

# The Confessor's Tongue for November 17, 2024

21st Sunday After Pentecost; St. Gregory the Wonderworker of Neocoesarea  
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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**21 November: The Entrance  
of the Theotokos into the Temple**

We keep this feast, one of the twelve Great Feasts, for four days until its leavetaking November 25. We may use the Troparion of the feast before meals in place of our usual prayer and the Kontakion after meals in place of our usual giving of thanks.

**Entrance of Theotokos, Troparion, tone 4**

Today is the prelude of the good will of God, / of the preaching of the salvation of mankind. / The Virgin appeareth in the temple of God, / in anticipation proclaiming Christ to all. / Let us rejoice and sing to her: / Rejoice, O Fulfillment // of the Creator's dispensation.

**Entrance of Theotokos, Kontakion, tone 4**

The all-pure Temple of the Savior, / the precious Bridal Chamber and Virgin, / the sacred treasure of the glory of God, / is led today into the house of the Lord, / and with her she bringeth the grace of the divine Spirit. / Of her God's angels sing in praise: // "She is indeed the heavenly Tabernacle."

When the Most Holy Virgin became three years old, her parents, true to their vow to the Lord to dedicate their child to Him, solemnly led their Most-pure Daughter into the Jerusalem Temple "to be brought up in divine grace" "before the Lord." Though at that time the Most Holy Virgin, as expressed in church hymns, was yet "three years old in the body" she was already "many years in the spirit" although still "a child in the flesh, she was already perfect in soul". She looked at the temple of the Lord as at a paradisiacal dwelling of the glory of God, as at the most cultivated haven, for which Her soul thirsted more than the home of her parents, is why she entered into the temple majestically and rejoicing. The Holy Virgin was put on the first step of the temple and to the surprise of everyone, with no one supporting her, being encouraged by the spirit of love for God, climbed firmly up the fifteen steps of the temple.

At this time, on the outside in front of the Jerusalem temple there were about were ninety apartments. In these apartments there were rooms for various persons: separately the maidens who lived there during the time they were dedicated to the services to God; separately widows lived there, promising God to keep the premises clean until their death; separately men, called supervisors, in the image of unmarried monks resided there. There were also other apartments for the comfort of pilgrims and strangers who came from a distance for worship in the temple. All of them served the Lord in the temple and had their livelihood from the church estates. The Most Holy Child Mary was lodged at the Jerusalem temple in the apartments where the maidens lived.

The Holy Young Child, living in the temple, spent all her time in prayer, reading the Word of God

and thinking about God. She occupied half her time with her own needlework, especially loving to prepare clothes dedicated to serving in the temple; which she fulfilled while growing up, and occupied the other half with works of charity at the temple, serving the needy, the crippled and the infirm which tradition says, to whom she also gave all her food, herself eating only the "most glorious bread from heaven", brought to her by the angels", and "conversing with them". Living at the temple and devoting all her time to pious occupations, the Most Holy Virgin was continually used to being before the all-seeing, omniscient Lord God and His almighty will in soul and body, in mind and heart, in thought and desire, having formed in herself a living and firm faith in the word of the Lord, a fervent love for the Lord and for neighbor, an all-perfect fidelity to the will of God, the deepest humility and meekness, inscrutable patience and obedience to the word of the Lord. "

In the early years of her life she lost her parents. After their death, she all the more turned to the One God with all her soul, and with all the desires of a pure heart and singularly sought Him out for joy and consolation.

When the time has come for the Most Holy Virgin, according to the then existing custom, to leave the sacred dwelling of her pious formation and like other maidens to marry, she declared to the high priest and to the priests her vow to remain virgin and with their advice and consent, for the protection of virginity, at that time being eleven years old, was betrothed to her relative, the aged righteous Joseph, and moved from the temple into his house which was in Nazareth.

The example the Saints Joachim and Anna teaches us to fulfill pious vows. And the deeply instructive example of the upbringing of the Most Holy Virgin explains to us our duties to our children that we must as early as possible and to take them to the temple of God more often, to accustom them to the full complement of prayers at home, teaching them in the law of the Lord, particularly in their growth to properly use their time to develop in them love for their neighbor and diligence to inspire obedience in them to the church rules (*Ustav*), and to waken and strengthen in them the spirit of piety and the fear of God .

**The Besetting Sins of Our Land: Untruth**

*Fr. Justin Frederick*

The desire for freedom from foreign rule, tyranny, harsh, arbitrary authority, and chafing social norms has long possessed people. Some of the desire is just, some of it is simply self-will and rebellion. In any case, however they conceive of it, people long for freedom and will conduct revolutions in the hopes of acquiring

it. But all too often in our time, they neglect the very condition of freedom: living in truth.

"You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free," said Christ. He is the Truth. Truth is not an idea, firstly, but a person. To know the truth is to know Christ, and then to know people, events, and things in relation to Him and the reality established in and by Him. True knowledge is knowledge of that reality.

In their pursuit and maintenance of freedom, many people are willing to use lies and untruth. But lies do not liberate. They deprive people of the knowledge of reality. They darken. They enslave.

We grow increasingly aware of the lies and distortions that surround us. The lies are not just outright falsehoods. The facts may be true, but they are arranged and "spun" in such a way that they conceal rather than reveal the truth. What do the facts mean? This can only be known in relation to Christ. Data are offered, but other relevant data are withheld—lying by omission. The information warfare is great, and truth is ever its casualty.

The great Russian writer of the twentieth century, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, lived in the Soviet Union. Growing up as an atheist and a communist, he eventually began to see that the supposedly glorious workers' paradise was built on lies. In 1974, just as he was expelled from the Soviet Union to the West, he published his powerful essay "Live Not By Lies," calling on the people of his homeland to stop cooperating in the lies of the authorities. Solzhenitsyn's words written half a century ago speak as relevantly and powerfully now as they did then—even more so. Let us read his words, thinking of the quality of lying in our time. If our nation is to be healthy and strong again, it needs to be committed to truth and telling the truth.

"Live Not By Lies" Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

There was a time when we dared not rustle a whisper. But now we write and read *samizdat* ["self-published" literature circulated underground because the authorities would not allow such things to be published normally] and, congregating in the smoking rooms of research institutes, heartily complain to each other of all *they* are muddling up, of all *they* are dragging us into! There's that unnecessary bravado around our ventures into space, against the backdrop of ruin and poverty at home; and the buttressing of distant savage regimes; and the kindling of civil wars; and the ill-thought-out cultivation of Mao Zedong (at our expense to boot)—in the end we'll be the ones sent out against him, and we'll have to go, what other option will there be? And they put whomever they want on trial, and brand the healthy as mentally ill—and it is always "they," while *we* are—helpless.

We are approaching the brink; already a universal spiritual demise is upon us; a physical one is about to flare up and engulf us and our children, while we continue to smile sheepishly and babble: "But what can we do to stop it? We haven't the strength."

We have so hopelessly ceded our humanity that for the modest handouts of today we are ready to surrender up all principles, our soul, all the labors of our ancestors, all the

prospects of our descendants—anything to avoid disrupting our meager existence. We have lost our strength, our pride, our passion. We do not even fear a common nuclear death, do not fear a third world war (perhaps we'll hide away in some crevice), but fear only to take a civic stance! We hope only not to stray from the herd, not to set out on our own, and risk suddenly having to make do without the white bread, the hot water heater, a Moscow residency permit [a good job, popularity on social media...].

We have internalized well the lessons drummed into us by the state; we are forever content and comfortable with its premise: we cannot escape the *environment*, the social conditions; they shape us, "being determines consciousness." What have we to do with this? We can do nothing.

But we can do—everything!—even if we comfort and lie to ourselves that this is not so. It is not "they" who are guilty of everything, but *we ourselves*, only *we*!

Some will counter: But really, there is nothing to be done! Our mouths are gagged, no one listens to us, no one asks us. How can we make *them* listen to us? {*We've been deplatformed, cancelled.*}

To make them reconsider—is impossible.

The natural thing would be simply not to reelect them, but there are no re-elections in our country.

In the West they have strikes, protest marches, but we are too cowed, too scared: How does one just give up one's job, just go out onto the street?

All the other fateful means resorted to over the last century of Russia's bitter history are even less fitting for us today—true, let's not fall back on them! Today, when all the axes have hewn what they hacked, when all that was sown has borne fruit, we can see how lost, how drugged were those conceited youths who sought, through terror, bloody uprising, and civil war, to make the country just and content. No thank you, fathers of enlightenment! We now know that the vileness of the means begets the vileness of the result. Let our hands be clean!

So has the circle closed? So is there indeed no way out? So the only thing left to do is wait inertly: What if something just happens *by itself*?

But it will never come unstuck *by itself*, if we all, every day, continue to acknowledge, glorify, and strengthen it, if we do not, at the least, recoil from its most vulnerable point.

From lies.

When violence bursts onto the peaceful human condition, its face is flush with self-assurance, it displays on its banner and proclaims: "I am Violence! Make way, step aside, I will crush you!" But violence ages swiftly, a few years pass—and it is no longer sure of itself. To prop itself up, to appear decent, it will without fail call forth its ally—Lies. For violence has nothing to cover itself with but lies, and lies can only persist through violence. And it is not every day and not on every shoulder that violence brings down its heavy hand: It demands of us only a submission to lies, a daily participation in deceit—and this suffices as our fealty.

And therein we find, neglected by us, the simplest, the most accessible key to our liberation: a *personal nonparticipation in lies*! Even if all is covered by lies, even if all is under their rule, let us resist in the smallest way: Let their rule hold *not through me*!

And this is the way to break out of the imaginary encirclement of our inertness, the easiest way for us and the most devastating for the lies. For when people

renounce lies, lies simply cease to exist. Like parasites, they can only survive when attached to a person.

We are not called upon to step out onto the square and shout out the truth, to say out loud what we think—this is scary, we are not ready. But let us at least refuse to say what we *do not* think!

This is the way, then, the easiest and most accessible for us given our deep-seated organic cowardice, much easier than (it's scary even to utter the words) civil disobedience à la Gandhi.

Our way must be: *Never knowingly support lies!* Having understood where the lies begin (and many see this line differently)—step back from that gangrenous edge! Let us not glue back the flaking scales of the Ideology, not gather back its crumbling bones, nor patch together its decomposing garb, and we will be amazed how swiftly and helplessly the lies will fall away, and that which is destined to be naked will be exposed as such to the world.

And thus, overcoming our temerity, let each man choose: Will he remain a witting servant of the lies (needless to say, not due to natural predisposition, but in order to provide a living for the family, to rear the children in the spirit of lies!), or has the time come for him to stand straight as an honest man, worthy of the respect of his children and contemporaries? And from that day onward he:

- Will not write, sign, nor publish in any way, a single line distorting, so far as he can see, the truth;
- Will not utter such a line in private or in public conversation, nor read it from a crib sheet, nor speak it in the role of educator, canvasser, teacher, actor;
- Will not in painting, sculpture, photograph, technology, or music depict, support, or broadcast a single false thought, a single distortion of the truth as he discerns it;
- Will not cite in writing or in speech a single “guiding” quote for gratification, insurance, for his success at work, unless he fully shares the cited thought and believes that it fits the context precisely;
- Will not be forced to a demonstration or a rally if it runs counter to his desire and his will; will not take up and raise a banner or slogan in which he does not fully believe;
- Will not raise a hand in vote for a proposal which he does not sincerely support; will not vote openly or in secret ballot for a candidate whom he deems dubious or unworthy;
- Will not be impelled to a meeting where a forced and distorted discussion is expected to take place;
- Will at once walk out from a session, meeting, lecture, play, or film as soon as he hears the speaker utter a lie, ideological drivel, or shameless propaganda;
- Will not subscribe to, nor buy in retail, a newspaper or journal that distorts or hides the underlying facts.

This is by no means an exhaustive list of the possible and necessary ways of evading lies. But he who begins to cleanse himself will, with a cleansed eye, easily discern yet other opportunities.

Yes, at first it will not be fair. Someone will have to temporarily lose his job. For the young who seek to live by truth, this will at first severely complicate life, for their

tests and quizzes, too, are stuffed with lies, and so choices will have to be made. But there is no loophole left for anyone who seeks to be honest: Not even for a day, not even in the safest technical occupations can he avoid even a single one of the listed choices—to be made in favor of either truth or lies, in favor of spiritual independence or spiritual servility. And as for him who lacks the courage to defend even his own soul: Let him not brag of his progressive views, boast of his status as an academician or a recognized artist, a distinguished citizen or general. Let him say to himself plainly: I am cattle, I am a coward, I seek only warmth and to eat my fill.

For us, who have grown staid over time, even this most moderate path of resistance will be not be easy to set out upon. But how much easier it is than self-immolation or even a hunger strike: Flames will not engulf your body, your eyes will not pop out from the heat, and your family will always have at least a piece of black bread to wash down with a glass of clear water.

Betrayed and deceived by us, did not a great European people—the Czechoslovaks—show us how one can stand down the tanks with bared chest alone, as long as inside it beats a worthy heart?

It will not be an easy path, perhaps, but it is the easiest among those that lie before us. Not an easy choice for the body, but the only one for the soul. No, not an easy path, but then we already have among us people, dozens even, who have for years abided by all these rules, who live by the truth.

And so: We need not be the first to set out on this path, Ours is but to join! The more of us set out together, the thicker our ranks, the easier and shorter will this path be for us all! If we become thousands—they will not cope, they will be unable to touch us. If we will grow to tens of thousands—we will not recognize our country!

But if we shrink away, then let us cease complaining that someone does not let us draw breath—we do it to ourselves! Let us then cower and hunker down, while our comrades the biologists bring closer the day when our thoughts can be read and our genes altered.

And if from *this also* we shrink away, then we are worthless, hopeless, and it is of us that Pushkin asks with scorn:

Why offer herds their liberation?

.....

Their heritage each generation

The yoke with jingles, and the whip.

February 12, 1974

*translated from the Russian by Yermolai Solzhenitsyn*

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### **Prayers of the Prayerbook: Morning Prayer 1**

*Fr. Justin Frederick*

*In order to pray better and appropriate more deeply the meaning of our customary prayers, we are reflecting on some of those prayers in this series.*

The brief first morning prayer was composed by St. Macarius the Great, one of the Egyptian desert fathers..

*O God, cleanse me a sinner, for I have done nothing good before Thee. Deliver me from the evil one, and may Thy will be in me, that I might open mine unworthy lips without condemnation, and praise Thy holy name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.*

We ask God to cleanse us as we begin the day. Perhaps we sinned in the night, struggled with sinful thoughts, gave into sloth, or any number of other sins, so we ask God to cleanse us. We begin the day with humility, saying we have "done nothing good" before God. We have nothing to be proud of, no works or virtues to depend on. We start cleansed in humble dependence on the Lord.

The Christian life is one of spiritual warfare against the evil spirits. Every day they assault us in a myriad of ways. Recognizing this, we ask that the Lord deliver us from the evil one during the day. We ask that God's will, not the devil's, would be in us, reinforcing what we asked in the Lord's Prayer, "Thy will be done." Seeing God's deliverance from the wiles of the evil one during the course of the day enables us to open our mouths in praise of God for giving us victory over sin and temptation the evil spirits bring. We are to praise God and give Him the glory for every victory, every success, and not try to take credit for ourselves. This is humility: to take responsibility for all our falls and to give God the glory for all our victories.

### The Optina 500: Cell-Rule of Saints

*A season of fasting involves increased prayer. Here is a practice the may inspire us.*

The monks of Optina Monastery & Skete attended Matins, Liturgy, and Vespers with Compline every day. In addition, many of them read the following rule in their cells, popularly called "the Optina 500." It included systematic reading of the New Testament, prostrations, bows, and extensive use of the Jesus Prayer. We, too, can use it or draw on it in our own prayer life.

Each day one reads one chapter from the Gospels in order, beginning with Matthew and ending with John, and two chapters from the Epistles, beginning with the Acts of the Apostles and ending with the Apocalypse of St. John the Theologian, with the last seven chapters of the Apocalypse read on the same day. This allowed one to read through the whole New Testament every 89 days.

Read one kathisma from the Psalter each day, beginning with the first and ending with the last. (There are 20 in the Psalter.)

The 500 itself consists of the following: three prostrations with the prayers 1) O God, have mercy on me a sinner; 2) O God, cleanse Thou me a sinner and have mercy on me; 3) Thou hast created me, O Lord, have mercy on me; countless times have I sinner, O Lord, forgive me. Then the "Usual Beginning" according to the morning prayers found in the typical prayerbook:

Through the prayers of our holy Fathers...  
Glory to Thee, our God, glory to Thee.  
O Heavenly King...  
Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal...3  
Glory to the Father...now and ever...  
All Holy Trinity, have mercy on us....  
Lord, have mercy. (3)

Glory to the Father...now and ever...

Our Father, who art in heaven...

Through the prayers of our holy Fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us. Amen. [*In place of "For Thine is the kingdom..."*]

Lord, have mercy. (12)

Glory to the Father...now and ever...

Come let us worship God our King.

Come let us worship and fall down...

Come let us worship and fall down...

Psalm 50 "Have mercy on me, O God..."

The Symbol of Faith (Creed)

"Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, have mercy on me the sinner," (100-the Jesus Prayer), with a full prostration with each of the first 10, full bows for the next 20, and a full prostration with the last one. The prayers are counted by use of a knotted prayer rope.

Prayer to the Theotokos (11<sup>th</sup> of morning prayers) as follows:

O most holy Theotokos, my lady, through thy holy and all-powerful prayers, turn away from me, thine unworthy servant, despair, forgetfulness, unreasonableness, indifference, and all unclean, evil, and blasphemous thoughts from my wretched heart and darkened mind. Extinguish the flame of my passions, for I am poor and wretched. Deliver me from my numerous memories and fantasies. Free me from all evil acts, for thou art blessed by all generations, and thy most honorable name is glorified unto ages of ages. Amen. *Prostration* Then two more identical sets of 100 Jesus Prayers with the prayer to Mary.

The fourth 100 follows the same pattern but with this prayer to the Theotokos: "My most holy Lady Theotokos, save me a sinner."

The fifth 100 consists of 50 prayers to one's Guardian Angel: "O holy Angel of God, my guardian, pray to God for me a sinner," with full prostrations with the first five, bows with the next 10, 34 without bows, and the last with a prostration. The final 50 prayers follows the same pattern of bows and prostrations, but with the prayer: "All Saints, pray to God for me a sinner."

Then: Meet it is in truth to bless thee, O Theotokos...*prostration*.

Glory to Thee, O God, glory to Thee.

Glory to the Father...now and ever...

Lord, have mercy. (3)

Through the prayers of our holy Fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us. Amen.

The prostrations are not done on Sundays, Great Feasts, Pascha through Pentecost, on Forefeasts, for the duration of Feasts, or any day when a Vigil is served. The rule is completely set aside during Bright Week and from December 24 - January 7.

### Upcoming Events 2024

15 November: Nativity Fast Begins

21 November: Great Feast of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple

GLORY BE TO GOD FOR ALL THINGS!