

The Confessor's Tongue for February 6, A. D. 2011

37th Sunday After Pentecost: St. Photios, St. Buccolus; Zacchaeus Sunday

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.

6 February: St. Photios

The great theologian and fearless defender of Orthodoxy, one of the "pillars of Orthodoxy", came from a well-known family and held the position of state secretary. Having a great mind Photius possessed enormous information on Holy Scripture, theology, history, philosophy, literature, mathematics and even medicine. However brilliant was his secular life at the court, he was not fond of it and since his youth he was inclined to the spiritual life and the quiet cultivation of the sciences, vowed to live a celibate life, wishing to devote himself to monasticism.

In 858, Photius was consecrated to the rank of Patriarch of Constantinople. He had been resisting this assignment and only the will and the persistent requests of the emperor forced him to come to the throne to which there was no one else better to occupy. In the rank of hierarch Photius became glorified for piety, by his godly enlightenment, and by his ascetic effort on the decision of the Seventh Ecumenical Council for the defense of the veneration of icons. He did much work in correcting the destruction and the abuse by the iconoclasts of monasteries, churches, icons and so forth. He always and before all fervently stood up for the interests of Orthodoxy and stigmatized vices and crimes, not being frightened even by the powers of this world. He was distinguished by his trusteeship for the charitable establishments, which were then managed by the church, and by his personal charitableness as was shown by him especially on feast days. He zealously cared for the planting and spread of Christianity among the Slavic peoples. The broad missionary activity of Photius has touched even our remote and at that time wild country. As the adherent of the Christian enlightening influence of Byzantium, Photius sent the most hopeful of his bishops for the formation of the Rus to Christianity. This bishop-missionary performed his ascetic effort all the more probably among the Rus on the Taman Peninsula (Tmutorokan) across the Azov Bosphorus (Kerch). From these Rus Christianity was able to penetrate through Taurida even to Kievan Rus. Thus Photius was the founder of our formation in Christianity and planter of the first seeds of the Christian faith falling on Russian soil even up to the Holy Equal to the Apostles Prince Vladimir. Our existing ancient scribe at that time postulates that even Vladimir accepted the first Metropolitan and Bishops from Photius, and there is an echo of a tradition about Photius as the founder and the first announcer of the formation of the Rus in the Christian faith. Through Photius, who lifted up the education levels in Byzantium, we are also much obliged for the enlightenment revealed to those

following Christianity in Bulgaria as well, and for us the remarkable powers during the reign of Yaroslav and during the time closest after him.

As the zealous advocate of Orthodoxy, Photius more than once attracted to himself the malice of enemies and suffered them not a little. The Roman Popes autocratically and innocently even excommunicated him, and the Emperor Basil the Macedonian exiled him in 867 to an imprisonment. But Photius endured all this with Christian courage and patience. In 879, Photius was again called to the patriarchal throne, but, because of the intrigues of his enemies, was again removed to one Armenian monastery. The remaining days of this courageous advocate of Orthodoxy was carried out in solitude and in the ascetic efforts of Christian piety. He died on February 6, 891 at about 75 years of age. Photius left many works in which he accused the Latins of errors, and denied the false teachings of his contemporaries and so forth. His "Library" is a catalogue of 224 writers whom he regarded as especially remarkable and for whom he has made abstracts, and the "Nomocanon" is the systematic collection of canons and civil laws accepted by the Eastern Church.

Zacchaeus Sunday

The reading of the story of Zacchaeus's encounter with Jesus (Luke 19:1-10) marks the last Sunday counted from Pentecost in the Church Year. Next Sunday, the *Triodion*, the liturgical book used during Great Lent, will be opened for the first of four pre-lenten Sundays, the Publican and the Pharisee. It will be followed by the Sundays of The Prodigal Son, The Last Judgment (Meatfare), and Forgiveness Sunday (Cheesefare).

Everyone for whom St. Maximus is his home parish must attend the Forgiveness Vespers on Forgiveness Sunday, March 6, at 6:00 p.m. Please put it on your calendar if it is not there already!

No Vigil in Denton this Coming Saturday

The usual Resurrectional Vigil will not be celebrated at St. Maximus next Saturday. Instead, the faithful are encouraged to attend Vigil at St. Seraphim's Cathedral in Dallas, where Metropolitan Jonah and Metropolitan Hilarion of the Moscow Patriarchate will be present. Metropolitan Hilarion will be giving a presentation following the Vigil, which begins at 5:00. This is an opportunity to experience worship at another local parish. Thus Confession will not be available next Saturday evening, so plan accordingly. It will be available Friday morning and evening, Wednesday morning, and by appointment.

2011 Diocesan Pastoral Conference

The week of February 13, Fr. Justin will be attending the annual Diocese of the South Pastoral Conference for its clergy. It is being hosted by Fr. Paul Yerger's parish in Clinton, Mississippi. Metropolitan Jonah, Bishop Mark, and Archdeacon Kiril Sokolov will all be present and making presentations to the gathered clergy.

The Pastoral Conference was started a few years ago to give the bishop a chance to meet with his clergy to encourage them and build them up. Just as the priest pastors the parish, the bishop is to pastor the priests and deacons.

Fr. Justin will depart Monday, February 14 and return Thursday, February 17.

Fundraising

We have several things for which we are raising funds at present. As it gets confusing, here is a summary.

1. Hall Expansion. Money for this is being raised by pledges, designated gifts, and your weekly donations in the jar at Coffee Hour. This is a short-term project. Checks designated "Hall Expansion" will be put to this end.

2. Building Renovation and Beautification. The repair and painting of the front porch was phase one of this ongoing task to care for our historic building. Apart from dedicated gifts, we are raising money for this by soft drink sales from the refrigerator in the coffee hour room. The drinks in that refrigerator are donated; your dollar in exchange for a drink allows us to save money for the next phase. Imagine the whole building cleaned, caulked, repaired, and repainted. This is the goal. We'd like to be able to finish this task by the start of 2014. Checks left in the jar or designated "Beautification" will be credited to this account.

3. Building Fund for New Church. This understated effort has been in place for several years. All money deposited into the large wooden box next to the candle table (labelled "Building Fund") goes towards the construction of a new, permanent temple for our parish. Checks designated "Building Fund" also are put into this account.

4. Regular Tithes and Offerings are part of our worship of God and go to support the cost of maintaining a parish, a priest, and a diocese. If all of us do our part here, the rest will be relatively easy. Gifts to the other funds should be above and beyond our usual giving of tithes.

Raising funds is part of the growing pains of a healthy parish. We may either complain and grumble, or we may thank God that we have been given the opportunity to be founders and builders of a new parish as we joyfully and willingly bring our offerings beyond our normal tithes for these purposes, trusting in God to provide for our parish as each of us offers what he can willingly and in faith. May the blessing of

God for the founders and beautifiers of a church be upon all of us who participate in these efforts!

Hall Expansion and Church Plans

The parish is moving forward on plans to expand the hall. We are currently \$89 short of having in hand the \$5000 set as a threshold by the special parish meeting for going ahead with the larger hall expansion. There are still pledges towards the work in the sum of \$3500 outstanding. When those come in, we'll be exactly halfway to raising the full \$17,000 we need; we'd like to have that full amount by the end of February when we hope to start construction so we don't have to finance any of the work and can move on to focus on building the church. A fundraising letter will be sent out this week to help accomplish this goal.

Before we can begin construction, we have to demolish the concrete patio on the west end of the building. Some men willing to swing sledgehammers (or rent a jackhammer and run it) and some others to gather the concrete rubble and remove it will be needed to accomplish this task by the end of the month. In addition, a person to organize and oversee the work would be welcome. This work should be done by March 1.

Construction will probably take three months. We can help keep costs down by participating in the construction. If you'd like to help, take note. We'll make further details about helping as they become available. For now, our task is to remove the patio.

The addition is planned to be 1000 square feet: 25 feet by 42 feet. It will have doors facing the street and the back where the church will stand. It will have ten-foot ceilings and is being designed to match the existing building in appearance.

Our architect is working on our site plan and refining the church plan so we can take it to the city soon to get started on the approval process.

Please keep these efforts in your prayers.

Upcoming Events 2011

- 9 February, Wednesday 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. St. Maximus at the Soup Kitchen
- 12 February, Saturday, 5:00 p.m. Vigil with Metropolitan Jonah and Hilarion at St. Seraphim
- 25 February, Friday, 9:00 p.m. Hesychastic Vigil
- 6 March: Sunday, 6:00 p.m. Forgiveness Vespers (everyone needs to plan on attending this service!)
- 24 April: Holy Pascha: The Feast of Feasts!

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!