

The Confessor's Tongue for December 5, 2010

28th Sunday After Pentecost: St. Sabbas the Sanctified

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.

5 December: St. Sabbas the Sanctified

Born in Cappadocia, he "trained in virtue from childhood" beginning his ascetic life since he was 8 years old. At first, Sabbas settled in the Flavian Monastery which was close to his native village of Mutalaska. Naturally gifted, Sabbas soon learned the Psalter in the monastery and acquired the order of monastic life in all its strictness.

Within ten years Sabbas went to Palestine, arrived at the Laura of St. Euthymius the Great (see Jan. 20) he accepted St. Theoctistus (see Sept. 3) as his guide. In the course of the ten years, before the death of the St. Theoctistus, Sabbas did all that was required of him in obedience with all diligence, zealously trying "to subjugate the worst to the best, and to subject the flesh to the soul". For five years after the repose of the St. Theoctistus, Sabbas, in love for the highest desert asceticism, every week left the monastery for five days to be alone in a cave. During these five days he did not accept any food and spent time in prayer and meditation of God and was occupied weaving baskets.

After the death of the St. Euthymius, Sabbas selected a lonely cave near a dried up stream for his ascetic feats and settled in it. When the other adherents of desert-dwelling began flowing down to it, Sabbas founded a monastery for them, and thus arose what is known as the Lavra of St. Sabbas. In this monastery, at the beginning of its establishment, there was no temple, but later, after its creation, Sabbas, "when those who came to him who were priests, asking that they may perform the holy Liturgy, accepted ordination himself not wanting it because of his humility, being lower among the brethren leading up to the degree of priesthood". Subsequently Sabbas, according to his worthiness and monastic need, was ordained to the priesthood, from which he became known as the "sanctified".

Being the rector of the Monastery, Sabbas wrote the first Typicon for the order of the church services, known under the name of the Jerusalem Typicon and accepted by all the Palestinian monasteries.

According to the witness of Simeon of Thessalonica, "our divine father Sabbas wrote down the Typicon, having received it from Sts. Euthymius and Theoctistus, and they received it from those before them and from the Confessor Chariton" (see Sept. 28). The Ven. Sabbas died in 532.

Christmas Box Fundraiser

Dear Fellow Parishioners: We are working on a Christmas Box Fundraiser for our church's building fund! We are collecting 1 or 2 of your favorite holiday treats (ethnic varieties are welcome). This includes cookies, pastries, bars, etc. Sunday, December 19th, bring a batch of 30 of each item (a batch of 60 for

cookies) and we'll prepare the gift boxes together after coffee hour. All materials are being provided. **Please let Anna Stokes know what you intend to bring.** Each box will be stocked with a variety of treats, a list of the contents, and who donated them (so you can snag the recipe!) Enjoy the goods at home with the family or give them as gifts. Boxes will sell for \$10 each. All proceeds go toward the building fund, and with success, we hope to grow the effort next year while providing a lovely tradition for our parish. They will be for sale in the coffee hour room throughout the holidays, but if you would like to **pre-order**, contact Anna Stokes (phone: (940) 390-9119, email annarab@gmail.com)

The Sayings of St. Anthony the Great

Abba Anthony also said, "Always have the fear of God before your eyes. Remember Him who gives death and life. Hate the world and all that is in it. Hate all peace that comes from the flesh. Renounce this life, so that you may be alive to God. Remember what you have promised God, for it will be required of you on the day of judgment. Suffer hunger, thirst, nakedness, be watchful and sorrowful; weep and groan in your heart; test yourselves, to see if you are worthy of God; despise the flesh, so that you may preserve your souls."

Saying 33 Sayings of the Desert Fathers

Commentary: These are hard words from St. Anthony, but they are merely a compilation of our Savior's "hard" admonitions to watch, to be blessed by hungering and thirsting now, to be worthy of him by "hating" family members, and to seek first the kingdom of God and not gain the world and lose our souls. "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple," (Luke 14:26).

St. John the Theologian speaks in a similar vein in his first epistle: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If many man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever. I John 2:15-17

"Always have the fear of God before your eyes." The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Without that sober fear of him who has power over life and death, we will lack wisdom and will live foolishly and self-destructively.

"Hate the world." If we understand the world as the fallen order of man described by St. John's words, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," it is clear why we are to hate those

things collectively described as “the world.” Yet the words cut deeper. St. Maximus writes, “If we sincerely love God, we cast out the passions by this very love. Love for Him means to prefer Him to the world, and the soul to the body. It means to despise worldly things and to devote oneself continually to Him through self-mastery, love, prayer, psalmody, and so forth” (*400 Chapters on Love*, 3.50). Even the good natural order, the material world God made, which He declared to be “very good”, can get in the way of loving God. If we prefer our material life and all its pleasures and cares to knowing and serving God, we are no better than idolaters, for we are worshipping and serving the created things rather than the Creator. Because of God’s surpassing goodness, to give preference to material things over Him is like filling our pockets with common gravel when we could have easily filled them with diamonds. Seeing how easily distracted from God we are by the good world, St. Anthony expresses our proper attitude towards the world in contrast with our attitude towards God.

“Renounce this life...” and “Remember what you have promised God...” speak first of the monastic life which begins with renunciation of the world and its usual way of life and a promise of devoting oneself wholeheartedly to God. For those of us who live in the world, we must remember our Baptism, our consecration of ourselves to God and what that requires of us and be constantly renewed in it, and not let ourselves be dominated by earthly values (such as the ‘American Dream’).

Anthony’s admonitions to suffer hunger, thirst, nakedness, to be watchful and sorrowful is a call to the ascetic Christian life: to prayer, to fasting, to almsgiving and to repentance. His word to “despise the flesh” means we are to war against the passions the seek to rule us, that we are to subject our bodies to our minds illumined by Christ and not to let our bodies run our lives.

This word is hard for us to hear, but that does not mean we should not hear it. We enter into the Final Judgment in this life as we allow the Holy Spirit through the commands of Christ to judge our lives, as we accuse ourselves before God in Confession of our failure to love Him with all our heart. Without such hard words, we tend to live in self-satisfied complacency, which deposits us directly on the highway to hell. Made God grant us all “ears to hear” and the courage to face God’s judgment of our lives now rather than later.

Fr. Justin Frederick

“Perverse Thoughts Separate Men from God” Part One

From Elder Paisios in “Elder Paisios of the Holy Mt.”

Elder Paisios always urged us to think positively. Our positive thinking, however, should not be our ultimate aim; eventually our soul must be cleansed from our positive thoughts as well, and be left bare

having as its sole vestment divine grace granted to us through Holy Baptism. “This is our aim,” he used to say, “to totally submit our mind to the grace of God. The rest is taken care of by His grace.

In the beginning, we should willingly try to develop positive thoughts, which will gradually lead us to the perfect good, God, to whom belongs every glory, honor, and worship; on the contrary, to us belongs only the humility of our conceited attitude.

“We must always be careful and constantly question the nature of our thoughts. When someone is preoccupied and trusts his own way of thinking, he becomes vulnerable to the devil, who is capable of transforming us into sly persons, even when we are honest by nature.

The older fathers never trusted their own thoughts. Even for minor problems to which they had to give answers, they prayed to God, or fasted, as a way to “force” divine grace to reveal the answer according to God’s will; and after they got the “information,” they gave the answer.

In our days, when someone has a serious problem and asks for advice, we tend to interrupt him and provide an answer without letting him finish his question first. In this case, we do not only not seek the assistance of divine grace, but we also misuse our logic, which was granted to us by God. We are ruled by our own thoughts and unhesitatingly rely on them, very often having to face the disastrous results of our acts.

To be continued...Next week: The difference between the two thieves on the cross.

December Namedays

- 6 Alexander Nicholas Sancer, Nicholas Thayer (St. Nicholas of Myra)
- 7 Ambrose Leif Pierson (St. Ambrose of Milan)
- 13 Lucia Lydia Sancer
- 11-17 Sunday of Holy Forefathers Adam Betz (Adam the First Created) Reader Benjamin (Patriarch Benjamin) Joseph (Derek) Sancer (Righteous Joseph the Comely)
- 31 Melanie Betz (Ven Melania the Younger of Rome)

December Birthdays

- 5 Alexander Sancer, 7 Nancy Saito, 11 Lydia Sancer, 16 Emmauel Lyda (05), 28 Nathan Brouillette, 31 Leah Cole

Upcoming Events 2010-2011

- 22 December: Wednesday, 7:00 p.m. Metropolitan Jonah visits at Vespers.
- 24 December: Nativity Eve Vigil & Holy Supper.
- 6 March 2011: Sunday, 6:00 p.m. Forgiveness Vespers
- 24 April 2011: Pascha

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!