

The Confessor's Tongue for October 2, A. D. 2011

Sixteenth Sunday After Pentecost: SS. Cyprian & Justina; Blessed Andrew

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.

October 1: Pokrov (Protection of Theotokos)

In the standard opinion, this feast was established in memory of the vision of St. Andrew (see Oct. 2 about it) of the Mother of God covering Christians with her Omophorion in the Blachernae temple in Constantinople. In the life of St. Andrew it so speaks about this wonderful vision:

"Once, Blessed Andrew went to an all-night vigil that was being celebrated in the temple of Blachernae (where the robe of the Mother of God with an Omophorion and part of her belt was kept). Epiphanius was there (a famous youth, disciple of St. Andrew, according to some, he subsequently accepted monasticism with the name Polyeuctus and became a Patriarch of Constantinople, see Feb. 5 and Oct. 2) and was one of his servants. As was his custom Andrew stood, as it gave him strength, sometimes until midnight, sometimes until morning. At the fourth hour of the night [ten o'clock] the Blessed One with his own eyes saw a most majestic woman, coming from the Royal Doors (the doors the Greeks call the main entrance to the temple) with an awesome entourage, among whom was the honorable Forerunner and the Son of Thunder (John the Theologian) holding her hands, and many saints dressed in white going before her, while others followed singing hymns and spiritual songs. When she approached the Ambo, the Venerable One went to Epiphanius and asked: "Did you see the Lady and Queen of the world"? "Yes, my spiritual father", he answered. And as they watched, She bent her knees and prayed for a long time, shedding tears down her godlike and immaculate face. Having completed her prayer here, She went to the holy altar table, and prayed there for the people present. After completing her prayer, She removed her veil which was flashing like great and awesome lightening which she wore on her immaculate head and, holding it in her immaculate hands with great reverence, spread it over all the people standing there. These wonderful men (Andrew and Epiphanius) for a long time observed this protecting veil spreading over the people and shining with flashes similar to lightening of the glory of the Lord; and as long as the All-Holy Theotokos was there, it was visible and covering. After her departure it also became invisible. But, having taken it with her, She left grace behind for those who were present there".

This feast is one of the great feasts but is not one of the twelve.

October 2: SS Cyprian & Justina

Justina lived in Antioch with her parents, Edesius and Cleodonia. Edesius was an idolatrous priest and his whole household was pagan, but when Justina, going round the Christian churches, came to know

the true Faith, she brought both her father and mother to Christ the Lord, and all three were baptized by the bishop, Optatus. Cyprian was a magician, and had links with unclean spirits and powers of divination. A dissolute youth Aglaidas, a pagan, tried to lead Justina astray, being enraptured by her beauty, and, when the holy maiden firmly rejected him, sought Cyprian's help. Cyprian invoked evil spirits, one after the other, on Justina, to set alight in her the passion of impurity towards Aglaidas, but they were totally unsuccessful in this, for St. Justina, with the sign of the Cross and prayer to God, drove out the evil spirits. Then Cyprian came to know the power of the Cross over the demons and was himself baptized, in time becoming both priest and bishop. The wicked pagans seized both him and Justina, and they were sent for trial to Damascus, and then tortured and beheaded in Nicomedia at the end of the third century.

October 2: Blessed Andrew, Fool for Christ

Born a Scythian (according to the Eastern Menaion he was a Slav), the slave of the wealthy Constantinople resident Theognostus, who taught him the Greek language and the sciences, Andrew "loved Christ from a young child", was meek and obedient, frequently prayed to God and thought about the salvation of his soul. He diligently read the lives of the martyrs and saints and, finally, became zealous to imitate them. On special command from above, he accepted for himself the difficult ascetic effort of foolishness. In torn clothes he went about the city, endured hunger, cold, sneers and beatings, and at night he abided in silent prayer for himself, for his abusers and for the entire Christian world. "All who have seen" the way of life of St. Andrew marveled at his "patience". For his long-term asceticism of folly the Lord granted St. Andrew the gift of the recovery of sight and "all future things, as if seen before his eyes". He "led the youth Epiphanius to the right way" and predicted to him that "he would be bishop and teach the people" (see Oct. 1). For St. Andrew "hidden things were opened" and he "saw all bodiless and carnal things". In the Blachernae Temple he became worthy to see the Mother of God, "praying for the world" and covering Christians with her Holy Veil (see Oct. 1). St. Andrew died in the 66th year of his life. Some place the time of the life of St. Andrew in the 10th century, but others place it between the 5th and 7th centuries.

Prayer is not just a recitation of settled formulas but, first of all, an intercourse or conversation with the Living God. And every Christian is supposed and expected to practice it. *Fr. Georges Florovsky*

The Commandments of Christ

*"If ye love Me, you will keep my commandments."
John 14:15*

A Christian is one who confesses his faith in the God revealed in the person of Jesus Christ and who loves that God. But how can man know that he, in fact, loves God, whom he has not seen?

For those who conceive of love as an emotion of warm, favorable disposition to another, love for God is either something you have or do not have. Those who do not feel the emotion may feel bad that they do not feel love for God may try to manufacture the feeling. This is one reason why much contemporary Christian music outside the Orthodox Church is characterized by a saccharine emotionalism calculated to stir up the desired feeling of love in the listener.

But Christ Himself tells us what love for God is and how we can know that we love Him; "If ye love Me, keep my commandments." Here is an objective standard to discern love for God. He who loves God demonstrates it by submitting himself to Christ in keeping Christ's commandments. Whether one feels loving toward God or not is irrelevant here: one's love is manifested in one's obedience to the Master. Lack of obedience reveals that love is absent, regardless of how warm and loving one may feel.

The connection between love for God and the keeping of His commandments is not new with Christ but is clearly to be seen in the Old Covenant with Israel. In the second commandment from Sinai (graven images), God concludes by speaking of Himself as One who shows "mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep My commandments" (Exodus 20:6). Very often in the Hebrew Scriptures, an idea is put forward in the first half of a sentence and elaborated upon in the second. Thus those who love God are the same ones who keep His commandments. This appears again in Deuteronomy (11:1): "Therefore thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and keep his charge, and his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments, alway." A man loves God by keeping His charge, statutes, judgments, and commandments; conversely, to do these things is to love God. This juxtaposition of loving God and keeping His commandments, variously expressed occurs at least five more times in Deuteronomy.

Beyond the Torah, Joshua reminds the people of this duty at the end of his life after they have taken possession of the Promised Land: "But take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, which Moses the servant of the Lord charged you, to love the Lord your God, and to walk in all His ways, and to keep His commandments, and to cleave unto Him, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul" (Joshua 22:5). Daniel uses it in his prayer of intercession for the Hebrews in captivity at the conclusion of the seventy years, "O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy

to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments..." as does Nehemiah in his prayer to God for the Jews who had returned from exile but had not yet rebuilt Jerusalem's walls: "O Lord God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love Him and observe His commandments."

Christ, then, in linking love for God with keeping the commandments expresses an old theme but in a new way, as He speaks of keeping the commandments He Himself gives to His disciples as the basis for loving Him. Thus we may know objectively whether we love God despite our variable feelings.

Next week we shall consider this theme in the prayers and spiritual writings of the Church, before moving on to discussing Christ's commands in particular.

Fr. Justin Frederick

Offerings of Temple Wine and Oil

Olive oil is burned in the lampadas throughout the church and is also used for anointing at baptisms, at vigils, and at Unction. Altar Wine is used at the Divine Liturgy after Communion and at Litias, where it is blessed and consumed by the faithful. Both are Biblical symbols of the Holy Spirit.

In the Early Church, the faithful brought their offerings of bread, oil, wine, food, etc., to the temple, where the best was chosen by the deacons for use in the temple and the rest went to support the clergy and those in need.

In our time, these offerings may still be brought. Typically they are offered for the living in thanksgiving for God's blessings, on namedays, birthdays, for safe travel, healing in illness, general health & salvation, on an anniversary, for graduation, job seeking, special need, in honor of a saint, a special event. They may be offered for the departed for their blessed repose and eternal memory.

Offerings may be made for the benefit of Orthodox and Non-Orthodox alike. The name of the those for whom the offering is made will be published in the bulletin for others to join you in prayer.

You may bring olive oil in any size for an offering, or a bottle of port wine. If you prefer to make a cash offering, an offering of olive oil is \$5; an offering of altar wine \$10. If you would like to make an offering of chalice wine, please see Fr. Justin.

An offering sheet for this purpose may be found on the candle table. Fill it out completely and place it in the offering basket on the candle basket.

Upcoming Events 2011

Thursday, October 6, 9:30 a.m. Restland Cemetery,
Dallas: 40-Day Memorial Liturgy for Abp Dmitri.
Dec 26-Jan 1: Annual Winter Service Retreat at St.
George's Orthodox Church, Pharr, TX.

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!