitted to the Bishop three months prior to the date of the Assembly.

September 8: Nativity of the Theotokos

On the eighth day of the Church's new year, She celebrates the Great Feast of the Nativity of the Theotokos. The Feast has a pre-feast of one day and a post-feast of four days.

This feast marks the birth of Mary to her parents Joachim and Anna in their old age. The Church attributes great importance to the birth of Mary, the Mother of God, because it was through her and her acceptance of God's will that our Lord became man. This Feast occurs at the beginning of the Church year because Mary's birth marks the beginning of the process that led to our salvation. Without her cooperation and freely-given assent, the eternal Word of God would not have become man. The following hymn from Vespers of the Feast expresses much of the Feast's meaning:

Today is the beginning of joy for all the world; today the winds blow that bring tidings of salvation. The barrenness of our nature hath been loosed: for the barren woman is revealed as the mother of her, who, after bearing the Maker, still remained virgin. From her He who is God by nature taketh what is alien and maketh it His own; through her Christ worketh salvation for those gone astray in the flesh, He who loveth mankind and is the Deliverer of our souls.

The Feast marks the "beginning of joy," for through the godly inheritance of many generations, the way had been prepared for the birth of the woman who would be fitting to give birth to God in the flesh. God's plan awaited the coming of the suitable vessel who could bring His Son into the world, giving Him human flesh.

Man's nature, rendered barren by the curse, unable to fulfill his potential for achieving God's likeness, enslaved to sin, death, and the devil, is ended; for Anna, long barren, gives birth to the

perfect flowering and offering of the human race, her pure daughter Mary, and Mary, through her purity and willing submission to God, permits "He who is God by nature" to take "what is alien" (i.e. human nature) and to make that created human nature His own. Through her, Christ comes to work salvation for man whom He loves.

The Troparion of the Feast, which expresses the external meaning of the Feast, gives the reason for the claim that Mary's birth is "the beginning of joy for all the world" which "hath brought joy to all the inhabited earth." Through her, Christ is born who delivers us from the curse and from death and pours out upon us blessing and eternal life.

The Kontakion of the Feast, which expresses the internal, or hidden, meaning of the Feast, describes the cosmic effects of Mary's birth: Adam and Eve are set free from death and corruption, and God's people are delivered from sin. A barren woman, Anna, bears a woman, Mary, who sustains our lives, and she does this because of whom she bore: Christ our God.

As usual, we sing or say the troparion and kontakion of the feast at meals and as part of our daily prayers from the Vigil of the Feast through the Leavetaking on September 12th.

Troparion, tone 4

Thy Nativity, O Virgin, / hath proclaimed joy to the whole universe! / The Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God, / hath shone from thee, O Theotokos! / By annulling the curse, / He bestowed a blessing. / By destroying, death He hath granted us eternal life.

Kontakion, tone 4

By thy Nativity, O most pure Virgin, / Joachim and Anna are freed from barrenness; / Adam and Eve, from the corruption of death. / And we, thy poeple, freed from the guilt of sin, /celebrate and sing to thee: / the barren woman giveth birth to the Theotokos, / the Nourisher of our Life.

The Importance of Confession, II

Elder Cleopa of Romania (+1998)

"Do you want to know something else? *Nothing unclean shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.* That is why the greatest thing you can do for someone is to summon the priest, not the doctor, when that person is sick. The priest is the one who has grace from God. haven't you heard the Gospel? *Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.* If you confess thoroughly before your death, your soul is saved. As the soul passes through the toll houses, any sins that were absolved by the priest on earth have been erased from the record by the Holy Spirit. The devils are furious over this, but there is nothing they can do. 'Look at that! We had him in our hands before!' But now, the Holy Spirit has erased all those sins.'

"This is the power that God has given to the priests; if it were not for this power that God bestowed on the priests, no one among men could be saved. God, who made heaven and earth, also knew what to do for the salvation of the world. When Christ was resurrected, he gave this authority to the

apostles. What did He say to the apostles? *He breathed upon them and said to them: Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained. . . what you bind on earth will be bound in heaven . . .* What, my brothers! Haven't you read this? Haven't you heard the Gospel?

"Following a thorough confession, we need to be given a penance [*epitemia*], and we must fulfill that penance. The one who has confessed is absolutely obligated to fulfill that penance in order to be delivered from the eternal torments of hell. We see in Holy Scripture that everyone who sinned before the Lord was cleansed through a penance. If someone has received a penance and has not fulfilled it, then he cannot be cleansed of the leprosy of sin, nor will his soul be released from the slavery to the devil. You should be aware that someone who truly repents not only received the penance given him by the priest, but he even asks for a greater penance, for he knows every sinner will have to fulfill a penance, where here in this passing life, or else in eternity. Of course, the penance imposed must be in accordance with the person's individual strength.

"Do you think that you can outrun the devil? In a split second, he can be at the other end of the earth. But you can outrun him in another way: if you humble yourself and consider yourself to be nothing but dust and ashes, a sinner who is unable and unworthy to live on this earth. The only thing the devil fears is humility! He is not afraid of anything else. Even if you are the most ascetic person on earth, if you do not know how to ask for forgiveness, then you are nothing but a laughingstock to the devils.

"Therefore, brothers, may the mercy of God help us to obtain at least a little bit of humility and discernment, because this world is full of traps and snares and every kind of temptation and worldly devises to make us fall. We need discernment at all times. Remember what I told you before: the forest is not afraid of someone who carries off a carload of wood, because it knows that the axle of the cart will break as it goes down the road. No, the forest fears the one who carries off a piece of wood every time he leaves the woods. That is the way it is with the enemy of our souls: he does not fear the one who undertakes great ascetic feats at once, for he knows that person will become tired and abandon everything. Instead, he fears the one who increases in the spiritual life little by little. St. Theodosius says that by working little by little, man gains great wealth in both material and spiritual things. Do things little by little and always regret that you have not done more."

Upcoming Events 2023

24 September: Annual Meeting
15 October: 2:00 p.m. Octoberfest
12 November: Parish Thanksgiving Dinner

GLORY BE TO GOD FOR ALL THINGS!