

# The Confessor's Tongue for April 7, 2024

Third Sunday of Lent: Veneration of the Cross; St. Tikhon of America

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 the Veneration of the Cross

This Sunday the Holy Church glorifies the holy cross and the fruits of the death of the Savior on the cross. She will carry out the holy cross into the middle of the temple for veneration, and is why the Sunday is called the Veneration of the Cross.

The purpose of instituting the Holy Cross in the service on the third Sunday will be revealed as a beautiful comparison by the Holy Church to the tree of life in paradise, the tree which sweetened the bitter waters of Marah, the tree with the canopy of leaves under whose shade tired travelers seeking the eternal promised land may find coolness and rest. Thus, the Holy Church offers the Holy Cross for spiritual reinforcement to those going through the ascetic effort of the fast, just as food, drink and rest serve as bodily reinforcement. This spiritual reinforcement is given as the representation of the love of God to man for whom the Son of God turned Himself over to death on the cross. It is especially necessary in the middle of our effort because now our ascetic efforts already have lost much of the freshness of its power and however yet cannot hopefully enliven itself for the near and successful ending of our ascetical effort. Having concentrated all that is the most severe and sorrowful in the worship services of the previous weeks, especially during the first, that may both frighten the sinner and apparently touch the hardest of human hearts, now in the middle of the large and difficult arena of the Holy Forty Day Fast the Holy Church offers the Holy Cross for great comfort and encouragement as needed for raising the flagging strength of those fasting. Wherefore nothing can both console, encourage, and inspire the fatigued, or perhaps even the Christian weakened in spirit so much as the presentation of the eternal divine love of the Savior who turned Himself over to the struggle on the cross for the sake of our salvation. *Bulgakov Handbook*

At Vigil on Saturday evening, the Gospel is not brought out for veneration. Instead, at the end of the Great Doxology, the Cross decorated with flowers, is brought out for veneration by the faithful. Special hymns are appointed to be sung at this time.

At the Liturgy on Sunday, the hymn "Before Thy Cross, we bow down in veneration..." is sung in place of "Holy God". Customarily, the Cross is venerated by all at the end of the Liturgy with prostrations, marking a rare exception to the rule of not doing prostrations on Sundays, or on a day when we have received Holy Communion.

The Cross is left out in the church through the Ninth Hour on Friday. When we enter the church each day, we normally venerate the Cross first, making full prostrations before it instead of our usual bows.

## From the Triodion

Nailed upon the Cross, Thy side pierced by the spear, Thou wast counted as a lifeless corpse; and Thou wast given gall to drink, O longsuffering Master, who by the hand of Moses hast made sweet the waters of Marah. Therefore I entreat Thee and I pray: uproot the bitter passions from my understanding, sweeten my mind with the honey of repentance, and grant that I may worship at Thy holy Passion.

*Tuesday Vespers of the 4<sup>th</sup> Week*

## On the Participation of the Faithful in the Eucharist, Part 2

*Document approved at the Hierarchical Consultation of the Russian Orthodox Church, February 2-3, 2015 in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow*

1. The practice of fasting in preparation for communion is regulated by the ascetical tradition of the Church. The fasting as abstinence from animal products and abstaining from distractions, accompanied by assiduous prayer and repentance, traditionally precedes the communion of the Holy Mysteries. The length and extent of fasting before holy communion can differ, depending on the Christian's inner state and objective life circumstances. Particularly, in the case of an acute or chronic illness that requires special dietary rules, as well as during pregnancy and nursing a child for women, the time of fasting can be shortened, lightened, or set aside altogether. The same rule concerns Christians who temporarily or permanently live in secular institutions which presuppose living and taking meals in common (military units, hospitals, boarding schools, special schools, or prisons).

The practice that has taken shape in our time that every one who receives communion several times a year fasts for three days before communion fully corresponds to the tradition of the Church. At the same time, the practice when a person who receives communion on a weekly basis or several times a month, while observing lengthy and one-day fasts established by the Typicon, approaches the holy Chalice without any additional fasting or keeping a fast on the day or in the evening before communion, is acceptable as well. This matter has to be resolved with the blessing of the person's spiritual father. The requirements concerning preparation for holy communion, intended for the laypeople who receive communion frequently, are also applicable for members of the clergy.

Bright Week, the week following the feast of Christ's Pascha, creates a special case regarding the practice of preparation for holy communion. The ancient canonical norm regarding the obligatory participation of all faithful at the Sunday eucharist was in the seventh century expanded to include all of the Divine Liturgies during Bright Week:

From the holy day of the Resurrection of Christ our God until the New Sunday, for a whole week, in the holy churches the faithful ought to be free from labour, rejoicing in Christ with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs; and celebrating the feast, and applying their minds to the reading of the holy Scriptures, and delighting in the Holy Mysteries; for thus shall we be exalted with Christ

and together with him be raised up (canon 66 of the Council in Trullo).

It follows from this canon that the laypeople are called to receive communion during the liturgies of Bright Week. Considering that the Typicon does not foresee any fasting during Bright Week and that Bright Week is preceded by seven weeks of struggle in the course of Lent and Holy Week, it ought to be acknowledged that the practice that has been established in many parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church that Christians who observed the Great Fast receive holy communion during Bright Week, while limiting their fasting to abstaining from food after midnight, is fully consistent with the canonical tradition of the Church. Similar practice can be expanded to the period between Nativity and Theophany. Those who prepare for communion during these days should take special care from excessive consumption of food and drink.

2. One should distinguish the preparatory fast from the eucharistic fast in a proper sense, i.e. the complete abstinence from food and drink from midnight until holy communion. This fast is mandated by the canons (see canon 41/50 of Carthage, cited above). At the same time, the requirement of eucharistic fast is not applied to infants, as well as to persons who suffer from grave acute or chronic illnesses which demand a regular intake of medicine or food (e.g. diabetes), and to those who are dying. Moreover, at the discretion of the spiritual father, this requirement may be facilitated for women who are pregnant or nursing a child. Canon law prescribes abstinence from marital relations during the period of preparation for holy communion. Canon 5 of Timothy of Alexandria refers to such abstinence on the eve of communion. The Church encourages those Christians who suffer from the harmful habit of smoking tobacco to abandon this habit. Those, however, who do not yet have the strength to do so must abstain from smoking from midnight and, if possible, from the evening before communion. Since in accordance with the Typicon, the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is combined with Vespers, its celebration during the evening hours constitutes a liturgical norm (even though in practice this liturgy usually is celebrated in the morning). In accordance with the decision of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church of November 28, 1968, when the Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is celebrated in the evening, the abstention from food and drink for those who receive communion must be no less than six hours, however the abstention before communion from midnight of the day is quite praiseworthy and those who have physical strength may keep it. One should also apply the standard of no less than six hours of abstinence while preparing for communion at the Divine Liturgy that is celebrated during the night (e.g. on the feasts of Holy Pascha and the Nativity of Christ).

3. The preparation for communion consists not only in abstinence from certain food, but also includes the more regular attendance of church services, and in the performance of a rule of prayer. The Order of preparation for Holy Communion, consisting of a special canon and prayers, is an inalienable part of this prayerful preparation. The prayer rule usually also includes the canons to the Saviour, the Theotokos, the Guardian Angel and other prayers (see "The Rule for those who are preparing to serve and wish to partake of the Holy Divine Mysteries of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ" in the Liturgical Psalter. During Bright Week, the prayer rule consists of the Paschal canon, and also the canon and prayers before communion.

A personal rule of prayer should be recited outside of services, which always presuppose the joint prayer of the entire assembly. Special pastoral care should be given to the people whose spiritual path in the Church is just beginning, and who are not yet accustomed to lengthy prayer rules, as well as to children and those who are ill. The Liturgical Psalter presupposes a possibility to replace canons and akathists with the Jesus prayer and prostrations. In the spirit of this direction, with a blessing of the spiritual father, the above-mentioned rule of prayer may be substituted by other prayers.

Since the Liturgy is the summit of the whole liturgical cycle, the attendance at the services that precede the Liturgy – primarily, Vespers and Matins (or the Vigil) – is an important part of preparation for the partaking of the Holy Body and Blood of Christ.

If a person was absent at the evening services on the eve of communion or did not recite his prayer rule in its fullness, his spiritual father or a priest who hears his confession must urge him to a more thorough preparation for communion, but also must take into account the circumstances of his life and possible existence of excusable reasons.

Preparing themselves for the reception of the Holy Mysteries of Christ at the Divine Liturgy, the children of the Church must gather in the temple before the service begins. To come late for the Divine Liturgy, especially when the faithful arrive after the reading of the Epistle and the Gospel demonstrates neglect toward the Mystery of the Body and Blood of Christ. If such tardiness occurs, the priest who hears confessions or distributes communion may decide not to admit such a person to the Holy Chalice. Exception can be made for people with limited physical capabilities, nursing mothers, small children, and the adults who accompany them.

After the end of the Divine Liturgy, a Christian must hear in church or himself read the thanksgiving prayers after holy communion. While prayerfully giving thanks to God for the gift he has received, a Christian must strive by all means to preserve this gift in peace, piety, and love for God and neighbor.

Considering the unbreakable bond between communion and the Divine Liturgy, the clergy must not permit the practice where in some churches the faithful are prohibited from receiving holy communion on the feasts of Holy Pascha, the Nativity of Christ, Theophany, on Memorial Saturdays, and on the Day of Rejoicing (Radonitsa).

### III.

A person who is preparing for holy communion performs an examination of his conscience, which presupposes a sincere repentance for the sins he has committed and revealing of these sins before the priest in the Sacrament of Repentance. In the situation where many who come to our churches are not yet fully rooted in the church life, and consequently sometimes do not understand the meaning of the Sacrament of the Eucharist or are not aware of the moral and canonical consequences of their sinful deeds, confession allows the priest who hears confession to discern whether it is possible to allow the penitent to receive the Holy Mysteries of Christ.

In special cases, in accordance with the practice that has formed in many parishes, a spiritual father may allow a layperson to partake of the Body and Blood of Christ several times during the same week (e.g. during Holy or Bright Week) without coming to confession before every

communion, excluding the situations when a person desiring to receive communion perceives a need for confession. While giving this blessing to the faithful, spiritual fathers should particularly remember their great responsibility for the souls of their flock, which was placed upon them in the sacrament of ordination.

In some parishes, it takes a long time to wait for the communion of the laity to begin. This occurs due to the length of communion of the clergy during liturgies with many concelebrants or due to the hearing of confessions after the communion verse. This state of affairs should be seen as undesirable. The sacrament of repentance must be, if possible, performed outside of Divine Liturgy, lest the penitent and the confessing priest both be deprived from full participation in the joint eucharistic prayer. It is unacceptable for a priest assisting at the liturgy to hear confessions during the reading of the Gospel or during the eucharistic canon. It is desirable to hear confessions in the evening before the Divine Liturgy or before the beginning of the liturgy. Moreover, it is important to establish in parishes the fixed days and hours when a priest would always be present to meet those who desire to talk with their pastor.

#### IV.

It is unacceptable to receive communion in a state of resentment or anger, or with grave, unconfessed sins or unforgiven offenses. Those who dare to approach the eucharistic gifts in such a state of soul place themselves under divine judgment, in accordance with the words of the Apostle: "For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body, eats and drinks judgment upon himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died" (1 Cor 11:29-30).

When grave sins have been committed, the application of the canons regarding excommunication of a person for an extended period of time (for longer than one year) may be performed only with the blessing of the diocesan bishop. When a priest abuses his right to impose penances, his case may be brought for review by the ecclesiastical court.

The canons prohibit receiving communion in the state of female impurity (canon 2 of St Dionysius of Alexandria, canon 7 of Timothy of Alexandria). An exception may be made in case of a danger of death, and whenever the issue of blood continues for a long time due to chronic or acute illness.

#### V.

As it was stated in the Bases for Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church (10.2) and in the definition of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church of December 28, 1998, the Church, while insisting upon the necessity for ecclesiastical marriage, still does not deprive from communion of the Holy Mysteries the spouses who constitute a marital union contracted with the acceptance of all legal rights and duties and recognized as a legally valid marriage, but which was not for some reasons sanctified by the rite of crowning. This measure of ecclesial economy is grounded in the words of St Paul (1 Cor 7:14) and canon 72 of the Council in Trullo, and intends to make it more possible to live the life of the Church for those Orthodox Christians who entered their marriage before the beginning of their conscious participation in the Church's sacraments. In contrast with adulterous cohabitation, which is a canonical impediment for communion, the former union constitutes a legal marriage in the eyes of the Church (excepting the cases when legally permissible "marriages," e.g. between close relatives or same-sex

cohabitations, recognized in a number of countries, are from the Church's point of view unacceptable in principle). The duty of pastors, however, is to remind the faithful of the necessity not only to contract a legally valid marriage, but also to sanctify such marriage through the liturgical rite of the Church.

Special attention is given to cases when persons have lived together for a long time, often having children together, but are not united either through ecclesiastical or a state-recognized marriage – moreover, one of the persons in this cohabitation does not desire either to register their relationship or to marry in Church. Such cohabitations are sinful and their wide dissemination in the world demonstrates the rebellion against the divine purpose concerning man, endangers the institution of marriage and cannot receive any recognition from the Church. At the same time, the spiritual father who knows the life situation of a specific person and condescends to human weakness, may in exceptional cases admit to communion the person in this relationship who is aware of the sinfulness of such cohabitation and seeks to enter a lawful marriage. The person in this cohabitation, guilty of preventing this marriage from taking place, cannot be admitted to communion. If, however, at least one of the cohabiting persons is married to another person, both sides cannot be admitted to communion without canonical rectification of their condition and offering an appropriate penance.

#### VI.

The preparation of children for holy communion has its own special characteristics. The length of this preparation is determined by the parents with the advice of their spiritual father and must take into consideration the child's age, state of health, and the extent of his integration into the life of the Church.

Parents who regularly bring their children to the Holy Chalice, which is a good thing, must seek to receive communion together with them (if it is not possible for both parents to receive, then one parent at a time). The practice where parents bring children to communion, but themselves seldom receive communion, prevents the development in a child's mind of a sense of need to partake of the eucharistic meal.

The first confession before communion, in accordance with canon 18 of Timothy of Alexandria, is performed after the child has reached ten years of age, but in the tradition of the Russian Orthodox Church the first confession usually occurs at seven years of age. At the same time, the age of the first confession, as well as the frequency of confession for a child between seven and ten years of age, if he receives communion every Sunday, must be determined by the spiritual father and the parents together, considering the individual characteristics in the child's development and his understanding of the life of the Church.

The eucharistic fast is not mandatory for children until three years of age. According to tradition, beginning with the age of three years, Orthodox families gradually teach the child to abstain from food and drink before the communion of the Holy Mysteries. By the age of seven years, a child must be firmly accustomed to receive on an empty stomach. From this time, the child should be instructed to read the prayers before holy communion, the content and length of which is determined by the parents in accordance with the child's age, as well as his spiritual and intellectual development.

The sponsors of the child must fully participate in rearing the children in piety, which includes urging the children toward regular partaking of the Holy Mysteries of Christ and helping the parents to bring the children to the Holy Chalice.

\*\*\* *The Eucharist is the central Sacrament of the Church. Regular communion is necessary for a human being for salvation, in accordance with the words of our Lord Jesus Christ:*  
*Truly, truly I say unto you: unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day (John 6:53-54).*

### From the Triodion

I have surpassed the Publican in my transgressions, yet I do not vie with him in his repentance; I have not gained the virtues of the Pharisee, yet I imitate his self-conceit. O Christ my God, in Thy supreme humility Thou hast upon the Cross destroyed the devil's arrogance: make me a stranger to the past sins of the Publican and to the great foolishness of the Pharisee; establish in my soul the good that each of them possessed, and save me.

*Tuesday Vespers of the 4<sup>th</sup> Week*

### Paschal Greetings in Various Languages

*A chance to prepare ahead of time. Be ready for any!*

*Greek:* Christos anesti! Alethos anesti!

*Russian:* Khristos voskresye! Vo istinu voskresye!

*Arabic:* El Messieh kahn! Hakken kahn!

*Serbian:* Cristos vaskres! Vaistinu vaskres!

*Romanian:* Hristos a inviat! Adevărat a învial!

*Spanish:* Cristo ha resucitado! En verdad ha resucitado!

*German:* Christus ist auferstanden! Wahrlich er ist erstanden!

*Latin:* Christus resurrexit! Vere resurrexit!

*Japanese:* Christos fukkatsu! Jitsu ni fukkatsu!

*French:* Le Christ est ressuscité! En verité il est ressuscité!

*Finnish:* Kristus nousi kuolleista! Totisesti nousi!

*Norwegian:* Kristus er oppstanden! Han er sannelig oppstanden!

*Italian:* Cristo e' risorto! Veramente e' risorto!

*Eritrean-Tigre:* Christos tensiou! Bahake tensiou!

*Swahili:* Kristo amefufukka! Kweli Amefufukka!

*Georgian:* Kriste aghsda! Cheshdmaritad aghsda!

*Finnish:* Kristus nousi kuolleista! Totisesti nousi!

*Zulu:* Ukristu uvukile! Uvukile kuphela!

*Welsh:* Atgyfododd Crist! Atgyfododd in wir!

*Gaelic:* Taw creest eeren! Taw shay eeren guhdyne!

*Anglo-Saxon:* Crist aras! Crist sodhlice aras!

*Chinese:* Helisituosi fuhuole! Queshi fuhuole!

*Coptic:* Pchistos aftooun! Alethos aftooun!

*Aleut:* Khris-tusax agla-gikux! Agangu-lakan agla-gikux!

*Yupik:* Xris-tusaq Ung-uixtuq! Iluumun Ung-uixtuq! Kris TOO Sahq Ung OOIKH took! Ee LOO Moon oong OOIKH took!

### From St. Basil the Great

May you be a delight to your friends, a terror to your foes, an object of respect to all, to the end that any who fall short in their duty to you may, when they learn how gentle you are, only blame themselves for having wronged one of such a character as yourself!

*Letter 73*

So truly stands the whole of human life, not contented with what has gone before and fed not so much on the past as on the future. For how is a man the better for having his belly filled yesterday, if his natural hunger fails to find its proper satisfaction in food today? In the same way, the soul gains nothing by yesterday's virtue unless it be followed by the right conduct of today. For it is said, "I shall judge thee as I shall find thee." *Letter 42*

Just as athletes win crowns by their struggles in the arena, so are Christians brought to perfection by the trial of their temptations, if only we learn to accept what is sent us by the Lord with becoming patience, with all thanksgiving. All things are ordained by the Lord's love. We must not accept anything that befalls us as grievous, even if, for the present, it affects our weakness. We are ignorant, peradventure, of the reasons why each thing that happens to us is sent to us as a blessing by the Lord; but we ought to be convinced that all that happens to us is for our good, either for the reward of our patience, or for the soul which we have received, lest, by lingering too long in this life, it be filled with the wickedness to be found in this world. *Letter 101*

### St. Cyril & the Saracens

In the Saracen [Saracen: Muslim subjects of the Caliph] encampment, they asked St. Cyril: "How can Christians wage war and at the same time keep Christ's commandment to pray to God for their enemies?" To this, St. Cyril replied: "If two commandments were written in one law and given to men for fulfilling, which man would be a better follower of the law: the one who fulfilled one commandment or the one who fulfilled both?" The Saracens replied: "Undoubtedly, he who fulfills both commandments." St. Cyril continued: "Christ our God commands us to pray to God for those who persecute us and even to do good to them, but He also said to us, *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.* That is why we bear the insults that our enemies cast at us individually and why we pray to God for them. However, as a society, we defend one another and lay down our lives, so that you would not enslave our brethren, would not enslave their souls with the bodies, and would not destroy them in both body and soul."

### Upcoming Events 2023

29 April-4 May: Holy Week

5 May: Holy Pascha

GLORY BE TO GOD FOR ALL THINGS!