

# The Confessor's Tongue for March 16, A. D. 2025

Second Sunday of Lent; St. Gregory Palamas

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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## The Sayings of St. Anthony the Great 7

*Abba Anthony said, "I saw the snares that the enemy spreads out over the world, and I said, groaning, 'What can get through such snares?' Then I heard a voice saying to me, 'Humility.'"*

Saying 7 in *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*

*Commentary:* The snares the enemy lays out by which to catch and destroy souls are many and powerful. Looking at our own world, how shall we escape gluttony, with so many varied foods to suit every taste in such great quantity available around the clock? How shall we escape lust and fornication in a when sensual images assail us from all sides, modesty and virginity are lost virtues, and sexual encounters are nearly free for the asking? How shall we escape greed, stinginess, and envy in a society that glorifies in conspicuous consumption? How shall we avoid telling and being enslaved by lies in a world of spin and image over substance? How shall we avoid error when even the notion Truth is denied and all opinions and positions are treated as being of equal value? How shall we avoid sloth in a culture of entertainment, whose constantly expressed desire is "don't work too hard" and "take it easy"? How shall we be motivated to undertake the hard work of repentance when there are so many means of escape available to us to numb the pain of guilt and feelings of inadequacy? And if we by some means escape the common pitfalls and sins of our age, how shall we avoid judging those who do not and taking pride in our own righteousness?

Who, if not the Lord, will save us from this wicked and perverse generation?

St. Anthony was granted to see the snares that the enemy spreads, and he groaned in despair of escaping them. How may one escape them? How can we sinners resist the compelling advertising of the enemy?

The answer given to Anthony is not one our world prescribes for troubles: humility. The world celebrates pride, but who sets holidays to celebrate humility? Humility says, "I am weak; of myself, I can do nothing good. Left to myself, I will be overcome and will fall. If I haven't fallen today like my neighbor, I surely will tomorrow. Unless Christ stretches out His hand to catch me, I shall surely sink like Peter in the sea. If there is any good in me, any resistance to sin, any victory over my passions and over the enemy, it is entirely due to God's grace at work in me. Let me cry out to God for help now and always that I not fall into any snare."

Humility places no confidence in man and all its trust and hope in God. God gives grace, not to the proud, but to the humble, to those who recognize their need (James 4:10, I Peter 5:6). "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up." Man's task is to humble himself; God's task

is to lift up. He lifts up those who, recognizing their weakness and susceptibility to sin, persist in crying out to Him for help in every need and in giving glory to Him for every victory.

The man with humility sees his own sins and reproaches himself and does not see the sins of others. As St. Macarius of Optina says, "Let the following be for you signs of humility or pride: the latter scorns everyone, reproaches them, and sees darkness in them, while the former sees only his own faults and does not dare to judge anyone." Such is humility which delivers from demonic snares.

Amma Theodora [one of the Desert Mothers] said that neither asceticism, nor vigils, nor any kind of suffering are able to save, only true humility can do that. There was an anchorite [hermit] who was able to banish demons; and he asked them, "What makes you go away? Is it fasting?" They replied, "We do not eat or drink." "Is it vigils?" They replied, "We do not sleep." "Is it separation from the world?" "We live in deserts." "What power sends you away then?" They said, "Nothing can overcome us, but only humility." "Do you see how humility is victorious over the demons?" Humility is alien and repellent to the proud hosts of hell.

God, on the other hand, is humble. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:5-8). Christ, who had every right to glory over man by virtue of His Divinity humbled Himself rather, and in so doing won Himself the name above every name at which every knee will bow. We are to have the same mind of humility in us, and that humility is our only path to victory over the proud hosts of hell.

So powerful is humility, that St. Barsanuphius of Optina says "With only humility, one can be saved, even without any works." In the *Prologue from Ochrid*, there is a story (March 30) that illustrates this point. A monk was lazy, careless, and lacking in his prayer life. But when he lay dying, he was happy. When the brethren, who knew his faults, asked how it was that a monk with so many sins could die joyfully, he replied: "I now see angels who are showing me a page containing my numerous sins. I said to them, 'Our Lord said: *judge not, and ye shall not be judged*. I have never judged anyone, and I hope in the mercy of God that He will not judge me.' And the angels tore up the paper with my sins." Upon hearing this, the monks were astonished and edified.

Humility allows us to receive the grace of God we need to stand. Only through humility can we escape the enemy's snares. *Fr. Justin Frederick*

### Spiritual Instructions

Archimandrite John (Krestiankin, +2006)

*Fr. John was an inspired elder at the Pskov Caves Monastery and a good candidate for canonization. You may meet him in the pages of Everyday Saints and in a collection of his letters: May God Give You Wisdom!*

“The world is governed by God’s Providence alone, and in this is salvation for one who believes; in this is the strength to endure earthly sorrows.”

“My dears, the world is governed by God’s Providence and not by us mortals.”

“I will tell you from experience that the sooner we accept what God has given us, the easier it will be to bear God’s good yoke, His easy yoke. It becomes heavy from our inner resistance.”

“Such a time has come when only faith that God’s Providence orders life can overcome all the hardships of life.”

“Lord! You know all things; do with me as You will. Amen.”

“There are no forgotten people in God, and God’s Providence watches over everyone. God rules the world—only God, and no one else.”

“The main thing in spiritual life is faith in God’s Providence and discernment with counsel.”

“Throughout all times, the world is governed by God’s Providence; and shall we pronounce judgment on it?”

“He gave us the path to salvation, and He is the same in all ages, for Christians of the first and last times—and this is faith in God’s Providence, and life according to faith.”

“If you live for God, for the sake of God, and to the glory of God—that is salvation, that is truth, and not an ephemeral meaning of life.”

“Remember, my child, that the most valuable thing is to learn to commit yourself entirely to God’s will.”

“Fear divisions and schisms in the Church! Fear falling away from the Mother-Church; only she holds back the lava of antichristian debauchery in the world now! Fear judging the Church hierarchs, for this is destructive even without the seal of antichrist!”

“O wondrous path of manifest works, I sing a hymn to thee! People, surround yourselves, gird yourselves with small good works—a chain of small, simple, easy—costing you nothing—kind feelings, thoughts, words, and deeds.”

“Only in works of love toward our neighbor must we see and feel the possibility of transforming our love, the possibility of salvation. For only through mercy and love can we acquire the Holy Spirit of God, which alone can enable us to resist the terrible evil spirits that have possessed people and the world.”

“So let us not pass by hands stretched out to us, the suffering, whose eyes are filled with pain and woe; let us not pass by our neighbor.”

“My dear ones, let us not pass by our salvation; let us not pass by Christ Himself, Who in the image of every person in need, calls us to the supper of love.”

### A Bee or a Fly: Which Would You Be?

Elder Paisios of the Holy Mountain

I know from experience that in this life people are divided in[to] two categories. A third category does not exist; people either belong to one or the other. The first one resembles the fly. The main characteristic of the fly is that it is attracted by dirt. For example, when a fly is found in a garden full of flowers with beautiful fragrances, it will ignore them and will go sit on top of some filth found on the ground. It will start messing around with it and feel comfortable with the bad smell. If the fly could talk, and you asked it to show you a rose in the garden, it would answer: “I don’t even know what a rose looks like. I only know where to find garbage, toilets, and dirt.” There are some people who resemble the fly. People belonging to this category have learned to think negatively, and always look for the bad things in life, ignoring and refusing the presence of good.

The other category is like the bee, whose main characteristic is to always look for something sweet and nice to sit on. When a bee is found in a room full of dirt and there is a small piece of sweet in a corner, it will ignore the dirt and will go to sit on top of the sweet. Now, if we ask the bee to show us where the garbage is, it will answer, “I don’t know. I can only tell you where to find flowers, sweets, honey, and sugar; it only knows the good things in life and is ignorant of all evil.” This is the second category of people who have positive thinking, and see only the good side of things. They always try to cover up the evil in order to protect their fellow men; on the contrary, people in the first category try to expose the evil and bring it to the surface.

When someone comes to me and starts accusing other people and puts me in a difficult situation, I tell him the above example. Then I ask him to decide to which category he wishes to belong so he may find people of the same kind to socialize with.

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“The spirituality of a person is defined by the quality of his thoughts. One day, three men were sitting in a park chatting. Suddenly, a young man hastily ran by them. When they saw him, they all thought something.

The first one thought, “He must have stolen something, so he is running to escape. The second one thought: “He must be late for his date with some girl—that is why he is running.” And the third one said to himself: “Most probably he is a chanter in a church and runs to be on time for the service.”

Three men had three different thoughts about the same person. However, only the last one, who had a positive thought, was benefited, whereas the other two were spiritually harmed.

### Upcoming Events 2025

27 March: Holy Unction, St. Seraphim, 6:00 p.m.

14-19 April: Holy Week

20 April: Great and Holy Pascha

12-13 August: Bishop Gerasim visits for Feast of St. Maximus

5 October: St. Jonah feast day in Alpine with Bishop

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!