

# The Confessor's Tongue for January 12, 2025

29<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost; Sunday after Theophany; St. Sava of Serbia, Martyr Tatiana  
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.

---

---

## January 12: St. Sava of Serbia

In the world Rastko (Rostislav), son of the Serbian King Stephan (see Feb. 13), at the age of 18, he abandoned the local principality given to him by his father and left for Mt. Athos with a Russian monk who came to Serbia and accepted the little tonsure in the Russian St. Panteleimon Monastery. Soon after that, at the urgent invitation of the monks of the Greek Vatopedi Monastery, he went over to this monastery and here received the great tonsure with the name Sava. "Having transformed the height of nobility to the humility of a servant", he "oppressed his body with many labors and enlightened his soul with prayer". Joining to the asceticism of abstinence, humility, prayer and good deeds of a hermit and the Vatopedi Monastery, he gave charity to all from what he received from his father in Serbia. Then with the grants from his father he built the Hilandar Monastery on Mt. Athos, settled in this monastery, gave it a *Typikon*, established a strict way of life, created a charitable institution in it and engaged in education. Within eight years for a short time he became Hegumen of the Serbian Studenitsa Monastery, but then, being zealous for the increase of piety in Serbia, together with his brother Stephen (see Sept. 24), he built a new monastery in district of Zhicha on the Ibar River. After this, St. Sava returned a second time to Mt. Athos and from there to Nicaea where at that time the Greek emperor and patriarch were residing, from whom St. Sava tried, although with greater effort, to get approval for the establishment of an autocephalous or independent Archdiocese in Serbia. The Emperor insisted that the same Sava accept this calling, and St. Sava, in humility, refused, but had to agree, and he was consecrated to the archiepiscopacy by Patriarch Germanus in 1219 and thus "he adorned the first Serbian see". On his return he visited Mt. Athos and arrived in Salonika and here "wrote many legal books about the exercise of the faith". Having arrived in Serbia, he immediately undertook the building of the church. He was zealous about destroying the rest of the pagan superstitions and "destroyed the transgressing heresies". Sometimes he went around the country correcting inadequacies, exposing errors and thin morals, and strengthening the people in faith and piety. As a deep patriot, St. Sava was zealous for the security of Serbia, threatened by the neighboring Ugars and for the defense and elevation of the political values and national worthiness of Serbia. St. Sava practiced asceticism for 14 years for church and country and in 1233 appointed his disciple Arsenius as his successor, and then he traveled to the Far East and arrived in Tirnovo [Trnovo], Bulgaria. He died in this city on January 14 (according to others on the 12th), 1236. A half-year later, the relics of St. Sava were

solemnly transferred to the Milesheva Monastery in southwest Herzegovina, near the small town Prepolie on the Mileshevka River. In 1595 the relics of St. Sava were burnt by Sinan Pasha, who died a shameful death that same year. The Serbs glorify St. Sava as the enlightener of Serbia. During his lifetime he was a great advocate of Orthodoxy, taught the flock entrusted to him that the right faith and good life are necessary for salvation, inspired them not to rely on wealth and to be merciful, to love one's neighbor, not to render evil for evil, begged with tears for all to protect their chastity and to defend widows and orphans. After his death St. Sava became glorified for wonders.

## Dogmas of Faith & Moral Dogma

*a Reflection by St. Nikolai of Zicha*

If, at times, the dogmas of the Faith seem like hard food, you should first endeavor to fulfill the moral dogmas of Christianity: then the understanding of the dogmas of the Faith will be revealed to you. The inquisitive examination of higher things, without effort regarding the improvement of your life, does not bring any benefit. Once, the monks of Egypt were reflecting on Melchizedek, and not being able to come to a clear understanding of the mysterious personality of this ancient king and high priest, they invited Abba Copres to their assembly and asked him about Melchisedek. Upon hearing this, Copres struck himself three times on the mouth and said: "Woe to you Copres! You left that which God commanded you to do, and you inquire into that which God does not require of you." Hearing him, the monks were ashamed and dispersed. St. John Chrysostom writes: "If we adhere to the true dogmas and are not concerned about our behavior, we will not have any kind of benefit; and in the same way, if we concern ourselves about our behavior and neglect true dogmas, we will receive no benefit for our salvation. If we want to be delivered from Gehenna and to gain the Kingdom, we need to be adorned on both sides—with correctness of dogmas and honorable living."

## On Correcting the Faults of Others

If you wish to correct the faults of anyone, do not think of trying to do so solely by your own means: you would only do harm by your vices, for instance, by pride and the irritability arising from it; *but cast thy burden upon the Lord*, and pray with all your heart that God Himself will enlighten the mind and heart of that man. If he sees that your prayer breathes love, and that it really comes from the depths of your heart, he will undoubtedly fulfill it, and you will soon see, from the change that has taken place in him for whom you prayed, that it is the work of the most high God. *St. John of Kronstadt*

### On Praying for the Departed

Some ask, what is the use of naming the departed, or of praying for them? God Himself knows the names and needs of all. But those who so speak forget, or do not know, the importance of prayer, do not realize the importance of every word uttered from a whole heart; they forget that the justice and mercy of God are moved by your heartfelt prayer, which the Lord In His goodness imputes to the merit of the living or the departed themselves, as to the members of the one body of the Church. They do not know that the *Church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven*, in her love continually prays to God for us, and expressly names before God those who pray for them—equal for equal. We name them, and they name us. But he who does not lovingly remember his brethren in prayer will not himself be remembered, and does not deserve to be named. Even one word of faith and love means much in prayer: *The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*

Pray to the Lord for the repose of the souls of your departed forebears and brethren each day, at morning and at evening, in order that the remembrance of death may live in you, and that hope of the life to come, after death, may not become extinct in you; and that your spirit may daily be humbled by the thought of the transitory nature of your life.

### On Sins After Baptism

*St. Maximus the Confessor, Ad Thalassios 6*

*Father Maximus Constans has translated St. Maximus's great work Ad Thalassios into English. The work contains some 65 questions on the meaning of Scripture while addressing Thalassios's questions about the operation of the passions.*

*In question six here, St. Maximus addresses the question of how is it possible for Christians to sin after baptism, when Scripture says those born of God do not sin.*

**Question 6:** If, according to St. John [the Theologian]: “He who is born of God does not sin, because God’s seed is in him, and he cannot sin” (1 John 3:9), and if he who is “born of water and Spirit” is himself born of God (John 3:5-6), then how are we who are born of God through baptism still able to sin?

**Answer:** The mode of our spiritual birth from God is twofold: the first bestows on those born in God the entire grace of adoption as entirely present in potential (Rom. 8:15); the second ushers in this grace as entirely present in actuality, transforming voluntarily the entire free choice of the one being born so that it conforms to the God who gives birth.

The first possesses this grace in potential according to faith alone; the second, in addition to faith, realizes on the level of knowledge the active, most divine likeness of the God who is known in the one who knows Him.

In those whom the first mode of birth is observed, it happens that—because the disposition of their will has not yet been fully extracted from its passionate fixation with the flesh, and because they have not been completely imbued by the Spirit with the active participation in the divine mysteries that have taken place—it happens, I say, that their inclination to sin is never very far away for the simple reason that they continue to will it. For the Spirit does not give birth to a disposition of the will without the consent of that will, but to the extent that the will is willing, He transforms and divinizes it. Whoever has shared in this deification through experience and knowledge is incapable of reverting from what he, once and for all, truly and precisely became cognizant of in actual deed, to something else besides this, which merely pretends to be the same thing—no more than the eye, once it has seen the sun, could ever mistake it for the moon or any of the other stars in the heavens.

In those, on the other hand, undergoing the second mode of birth, the Holy Spirit takes the whole of their free choice and transposes it completely from earth to heaven, and, through true knowledge realized in actual deed, refashions the intellect with the blessed beams of light of God the Father, so that it is deemed another God, experiencing, through permanent state obtained by grace, that which God does not experience but simply *is* according to His essence. In them, their free choice clearly becomes sinless in conformity with their state of virtue and knowledge, since they are unable to negate what they have become cognizant of through actual experience.

So even if we should possess the Spirit of adoption—which is a life-giving seed that bestows the likeness of the Sower upon those who are born of it—but do not offer Him a disposition of the will pure of any propensity of inclination toward something else, we will, as a result, willingly sin even after “being born through water and the Spirit” (John 3:5). But if, to the contrary, we were to prepare the disposition of our will to receive cognitively the operations of the water and the Spirit, then, through our ascetic practice, the mystical water would cleanse our conscience, and the life-creating Spirit would actualize in us the unchanging perfection of the good through knowledge acquired in experience. What is lacking, therefore, in each of us who is still able to sin, is the unequivocal desire to surrender our whole selves, in the disposition of our will, to the Spirit.

#### Upcoming Events 2024

20 January: Vigil for St. Maximus, 7:00 p.m.  
21 January: Divine Liturgy for St. Maximus, 9:00 a.m.  
2 February: Meeting of the Lord in the Temple  
2 March: Forgiveness Vespers, 5:00 p.m.  
3-8 March: Clean Week (*try to avoid other commitments*)

GLORY BE TO GOD FOR ALL THINGS!