

The Confessor's Tongue for January 9, A. D. 2011

33rd Sunday After Pentecost: Sunday before Theophany; St. Philip of Moscow
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 9: St. Philip Metropolitan of Moscow

The hierarch-martyr, in the world Theodore, descended from the old famous boyar family of Kolichev. He was born in Moscow in 1507, was well educated, and entered imperial service. At 30 years of age he decided to leave the vain world and to devote himself to the service of God. Not having shared his intention with anybody and not having taken anything with him, in peasant clothes, he went to the distant Solovki Monastery. Here he was welcomed by the Hegumen, the Elder Alexei, and was made a postulant, and like a lamb led to slaughter he fervently carried out the labor assigned to him. He carried water, cut fire wood, worked on a mill and in the monastery smithy, cultivated a kitchen garden and baked bread. Within a year and a half the Hegumen tonsured him, naming him Phillip.

In the calling of monk, St. Philip was an example of all the virtues, not weakening in labor and prayer. After the death of Hegumen Alexei, he received authority over the Solovki Monastery and very much labored for the improvement and adornment of the poor monastery. He wrote a Typicon (Ustav) for the brethren, constructed two temples, constructed a Skete and a hospital for the monks, drained bogs, and built roads.

Philip was called to Moscow by Tsar Ivan the Terrible on June 25, 1566 and was installed as the Metropolitan of Moscow. In this rank St. Philip "gleamed like a splendid star by his words of teaching". He fearlessly spoke the truth to the Tsar and accused him of cruelty with his subjects. Ivan, who ordinarily became infuriated at the slightest contradiction, at first listened to the truthful speech of the Metropolitan. The executions became less frequent. Even the oprichniki (secret corps) grew quiet, seeing the respect the tsar had for the Hierarch and being afraid of his accusations. But such a situation did not last long. Angered by the accusations of St. Philip, Ivan the Terrible constructed a cathedral, on which he exposed some of the slanderers against the Hierarch. The unrighteously accused sufferer was imprisoned in a dingy cell of the Theophany (Bogoiavlenskii) Monastery, fettered with chains, with a heavy collar around his neck, and was deprived of food for a few days in succession. Then he was transferred and imprisoned in the Tver Otroch Monastery. Within a year during Ivan's travel through Tver, St. Philip was strangled with a pillow in his own cell on December 23, 1569 by Maliuta Skuratov. He is glorified by the Holy Church, as "a true bishop and sufferer", "a true champion", "a pillar of Orthodoxy", "a Russian lamp". The relics of St. Philip repose in fragrant holiness according to the certificate of the celebration of the

truth of God in the Moscow Dormition Cathedral.
From the Bulgakov Handbook, Fr. Eugene Tarris translator.

"Perverse Thoughts Separate Men from God" Part Five

From Elder Paisios in "Elder Paisios of the Holy Mt."

There is no magical therapy that will automatically cure someone whose mind has gone astray due to his constant preoccupation with his false thinking; there are, however, certain steps to follow in order to recover:

First, and most important, is to realize the state of his own wretchedness.

After he realizes it, the second step is to repent, go to Confession, and never listen again to the voice of his own thoughts; instead, he must follow the voice of his spiritual father.

Thirdly, after he becomes aware of his miserable state of being, he should constantly ask God for His mercy through the Jesus Prayer, so Christ will help him, and His divine grace will return inside him.

One can only be cured and saved through humbleness, the only miraculous therapy I know of; only humility can save us.

Man is changeable; on the one hand, he clings to his good thoughts, and on the other, to his negative and devious ones. He does what he likes whenever he likes, for he has a free and independent will. The same thing applies to divine grace and illusion. Since man is constantly changing, divine grace and illusion come and go respectively.

If one lives in the world of his pride, that is the world of his own thoughts, he is filled with illusions and he is in danger. He must not listen to his thoughts, which try to push him left and right in order to destroy him; on one hand, they convince him that he is virtuous, nice, a real striver, talented, almost a saint, and on the other, that he is a failure and there is no hope for him to be saved. His thoughts will either create inside him the false belief that he is perfect and thus awaken his pride, or that he is a hopeless loser and fill him with despair. He must ignore both positive and negative thoughts, and always confess them to his spiritual father, and obey whatever he tells him. He should only trust him and not his own thoughts; furthermore, he must believe that he is nothing but a striving soul and constantly ask for God's mercy in his prayer in order for his mind to be cleansed.

As long as he thinks humbly of himself, God's grace remains within him and protects him. When he moves away from his humble thoughts and starts being preoccupied with what the patriarch or the bishop or the abbot or monks do or say, then God's grace starts retreating.

Therefore, the most important thing for us to look after is to preserve the sense of humbleness in our lives, and thus allow for divine grace to permanently remain within us. *To be continued...*

St. Symeon the New Theologian

[The Apostle Paul] proclaims, "Strive for peace with all men, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14). Why did he say, "Strive"? Because it is not possible for us to become holy and to be saints in an hour! We must therefore progress from modest beginnings toward holiness and purity. Even were we to spend a thousand years in this life, we should never perfectly attain to it. Rather, we must always struggle for it every day, as if mere beginners. This again Paul has shown us by saying, "Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect" (Philippians 3:12). *Discourse 5*

St. Symeon the New Theologian On Faults Often Considered Trifling

There will be those who, like myself, have been insubordinate and disobedient toward God's commandments who vainly calculate and say, "But I have not committed fornication! Swearing is nothing. I have not committed adultery! But what sin is it to have stolen a penny or a piece of bread?" And again, "I should attain bliss, if I do not commit the foul and sacrilegious vice of homosexuality. But what sin is there in being insulting or jealous, in being flippant or frivolous?" Then again there are those who in their folly think highly of themselves for being pure from the practice of sins of the flesh, and think that they are like angels of God, but take no account of the virtues and passions of the soul. They have nothing but contempt for all the rest of the Lord's commandments and do not force themselves to fulfill them. They refuse to do anything that is strenuous or to undergo any suffering for a commandment of God, and live carelessly.

What benefit, brethren, is there from abstaining from fornication and other impure acts of the body and yet seek after glory and strive for money? The one corrupts the body, and the other corrupts the soul. Moreover, glory from men and love for it makes us to be unbelievers, according to the word of the Lord when He says, "How can you believe, who receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?" What good is it to be innocent of homosexual acts, but to waste away with envy, hatred, and jealousy toward your neighbor? Hatred toward one's brother makes him who feels it into a murderer, for the apostle says, "anyone who hates his brother is a murderer." According to the sacred canons, a sodomite and a murderer are subject to the same penalty, and if they fail to repent they will be subject to eternal condemnation.

Homily on the Living Stone

St. Nicholas of Zicha (+1956)

"To whom coming, as unto a living stone...ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood. I Peter 2:4-5

What does a stone mean, my brethren, but stability? What can it teach us, my brethren, but stability? The living stone means immortality. The Apostle refers to Christ the Lord as the living Stone, because He is immortal and the giver of immortality. The Apostle also refers to Christians as living stones, as partakers of the immortality of Christ.

My brethren, what do unbelievers think will be the last end of man? They think that his last end will be like that of a stone; a man will die, he will become insensate and turn to dust. A stone is already dead and without feeling, and can easily be turned to dust. Thus both unbelievers and believers compare men with stone, unbelievers because of its deadness and lack of feeling, and believers because of its endurance and stability. For the first, stone is a symbol of death, but for the second, it is a symbol of immortality.

In truth, without Christ, men are and always will be like dead stones. But Christ is like living stone. Ally yourself with Him alone, and you will be like living stones. In building a house, a builder chooses only those stones that are hewn and dressed to fit together with the other stones in the wall. Those that are unhewn, undressed, rough, and dilapidated, he throws away. Building the house, or the Temple, of His immortal Kingdom, Christ chooses men as a builder selects stones, with one characteristic: life, spiritual life. The Lord casts aside the spiritually dead as useless material, and only takes those that are alive with His life, and who fit well with the other living stones—the angels and the prophets, apostles and saints. Let us strive, my brethren, to be holy material for the holy house of Christ's Kingdom, which He is building day and night, and which He will complete in the fullness of time.

O Lord Jesus, Thou builder of the heavenly Kingdom, enliven us by Thy Holy Spirit and build us as living stones into the house of Thine eternal glory. To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.

Upcoming Events 2011

- 15 January: Russian Liturgy, 9:30 a.m.
- 16 January: Mission Council
- 28 January: Friday Night Prayer Vigil, 9:00
- 6 March: Sunday, 6:00 p.m. Forgiveness Vespers
(everyone needs to plan on attending this service!)
- 7 March: Great Lent begins.
- 24 April: Holy Pascha: The Feast of Feasts!

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!