

The Confessor's Tongue for June 26, A. D. 2011

First Sunday After Pentecost: All Saints of North America

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.

Sunday of All Saints of North America

This second Sunday after Pentecost, we remember all the Saints who have blossomed in our land just as the Russian Church remembers all the Saints of the Russian land on this day.

We remember St. Herman, the monk who came to Alaska as one of the original missionaries in 1794 and lived there on Spruce Island until his repose in 1837, teaching the Christian Faith to the native Alaskans. We remember St. Innocent, who first came as a married priest to Alaska in 1824, was made the first bishop of the area in 1840 after the death of his wife, and served there as a tireless missionary and translator of the Scriptures and services of the Church into the native tongues until he was called back to Moscow in 1868 to become Metropolitan of Moscow and all Russia.

We remember the first martyrs of our land, St. Peter the Aleut, and Aleut lad who was tortured to death for his faith by Jesuits wanting him to convert in San Francisco in 1815, and St. Juvenaly, a Russian priest-monk and missionary who was martyred by natives near Lake Iliamna in Alaska in 1796.

We remember St. Tikhon, who served as bishop in America from 1898 to 1907 and was instrumental in seeing the services of the Church translated into English to make her worship and faith accessible to the English speakers of America, and who as Patriarch of Moscow from 1917 until his death in 1925, stood firm against the atheist Bolsheviks who sought to destroy the Church.

We remember St. Jacob Netsvetov of Alaska, the first native priest to be ordained to serve the Alaskan peoples, who labored as a missionary priest from 1828 until his repose in 1864.

We remember St. Alexis of Wilkes-Barre, an Eastern-rite Roman Catholic Priest (Uniate), who returned to the Orthodox Church in 1891 bringing 361 others with him, and who from then until his repose in 1909 labored tirelessly to reconcile Uniate Catholics with the Orthodox Church, himself personally bringing in about 15,000.

We remember St. Raphael, the first Arabic speaking bishop to labor in North America as an auxiliary to St. Tikhon in 1904, and, who established more than 30 Syrian and Lebanese parishes, and who founded *The Word* journal in Arabic (which continues to be published to this day, in English now) before his repose in 1915.

We remember two priests, Alexander Hotovitsky and John Kochurov who labored in America for a time and who both were martyred back in Russia by the Bolsheviks, St. John being the first of many priest-martyrs under communism in 1918; St. Alexander died in the Solovki labor camp in 1930.

Finally, we remember two beloved hierarchs, St.

Nikolai of Zicha and St. John of San Francisco. St. Nikolai was a Serbian bishop, known as a second Chrystosm for his powerful preaching and inspired writings. After suffering during the Second World War at the hands of the Nazis in the Dachau death camp, he came to America and taught at St. Tikhon's seminary until his repose in 1956. St. John of Shanghai and San Francisco was a Russian bishop who escaped the Bolsheviks, for a time was in Serbia, and who later served the Russian emigre community in Shanghai, China with special care for orphans until Mao's communists drove them out; he brought his orphans to the United States and ended his life as Bishop in California. He is much beloved and is known as a wonderworker.

These are but the Saints known to us who labored in North America. Doubtless there are others known to God. O all ye Saints of North America, pray to Christ God for us!

Thy Word Is a Lamp

Fr. Justin Frederick

Darkness is not conducive to safe travel. Even navigating a familiar house at night can be perilous without light. A toy not put away, a chair not pushed in under the table, or a little disorientation suffices for a stubbed toe, a bumped nose, or an unexpected fall to the floor. To combat the dangers of navigating a home by night, man has created night lights, flash lights, and easily accessible light switches so that late night trips to the bathroom do not end in mild disaster.

How much more does our spiritual life require light—light that allows us to see where it is safe to step and what steps to avoid, where lies the precipice and where runs the path. The Psalmist in that great panegyric to the law of God revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai declares, “Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” Man, perhaps, does not think of law as giving light, but the Psalmist begs to differ. Much as a flashlight keeps us from stumbling in the dark, so God's law, His Word, provides light to help him navigate the dark paths of this life to keep him from falling.

How can a young man keep his way pure, especially in a world full of temptation? “By taking heed according to Thy Word” (Psm 118:9) is the answer. God's Word gives wisdom, understanding, and guidance to keep man from sin and to guide him safely on the path of life. “Thy Word have I hid in my heart that I might no sin against Thee” (Psm 118:11). By reading, memorizing, and meditating upon God's Word, we hide it in our hearts so that it is always with us when we need it.

There is scarcely anything more shameful than when a man who can read neglects the reading of

God's Word. Such a one might as well be illiterate! He would be better off, in fact, for the illiterate knows he cannot read and often longs for that freedom, while the one who can read but neglects God's word to consume endless volumes of human wisdom deludes himself into thinking he is learned.

Brethren, we are all literate, at least in the sense of being able to read. Let us use that ability to become literate in God's Word, to read it, to reflect upon, to memorize it, to do it. It will repay us handsomely for the time we put in by giving us knowledge, wisdom, and light to keep us from tripping over unseen moral snags, falling into unperceived error in our thoughts, and delivering our souls from spiritual disaster.

Fr. Justin Frederick

Someone asked a monk: "Who taught you to pray? He answered, "Demons." "How did demons teach you?" "This is how! They warred against me with various thoughts, and I beat them off with prayer." *St. Ambrose of Optina*

Reading the Scriptures

Here are some suggestions for reading the Scriptures regularly.

1. Read what is given on the church wall calendar each day. Those are the lessons appointed to be read at Liturgy on that day. It is not much, but it is better than nothing.
2. Read the chapter of Proverbs corresponding to the day of the month. There are 31 chapters. Keep reading for a year or so, take a break, and come back to it. The reading and contemplating of Proverbs will save us from much grief in youth (and later)—if we will give heed.
3. Like the Optina Elders, starting with Matthew and going through to John, read one chapter from the Gospels each day; and starting with Acts and reading through to Revelation, read two chapters from the Epistles each day. That will take you through the entire New Testament in 90 days, four times a year. Imagine what that would do for your spiritual life if you stayed with it!
4. Try to read through the Old Testament once a year. If we omit Psalms and Proverbs and the Deuterocanonical books (i.e., if we use the Hebrew canon), we can read the whole OT by reading just two chapters a day. One can go about it various ways: straight through, chronologically, by genre; just make a checklist with all the OT books listed and check them off as you read them.
5. Identify key verses and whole chapters and memorize them. Read them aloud to yourself repeatedly for a week or two, then start to memorize. Hiding God's Word in your heart in this way will bear much good fruit.
6. See your priest if you need further help or suggestions.

Fr. Justin Frederick

On the Profit in Reading the Scriptures

St. John Chrysostom

For, tell me, who of you that stand here, if he were required, could repeat one Psalm, or any other portion of the Divine Scriptures? There is not one.

And it is not this only that is the grievous thing, but that while ye are become so backward with respect to things spiritual, yet in regard of what belongs to Satan ye are more vehement than fire. Thus should any one be minded to ask of you songs of devils and impure effeminate melodies, he will find many that know these perfectly, and repeat them with much pleasure.

But what is the answer to these charges? "I am not," you will say, "one of the monks, but I have both a wife and children, and the care of a household." Why, this is what hath ruined all, your supposing that the reading of the divine Scriptures appertains to [monks] only, when ye need it much more than they. For they that dwell in the world, and each day receive wounds, these have the most need of medicines. So that it is far worse than not reading, to account the thing even "superfluous:" for these are the words of diabolical invention. Hear ye not Paul saying, "that all these things are written for our admonition?"...

For if thou wouldest learn how great is the profit of the Scriptures, examine thyself, what thou becomest by hearing Psalms, and what by listening to a song of Satan; and how thou art disposed when standing in a Church, and how when sitting in a theatre; and thou wilt see that great is the difference between this soul and that, although both be one. Therefore Paul said, "Evil communications corrupt good manners." For this cause we have need continually of those songs, which serve as charms from the Spirit. Yes, for this it is whereby we excel the irrational creatures, since with respect to all other things, we are even exceedingly inferior to them.

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If a man falls into some sin and does not feel remorse for his offence as he should, he will easily fall into the same net again. *St. Mark the Ascetic*

St. John Chrysostom says: If you want to know the truth about yourself, seek it from your enemies. They will tell you. *Elder Ambrose of Optina*

Upcoming Events 2011

- 20-29 June: Peter & Paul Fast
- 28 June: Vigil for Feast of SS Peter & Paul at St. Paul's, Denison, with Chantus Maximus, 7:00 p.m.
- 29 July, 8:00 p.m. Chantus Maximus Concert.
- 29-31 July: Ten-Year Anniversary Celebration with Metropolitan Jonah, Archbishop Dmitri, and Bishop Nikon. Tickets go on sale this week.

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!