

# The Confessor's Tongue for August 25, 2024

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost; Apostles Bartholomew & Titus

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.

## The Church New Year September 1

Next Sunday, we shall celebrate the Church New Year. The first day of the Church New Year is also called the beginning of the Indiction.

The term Indiction comes from a Latin word meaning, "to impose." It was originally applied to the imposition of taxes in Egypt. The first worldwide Indiction was in 312 when the Emperor Constantine (May 21) saw a miraculous vision of the Cross in the sky. Before the introduction of the Julian calendar, Rome began the New Year on September 1.

According to Holy Tradition, Christ entered the synagogue on September 1 to announce His mission to mankind (Luke 4:16-22). Quoting Isaiah 61:1-2, the Savior proclaimed, "The spirit of the Lord is upon Me; because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to proclaim release to captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord..." This scene is depicted in a Vatican manuscript (Vatican, Biblioteca. Cod. Gr. 1613, p.1).

Tradition says that the Hebrews entered the Promised Land in September.

For the maintenance of their armed forces, the Roman emperors decreed that their subjects in every district should be taxed every year. This same decree was reissued every fifteen years, since the Roman soldiers were obliged to serve for fifteen years. At the end of each fifteen-year period, an assessment was made of what economic changes had taken place, and a new tax was decreed, which was to be paid over the span of the fifteen years. This imperial decree, which was issued before the season of winter, was named Indictio, that is, Definition, or Order. This name was adopted by the emperors in Constantinople also. At other times, the latter also used the term Epinemesis, that is, Distribution (Dianome). It is commonly held that Saint Constantine the Great introduced the Indiction decrees in A.D. 312, after he beheld the sign of the Cross in heaven and vanquished Maxentius and was proclaimed Emperor in the West. Some, however (and this seems more likely), ascribe the institution of the Indiction to Augustus Caesar, three years before the birth of Christ. Those who hold this view offer as proof the papal bull issued in A.D. 781 which is dated thus: Anno IV, Indictionis LIII -that is, the fourth year of the fifty-third Indiction. From this, we can deduce the aforementioned year (3 B.C.) by multiplying the fifty-two complete Indictions by the number of years in each (15), and adding the three years of the fifty-third Indiction.

There are three types of Indictions: 1) That which was introduced in the West, and which is called Imperial, or Caesarean, or Constantinian, and which begins on the 24th of September; 2) The so-called

Papal Indiction, which begins on the 1st of January; and 3) The Constantinopolitan, which was adopted by the Patriarchs of that city after the fall of the Eastern Empire in 1453. This Indiction is indicated in their own hand on the decrees they issue, without the numeration of the fifteen years. This Indiction begins on the 1st of September and is observed with special ceremony in the Church. Since the completion of each year takes place, as it were, with the harvest and gathering of the crops into storehouses, and we begin anew from henceforth the sowing of seed in the earth for the production of future crops, September is considered the beginning of the New Year. The Church also keeps festival this day, beseeching God for fair weather, seasonable rains, and an abundance of the fruits of the earth. The Holy Scriptures (Lev. 23:24-5 and Num. 29:1-2) also testify that the people of Israel celebrated the feast of the Blowing of the Trumpets on this day, offering hymns of thanksgiving. In addition to all the aforesaid, on this feast we also commemorate our Saviour's entry into the synagogue in Nazareth, where He was given the book of the Prophet Esaias to read, and He opened it and found the place where it is written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, for which cause He hath anointed Me..." (Luke 4:16-30).

It should be noted that to the present day, the Church has always celebrated the beginning of the New Year on September 1. This was the custom in Constantinople until its fall in 1453 and in Russia until the reign of Peter I. September 1 is still festively celebrated as the New Year at the Patriarchate of Constantinople; among the Jews also the New Year, although reckoned according to a moveable calendar, usually falls in September. The service of the Menaion for January 1 is for our Lord's Circumcision and for the memorial of Saint Basil the Great, without any mention of its being the beginning of a new year.

The First Ecumenical Council [Nicaea, 325] decreed that the Church year should begin on September 1. The month of September was, for the Hebrews, the beginning of the civil year (Exodus 23:16), the month of gathering the harvest and of the offering of thanks to God. It was on this feast that the Lord Jesus entered the synagogue in Nazareth (Luke 4:16-21), opened the book of the Prophet Isaiah and read the words: *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me; because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn* (Isaiah 61:1-2). The month of September is also important in the history of Christianity, because Emperor Constantine the Great was victorious over Maxentius, the enemy of the Christian Faith, in September. Following this

victory, Constantine granted freedom of confession to the Christian Faith throughout the Roman Empire. For a long time, the civil year in the Christian world followed the Church year, with its beginning on September 1. The civil year was later changed, and its beginning transferred to January 1. This occurred first in Western Europe, and later in Russia, under Peter the Great. <https://orthodoxtimes.com/the-beginning-of-the-indiction-september-1/>

#### **New Year, Troparion, tone 2**

O Fashioner of all creation, / who in Thine authority hast appointed the times and seasons: / bless Thou the crown of the year with Thy goodness, O Lord, / preserving in peace Orthodox Christians and Thy city, // and through the prayers of the Theotokos, save us.

#### **New Year, Kontakion, tone 2**

O Christ our King who livest in the highest, / Creator and Maker of all things visible and invisible, / who hast fashioned days and nights, seasons and years: / bless Thou now the crown of the year; / preserve and keep in peace Orthodox hierarchs, // this city and Thy people, O greatly Merciful One.

The Church New Year is a time for us to gather our energies to make “a beginning of good”; in other words, to be renewed and revived in seeking Christ first, to set in order what has fallen into disarray in our lives, to recalibrate spiritually, to break sinful habits, to establish good habits, and to reestablish correct priorities for our life in Christ. We need opportunities to take stock and make adjustments. While every day provides us such an opportunity, times such as the civil New Year, the Church New Year, Great Lent, and others readily support such an effort. May God grant us all that beginning of good!

#### **Help in Need**

The venerable Seraphim of Sarov used to say that the Mother of God is called the Plague of Demons, for a demon has no possibility to harm a person unless the person himself steps away from running to the help of the Mother of God.

#### **Remedy for Cold, Unwilling Prayer**

*St. John of Kronstadt*

When praying, keep to the rule that it is better to say five words from the depth of your heart than ten thousand words with your tongue only. When you observe that your heart is cold and prays unwillingly, stop praying and warm your heart by vividly representing to yourself either your own wickedness, your spiritual poverty, misery, and blindness, or the great benefits which God bestows every moment upon you and all mankind, especially upon Christians, and then pray slowly and fervently. If you have not time to say all the prayers, it does not matter, and you will receive incomparably greater benefit from praying fervently and not hurriedly than if you had said all your prayers hurriedly and without feeling... *MLiC, p.*

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#### **Orthodox Saturday Evenings**

As we enter the New Church Year next weekend, it is a good time to consider our relation to the resurrectional Vigil. For the committed Orthodox Christian, Saturday evening is a time of preparation for partaking of the Eucharist on Sunday morning, and the central part of the preparation is attendance at the All-Night Vigil.

Committing oneself to regular Vigil attendance can be a challenge: Americans think of Sunday morning as time for church, and Saturday evening as time to party; Saturday is a day to rest after the work week, or a day to do work around the house and yard; the Vigil is two hours or more, longer than we think we can spend; we have small children whom we think cannot make it through the service, and so on. To our minds, the challenges are many.

Yet the Church's expectation remains that we attend the Saturday evening service, at least in part, to prepare reverently for partaking of the Eucharist. What are we to do?

Many people overcome the challenge of Vigil by ignoring Saturday evening altogether. This is the easy solution that ultimately is not a solution. Like planting vegetables in soil deficient in nutrients, the plant grows but rarely bears fruit. So too, the willful neglect of Saturday evening Vigil will stunt spiritual growth and prevent us from receiving all that God would impart to us at the Liturgy. So what are we to do? Come to Vigil. Here are some suggestions to help:

1. Set aside Saturday evenings on your calendar and simply make the commitment to come to Vigil.
2. If the full Vigil is too much for you now, come for 45 minutes or an hour of it each week. Come for Vespers one week (5-5:45) and Matins another week (5:45-7:10). Come late, leave early, but come!
3. Come to Vigil the night you make your monthly confession. Then build to alternating weeks.
4. If you have small children, alternate weeks with your spouse, or, better, bring everyone for a part of the service. Children who are in church more frequently typically end up acting better in church than those who come less frequently.
5. Keep Vigil at home, turning off media and entertainment, praying for an extended period, reading the Scriptures, etc. One simple way would be to keep Vigil on the prayer rope with the Jesus Prayer: 600 knots for Vespers, 1500 knots for Matins.
6. There are other options, but we should not let omitting the Vigil entirely from our lives be one.

#### **Upcoming Events 2024**

- 1 September: Church New Year
- 8 September: Great Feast Nativity of Theotokos
- 14 September: Great Feast Elevation of the Cross
- 29 September: Annual Meeting
- 13 October: Octoberfest
- 10 November: Parish Thanksgiving Meal

**GLORY BE TO GOD FOR ALL THINGS!**