

The Confessor's Tongue for March 24, 2024

Sunday of Orthodoxy; Forefeast of Annunciation

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.

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Sunday of Orthodoxy

This day the Holy Church commemorates the victory of Orthodoxy over heresies and is why this day is also called the "Sunday of Orthodoxy". The Synaxarion explains that the day celebrates "the restoration of the holy and venerable icons", which happened in first half of the 9th century (in 842) "by the Emperor Michael (the Byzantine Emperor), the holy and blessed Empress Theodora (see page 80) and the Holy Methodius (see page 206), Patriarch of Constantinople". This commemoration was established to celebrate the final victory of the Holy Church over the iconoclastic heresy. In the hymns for this day the Holy Church, glorifying the holy icons, and also its iconodule adherents and inspiring in us the obligation of venerating icons, sings: "A feast of joy and gladness is revealed to us today. For the teachings of the true Faith shines in all their glory, and the Church of Christ is bright with splendor, adorned with the holy icons which now have been restored; and God has granted to the faithful unity of mind." "Now a pious brightness stretches over all, dispersing the flattery of the impious like a cloud, enlightening the hearts of the pious: come let us fall down with pious wisdom before the honorable icons of Christ worshipping in the Orthodox way", "and with due honor let us venerate the holy icons of Christ, of the all pure Virgin and the saints, whether depicted on walls, on wooden panels or on holy vessels, rejecting the impious teaching of the heretics.

But in this way the Holy Church at the time of victory over the iconoclasts in the struggle against various heresies finally explained and defined in the canons of the Seventh Ecumenical Council the Orthodox Christian teaching that is now a celebrated event and is not called the celebration of iconolatry but the Triumph of Orthodoxy. It does not mean that after the 10th Century heresies would or could not appear any more; but it means that all following heresies, even though they were numerous and various, find their accusation and refutation in the definitions of the Seven Ecumenical Councils.

The victory of Orthodoxy in the Greek Church itself was first celebrated on the first Sunday of Great Lent, and thus the basis of the present Triumph of Orthodoxy is historical. Together with these things the Holy Church through the celebration of the present day means to grant great comfort to those who attend. This intention agrees with the rules of faith and piety and the ascetic effort of the fast. It sees in this action the proof of their living communion according to their faith and life, and finds in this the foundation for prayerful petition to God for them. After the end of the liturgy on this day it is necessary to serve the special Rite of Orthodoxy, composed by St. Methodius.

Again the restoration of honoring and venerating the holy and venerable icons was annually prescribed "from that time these holy confessors appointed the annual commemoration of this solemnity, so that we might never again fall into a similar ignominy". Christianity and together with it, The Rite of Orthodoxy, passed from Greece to the Russian Church. *Bulgakov Handbook*

From the Triodion

Thou who art uncircumscribed in Thy Divine nature,
O Master,
wast pleased in the last times to take flesh and be circumscribed;
and in assuming flesh, Thou hast also taken on thyself all its distinctive properties.
Therefore we depict the likeness of Thine outward form,
venerating it with an honor that is relative.
So we are exalted to the love of Thee,
and following the holy traditions handed down by the Apostles,
from Thine icon we receive the grace of healing.

Lord I Have Cried at Vespers for Sunday of Orthodoxy

"Thy Will Be Done"

St. John of Kronstadt

It is never so difficult to say from the heart, 'Thy Will be done, Father,' as when we are in sore affliction or grievous sickness, and especially when we are subjected to the injustice of men, or the assaults and wiles of the enemy. It is also difficult to say from the heart, 'Thy Will be done' when we ourselves were the cause of some misfortune, for then we think that it is not God's Will, but our own will, that has placed us in such a position, although nothing can happen without the Will of God. In general, it is difficult sincerely to believe that it is the Will of God that we should suffer, when the heart knows both by faith and experience that God is our blessedness; and therefore it is difficult to say in misfortune, 'Thy Will be done.' We think, 'Is it possible that this is the Will of God? Why does God torment us? Why are others quiet and happy? What have we done? Will there be an end to our torments?' And so on. But when it is difficult for our corrupt nature to acknowledge the Will of God over us, that the Will of God without which nothing happens, and humbly to submit to it, then it is the very time for us humbly to submit to this Will, and to offer to the Lord our most precious sacrifice—that is, heartfelt devotion to Him, not only in the time of ease and happiness, but also in suffering and misfortune; it is then that we must submit our vain erring wisdom to the perfect Wisdom of God, for our thoughts are as far from the thoughts of God 'as the heavens are higher than the earth.' *MLIC, pp. 136-7*

From the Triodion

Let us now set out with joy upon the second week of the Fast;
and like Elijah the Tishbite let us fashion for ourselves from day to day, O brethren,
a fiery chariot from the four great virtues;
let us exalt our minds through freedom from the passions;
let us arm our flesh with purity and our hands with acts of compassion;
let us make our feet beautiful with the preaching of the Gospel;
and let us put the enemy to flight and gain the victory.
Sunday Evening Vespers of the First Sunday of the Fast

On the Carnal, Corrupted Man
St. John of Kronstadt

The carnal man does not understand the spiritual blessedness that proceeds from prayer and virtue, and cannot comprehend even in a small degree what the blessedness in the next world will be. He does not know anything higher than earthly carnal happiness, and considers future blessings as imaginary visions. But the spiritual man knows by experience the blessedness of the virtuous soul, and foretastes future blessedness in his heart. *My Life in Christ*, p. 129

One cannot eat and drink and smoke continually. One cannot turn human life into constant eating, drinking, and smoking (although there are men who do eat, drink, and smoke almost uninterruptedly); and thus the spirit of evil has turned life into smoking, and made the mouth, which ought to be employed in thanking and praising the Lord, into a smoking furnace. The less and lighter the food and drink you take, the lighter and more refined your spirit will become. *MLIC*, p. 139

The corrupted man continually wishes to eat and drink, to continually satisfy his sight, hearing, smell, and feeling; carnal men satisfy themselves with dainty food and drink, fine sights, music, smoking, magnificent edifices, and outward splendor. But the adornment of holy objects raises our souls to God, and is therefore not only sinless, but holy and edifying, as also sacred singing, the fragrance of incense, the magnificence and splendor of the ornaments of the temple and all its vessels. All these, being destined to serve to the glory of God and to arouse pious feelings, are not sinful, but holy. Buy there, in the world, everything ministers to the carnal, corrupted man, and estranges from God. The corrupt heart seeks impure carnal sensations, and everything there satisfies it. The corrupt mind seeks knowledge corresponding to its corruption, and is there satisfied. The corrupt imagination and memory also seek images corresponding to them, and are there satisfied. But we Christians are "new creatures," or "a chosen generation," a new people, "created in righteousness and true holiness" after God. We must divest

ourselves of the old man and his works, and must fight against his desires and lusts. *MLIC*, pp. 142-3

The carnal man considers the Christian's freedom as slavery; for instance, attending Divine service, fasting, preparation for the Sacrament, Confession, Communion, all the Sacraments, and does not know that all this is a requirement of his nature, a necessity for his spirit. *MLIC*, p. 138

The carnal man's entire life and occupations have a carnal tendency and carnal aim; his prayer is carnal, his learning and his teaching of others are carnal, his writings are carnal; at every step, in nearly every word, the carnal life appears. The carnal life manifests itself especially in everything relating to the man's appetites: here is the very seat of the carnal man. In proportion as the man by God's grace lays aside the carnal life, he begins to trample his carnal appetites under foot—he alters his food, ceases to live for insatiable appetite; gradually in his heart, faith, hope, and love begin to reign. Instead of eating, drinking, dress, riches, God, the soul, eternal life, eternal torment, occupy his thoughts and imagination. Instead of the love of money, of food, drink, dress, the luxury of his house and surroundings, love for God, for men, a longing to dwell with the Angels and Saints; instead of food and drink, hunger and thirst, and the diligent reading and listening to the Word of God and Divine service. Previously his enemies were those who hindered his outward well-being, now he bears privations with equanimity; previously he sleep much and found pleasure in sleep, now he sleeps little and intentionally deprives himself of sweet sleep; previously he gratified the flesh in every way, now he mortifies it so that it may not rebel against the spirit. Instead... *MLIC*, p. 135

On Our End (Telos) and Our Goal (Skopos)
St. John Cassian, Conference 1

The end [*telos*] of our profession [of faith] . . . is the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven; but the goal or *skopos* is purity of heart, without which it is impossible for anyone to reach that end.

[Purity of heart means] not to be envious, not to be boastful, not to be angry, not to do evil, not to seek the things that are one's own, not to rejoice over iniquity, not to think evil . . . always to offer God a perfect and utterly clean heart and to keep it unsullied by any passion.

For the sake of this, we know we must undertake fasts, vigils, labors, bodily deprivations, readings, and other virtuous things [raising children, etc.] so that by them we may be able to acquire a heart untouched by any harmful passion . . .

Upcoming Events 2023

29 April-4 May: Holy Week
5 May: Holy Pascha
5-11 May: Bright Week

GLORY BE TO GOD FOR ALL THINGS!