

The Confessor's Tongue for July 13, A. D. 2025

5th Sunday After Pentecost; Fathers of the First Six Ecumenical Councils

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.

19 July: St. Seraphim of Sarov

If we do not agree with the evil thoughts suggested by the devil, we do good.

One should not undertake ascetic labors beyond one's measure, but one should strive to make our friend—the flesh—faithful and capable of performing virtues.

One should go by the middle path: “turn not aside to the right hand nor to the left” (Prov. 4:27); and one should render unto the spirit what is spiritual and unto the body what is bodily; for the maintenance of temporal life, one should render what is necessary, and for life in society, that which is lawfully demanded by it, in accordance with the words of Holy Scripture: “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's” (Mt 22:21).

One must condescend to the soul in its infirmities and imperfections, and bear its defects as we bear those of others; one must not, however, become lazy, but should spur oneself to do better.

Perhaps one has eaten too much, or done something similar to this which is natural to human weakness—do not be disturbed at this, and do not add injury to injury; but bestir yourself to correction, and at the same time strive to preserve peace of soul, according to the word of the Apostle: “Blessed is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth” (Rom 14:22).

One should partake of enough food each day so that the body, strengthened, may be the friend and helper of the soul in the performance of virtue; otherwise, it may happen that, while wearing out one's body, one's soul also will grow weak.

On Fridays and Wednesdays, and especially during the four fasts, partake of food once in the day, and an angel of the Lord will join himself to you.

When your activities fall into a real order, boredom will find no place in your heart. Only those are afflicted with boredom whose affairs have no orderly arrangement.

St. Hesychios on Watchfulness

One of the main reasons Christians fall over and over into the same sins, often caught by surprise, is a lack of watchfulness. Christ said to His three disciples in the garden, “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.”

Without watchfulness and prayer, we are easy prey for the demons, who are experts and provoking us with thoughts that will lead to sin.

St. Hesychios instructs us in the art of watchfulness. His work is found in volume one of the Philokalia. I consider this text so critical to progress and victory in spiritual life and we shall run this great work serially over the next few months here in these pages. Let us pray that we may understand and heed his teaching by doing it.

53. An intellect that does not neglect its inner struggle will find that - along with the other blessings which come from always keeping a guard on the heart - the five bodily senses, too, are freed from all external evil influences. For while the intellect is wholly attentive to its own virtue and watchfulness and longs to enjoy holy thoughts, it does not allow itself to be plundered and carried away when vain material thoughts approach it through the senses. On the contrary, recognizing the wiliness of these thoughts, it withdraws the senses almost completely into itself.

54. Guard your mind and you will not be harassed by temptations. But if you fail to guard it, accept patiently whatever trial comes.

55. Just as the bitterness of absinth helps a poor appetite, so misfortunes help a bad character.

56. If you do not want to suffer evil, do not inflict it, since the suffering of it inevitably follows its infliction. 'For whatever a man sows he will also reap' (Gal. 6:7). Reaping unwillingly the wickedness we deliberately sow, we should marvel at God's justice.

The Sayings of St. Anthony the Great 21

It happened one day that one of the brethren in the monastery of Abba Elias was tempted. Cast out of the monastery, he went over the mountain to Abba Anthony. The brother lived near him for a while and then Anthony sent him back to the monastery from which he had been expelled. When the brothers saw him, they cast him out yet again, and he went back to Abba Anthony saying, ‘My Father, they will not receive me.’ Then the old man sent them a message saying, ‘A boat was shipwrecked at sea and lost its cargo; with great difficulty it reached the shore; but you want to throw into the sea that which has found safe harbor on the shore.’ When the brothers understood that it was Abba Anthony who had sent them this monk, they received him at once.

Anthony Saying 21 *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*

Commentary: “One rotten apple spoils the whole barrel.” This saying, which is certainly true in the physical world and at least partially true in the spiritual world, would seem to be the thought of the monks moving them to cast out their fallen brother. St. Paul says something similar to the Corinthians in the case of the man who had taken his father's wife as his own (I Cor. 5). Paul expresses his displeasure over their toleration of this immorality and tells them to “deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.” He warns his spiritual children that “a little leaven leavens the whole lump” and calls on them to cast out the old leaven and “put away from yourselves the evil person”.

Thus, the brothers seem to have acted on a solid principle. That they did is confirmed by Anthony not

reproving them for casting the brother out in the first place. The brother, leaving the monastery, settles near Anthony for a time. Anthony sees his repentance, and, when he deems the time ripe, he sends him back to his monastery healed. But the brothers refuse him entrance, and it is for this refusal to receive the penitent that Anthony reproves them with his parable of the wrecked ship.

The Church is a hospital for those wounded and disfigured by sin, but we must not abuse this image: the Church *is* a hospital, but only for the sick, wounded person who recognizes his ill health and desires to be made well. The whole Church is founded upon repentance. Without initial repentance, one may not enter Her, and without continued repentance until life's end, one may not remain in Her. The basic message of both St. John the Baptist and Christ was "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The Church is a hospital for sinners, sick and wounded by sin, but one must acknowledge one's sin to be admitted for care. To reject the Church's diagnosis, stubbornly and pridefully to insist on acceptance in the Church as an unrepentant sinner is to exclude oneself from the community of penitent sinners.

While this was initially the case with the man in Corinth, after being excluded from fellowship, he repented, and St. Paul in his second epistle to that church called on them to receive him back into fellowship. The same principle is at work here. The fallen brother repented and demonstrated that repentance in his way of life. Anthony sent him back in that repentant state, but the brothers would not receive him because of his prior sin. Anthony properly but gently chastises them through his parable, and they relent.

A baptized brother who chooses to live in sin without repentance is as pernicious to others in the Church as a rotten apple in a barrel is to the other sound apples. If the Church acts to exclude him from fellowship formally, it merely confirms what the man has already effected spiritually by his choice of sin. Very often, such people simply remove themselves from fellowship, sensing the incompatibility of their willful sin with the life of repentance leading to holiness in the Church. He who does not remove himself and who refuses to repent after private admonition must be removed to protect others from his bad example, to humble him, and to move him to repentance. The goal is always humility and renewed repentance for the sinner.

Because the Church is a hospital, any sinner who is willing to repent and believe may be admitted, and a fallen brother who demonstrates his repentance in deed as well as word must be re-admitted. Of course, the brother who falls and gets up again in repentance is not excluded at all. Depending on his sin, it is possible he will not be re-admitted immediately to the Chalice, but he will not be sent out the door. That measure is reserved for those who sin and will

not repent, and so, by their bad example, would cause others to fall. *Fr. Justin*

Making The Sign of the Cross

The *Typicon* of the Orthodox Church provides rules for making the sign of the Cross during divine services both for the clergy and the worshippers. These rules are found in various chapters of the *Typicon*, the *Ordered Psalter*, and other liturgical books. We make the sign of the Cross without bowing at the following times:

- 1) at the beginning and ending of readings from Holy Scripture;
- 2) at the beginning of the reading or singing of the stichera, troparion, or psalm;
- 3) during the words "alleluia" which are said in the middle of the Six Psalms at Matins;
- 4) during the reading and singing of the Creed at the words: "I believe", "in one Lord, Jesus Christ," and, "in the Holy Spirit" (some add one at "in one Holy...Church");
- 5) during the Trisagion ("Holy God") at the beginning of Matins, at the end of the Great Doxology (end of Matins/Vigil), and during the Liturgy;
- 6) at the dismissal during the words "Christ our true God," during the words "By the Power of the Precious and Life-creating Cross," also in the deacon's petition "O God, save thy people" read during Vigil.

Bows Without the Sign of the Cross

We bow the head without making the sign of the Cross at the following times:

- 1) when the priest says, "Peace be to all";
- 2) any time the priest or bishop blesses ("the blessing of the Lord be upon you", "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all", "and the mercies of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ be with you all", etc.;
- 3) at the Deacon's exclamation before the Trisagion in Liturgy "and unto ages of ages";
- 4) when the priest or deacon censures the people;
- 5) at the Great Entrance when the priest says "You and all Orthodox Christians, the Lord God remember in His kingdom..." and the people say quietly "thy priesthood the Lord God remember...".

Coming Events 2025

14-18 July: OCA All-American Council, Phoenix AZ
19-20 July: Fr. Justin in Alpine
12-13 August: Bishop Gerasim visits
5 October: St. Jonah feast day in Alpine with Bishop

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!