

The Confessor's Tongue for September 17, 2023

15th Sunday after Pentecost: Martyrs Faith, Hope, Love & Mother Sophia

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.

On Keeping Passover

The Lord gave his people Israel many instructions in the year they camped at Sinai, building the tabernacle and its furniture and all that God had commanded them to make for His service. An important part of those instructions related to keeping the seven feasts the Lord had established for Israel.

The first among the feasts was Passover, which commemorated Israel's Exodus from slavery in Egypt. The feast helped them to remember what the Lord had done for them, and to honor Him for it, and to remember Him always in the present. Forgetting what the Lord had done was a great danger. In Deuteronomy, the Lord warns Israel a number of times about forgetting what He had done for them.

And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full; Then beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. (Deuteronomy 1:10-12)

The danger of forgetting was that they would become ungrateful and would fall away from the Lord to worship idols, break the covenant, and incur the curse. This they did repeatedly to their shame and harm.

Positively, they were commanded many times to remember what the Lord had done: "But thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt, and the LORD thy God redeemed thee thence" (Deut. 24:18). Keeping Passover was an essential part of keeping the positive command to remember God's mighty works on their behalf. The Lord commanded them,

And it shall come to pass, when ye be come to the land which the LORD will give you, according as he hath promised, that ye shall keep this service. And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the LORD's Passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. (Exodus 12:25-27)

The question arose, what should a Hebrew do if the time for Passover came and he was on a journey or unclean and so could not keep the feast? The Lord did not say, "That's ok, just observe it next year." Rather, He appointed that they should keep it the next month. If the normal day for Passover was the fourteenth of the first month, those unable to keep it then were to keep it the fourteenth of the second month (Numbers 9:10-12). But if a man was ritually

clean and at home, not on a journey, and he simply chose not to keep the Passover, the Lord gave this judgment: "But the man that is clean, and is not in a journey, and forbeareth to keep the Passover, even the same soul shall be cut off from among his people: because he brought not the offering of the LORD in his appointed season, that man shall bear his sin" (Numbers 9:13). To be a member of the covenant meant to remember God for all His benefits and blessings, to make time not only at Passover but at the other feasts during the year to remember, to not forget, to make offerings to the good Lord and worship Him.

If this was true in old Israel, how much more true is it now in the New Israel, the Church? The Great Feasts of the Church year recount important moments in God's work for our salvation. We are to lay aside worldly business to gather in Christ's name to remember what He has done for us, to return thanks, to offer the sacrifices of praise and our whole life, and to worship Him. Just as worship on the Lord's day is not optional for the Christian, so too, the worship of the Lord on the Great Feasts is not optional, but a joyful opportunity to draw near to the Lord, to remember, to be grateful, to buttress ourselves against forgetting the Lord's benefits to us. May the Lord grant us all proper zeal for His service to remember, and not to forget. *Fr. Justin Frederick*

Differences Between Orthodoxy & Catholicism

Elder Cleopa of Romania (+1998)

"The principle dogmatic and canonical teachings that distinguish us from the Roman Catholics are:

"First, the *filioque*. They say that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. This dogmatic error is very serious. The Holy Gospel according to St. John says that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and is sent into the world through the Son.

"Second: the supremacy of the Pope. The Pope is considered by the Roman Catholics as the supreme head of the *entire* Christian Church, in other words, Christ's *locum tenens* upon earth. They claim that Pope is greater than all the patriarchs! The universal Church never accepted this. Demonic pride! They refer to the Pope as the successor of St. Peter.

"Third is papal infallibility. The Roman Catholics say that the Pope cannot err as a man in matter pertaining to the faith or when he preaches. This is a dogma that the Orthodox Church rejects.

"Fourth is purgatory. They say that there is a great fire between paradise and hell where souls stay for several hundreds of years to be cleansed before going to paradise. This is not found anywhere in holy Scripture, and not teaching on this subject can be found anywhere.

"Fifth is leavened bread. They do not serve holy communion with raised bread, but with wafers, like the Jews.

"Sixth is the new dogma which the Romans instituted of the 'Immaculate Conception.' They claim that the Mother of the Lord was born of the Holy Spirit. This is not true. She was born in the natural manner from her holy parents, Joachim and Anna, as a fruit of prayer.

"Seventh is transubstantiation. The Roman Catholics do not have the prayer of the invocation of the Holy Spirit as we do at the Epiclesis of the Divine Liturgy. They claim that the gifts are sanctified solely through the words "take, eat. . ." and so forth. There is no prayer for the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the holy gifts.

"Eighth is clerical celibacy. Roman Catholic priests may not be married. They are all celibate, which is contrary to the decisions of the Ecumenical Councils that allow married men to become priests.

"Ninth is papal indulgences. Another error. No matter what sins people have committed, if they give a lot of money to the Pope, he can forgive and absolve them. Their saints have too many virtues and good deeds and don't have a use for so many of them, so they give these extra deeds to the pope and he sells these for the forgiveness of sins to people who don't have enough good deeds.

"Tenth is a very important point: Chrismation. The Roman Catholics do not chrismate children immediately after baptism, but only when they are seven or eight years old, and then only the bishop can perform this service.

"We have the Constantinopolitan Liturgies of St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory the Dialogist, and St. John Chrysostom, but the Roman Catholics have only the Roman Liturgy and the Ambrosian Liturgy.

"These are the man dogmatic and canonical points that separate the Orthodox Church from the Roman Catholics."

"Perverse Thoughts Separate Men from God" Part Two

From Elder Paisios in "Elder Paisios of the Holy Mt."

Looking at this subject from a different point of view, Elder Paisios stressed and greatly emphasized the specific characteristic of love, that is, that "love is not irritable or resentful." He used to say that "we should never, even under the worst circumstances, allow a negative thought to penetrate our soul. The person, who, under all circumstances, is inclined to have positive thoughts, will always be a winner; his life will be a constant festivity, since it is constantly based on his positive thinking. Our acts depend on and are determined by the "machine" we have inside us, and not by the "material" we digest, or the environment we live in. I will give you an example, so you can better understand what I am trying to say:

If one has a machine that produces bullets and feeds it with the highest quality material—let's say

gold—the machine will still convert gold into bullets, golden but destructive bullets; if he feeds it with silver, then it will produce silver bullets; if he feeds it with iron, it will produce iron bullets, or if he feeds it with clay, it will produce clay bullets. In other words, no matter what material he feeds his machine, it still produces bullets, because it was made to manufacture these destructive products. If someone converts the machine into one that produces holy chalices instead of bullets, then whatever material he feeds it, it will always produce holy chalices. If he puts in the machine iron or clay, it will manufacture clay or iron chalices respectively.

I will now tell you a story regarding a very old father from Kapsala. The old father's "machine" was the kind that produced only positive thoughts. He only saw the good things in life, and he was blind to every evil. Once, a group of people visited him and brought him a small radio as a present. The old father took it in his hands and examined it with lots of admiration. He asked where it was manufactured, and the visitors told him in Japan. As he was looking at it, suddenly he was filled with joy and started kissing the radio saying: "Glory to God!"

The visitors asked him why he was glorifying God, and he explained to them, "You see, I am very pleased that the Japanese Christians put the sign of the Holy Cross on the products they manufacture."

The old father had noticed the positive and negative poles (+, -) of the batteries and thought it was the sign of the Cross. His mind produced a simplistic and positive thought for the radio the visitors brought him. Considering he was an ascetic, he could have developed negative thoughts and get angry at them for bringing him such an unsuitable present.

Someone asked the same father why he was making the sign of the Cross when he saw an airplane. And he simply answered: "Don't you see, my child, that its shape looks like the sign of our Holy Cross?" The old father ignored the negative thoughts associated with the sight of an airplane, such as wars and bombing. His mind was attracted by the similarity of its shape to the sign of the Holy Cross; the sight and noise of the airplane made him think of the crucifixion of Christ....*To be continued...*

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!