

The Confessor's Tongue for October 23, A. D. 2011

Nineteenth Sunday After Pentecost:

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 23: James Brother of the Lord

One of the Seventy, in the opinion of the majority of the holy fathers of the Church, especially the Eastern, he was the son of St. Joseph the Betrothed, and needs to be distinguished from James, son of Zebedee (see Apr. 30) and James, son of Alpheus (see Oct. 9). As his father Joseph is called the father of Jesus Christ, and thus he is called "the brother of the Lord in the flesh" (Gal. 1:19), and in this sense even the All-Holy Virgin Mary may be called his mother (Mt. 13:55; Mk. 6:3). According to tradition, he accompanied the All-Holy Theotokos when she with the Baby Jesus and Joseph fled to Egypt from the wrath of Herod. After the resurrection of Jesus Christ, he was worthy of the special appearance of the Lord (1 Cor. 15:7).

St. James was strictly devout from youth. Distinguished by an unusually strict way of life, he observed the strictest fast; neither partook of wine nor meat, nor cut his hair, nor bathed, nor rubbed his body with olive oil, nor wore soft clothes but wore coarse haircloth and frequently prayed with prostrations. In prayer he practiced asceticism with such fervor that a hardened leather formed on his knees, like a camel's, from the frequent prostrations. For such a virtuous life James was known to all people as the righteous one and so earned great respect among the Judaic leaders, that he alone was given permission by the high priest to enter the Holy of Holies, the innermost part of the Jerusalem temple, where St. James retired for prayer.

St. James was even more greatly honored in the beginning society by the Christians and he was honored as a pillar of the Church (Gal. 2:9). Tradition holds that, by command of the Lord, he was installed by the Apostles as Bishop of the Jerusalem Church. He presided over the Apostolic Council in Jerusalem (Acts 15:13-21). St. James spent the whole time of his apostolic service in Jerusalem and many people always gathered around him not only to listen to his words, but also to only touch the edge of his robe.

"Enlightening those in the darkness of cruelty", in his sermons about Christ he successfully excited the attention and envy of the Judaic leaders, who plotted to kill him. With this goal in mind and taking advantage of the absence of the Roman governor in Jerusalem, the enemies of the Christian faith demanded from him that he in the presence of all the multitude of people gathered in Jerusalem for the feast of Passover solemnly confess before all that the Christians are mistaken in believing that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and forcefully entered the holy apostle on the roof of the temple so that all could hear his truthful word. But from the mouth of the holy confessor of the faith in Christ they heard fearlessly before all assembly of the Jews the spoken word about the divinity of Jesus Christ. Then many
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believed in Christ, and the scribes and Pharisees spoke among themselves: "We did poorly, giving Jesus such witness from one respected by all men". Fearing that many will turn away from the faith to his witness, they furiously threw the righteous man off the roof, shouting: "even the righteous has gone astray". Severely injured from falling from that height, St. James did not suddenly die, but still had the strength to rise on his knees and to pray for his enemies. Notwithstanding, the cruel Jews stoned him and one of them with a blow to the head ended the life of the holy confessor and martyr of Christ. This happened in the year 62 after the Nativity of Christ. The martyr's death of St. James made such an impression on the minds of the Jews that they considered the afflictions of the war with the Romans and the war itself that befell them (66-70) as the punishment of God for this death.

The Holy Apostle James wrote a "Catholic epistle", which is deeply edifying, where he teaches about the necessity of good works for Christians without which their faith is dead (Jas. 11:17 and fol.). The Holy Apostle also composed one of the ancient liturgies. *V. Bulgakov, Handbook for Church Servers, 2nd. ed., 1274 pp. (Kharkov, 1900) pp. 0386-0387. Translated by Archpriest Eugene D. Tarris © September 13, 2006. All rights reserved.*

For Consideration

St. Nicholai of Zicha

O, when shall we get to the point of making as much effort over our souls as we do over our bodies? When shall we come to the desire to bedeck ourselves with virtues before God and His glorious angels as much as we bedeck ourselves with vain and transitory outward goods? The saints Pelagia and Thais (Oct 8) were, in the beginning, only aware of their bodies, while their souls were like slaves lying bound in the prison of their flesh. They were both bedecked with vanity, clothed in vanity, adorned with vanity, surrounded by vanity and flattered by vanity. But what a sudden change! What a divine step in their lives! Stranger that if a wild apple tree were to change its nature and begin to bear sweet apples, or if some turgid and stinking pool somehow cleared itself and became pure drinking water. When Bishop Nonnus, with the other bishops, first saw Pelagia the sinner in her external resplendence, clad in the costliest garments, ornamented, adorned, bedecked with rings, necklaces, and baubles, perfumed, surrounded by slaves—when the bishop saw her, he burst into tears and said to his companions: "I have indeed learned much from this woman. God will bring her before His Dread Judgment and will rebuke us through her. For think: how many hours does this woman spend in her room washing herself, dressing herself, adorning herself, preening herself in the mirror—and what for?"

Only to appear lovelier in men's eyes. And we, who have an immortal Bridegroom in heaven —we do not exert ourselves to bedeck our souls with repentance or to clothe them in the beauty of the virtues, that they may appear lovelier in God's eyes.

From the First Homily on I Thessalonians
St. John Chrysostom

Moral. Let no one therefore despair, even though he has lost much time, and has done nothing. It is possible for him even in a little while to do so much, as he never has done in all his former time. For if he who before did not believe, shone so much at the beginning, how much more those who have already believed!

Let no one, again, upon this consideration be remiss, because he perceives that it is possible in a short time to recover everything. For the future is uncertain, and the Day of the Lord is a thief, setting upon us suddenly when we are sleeping. But if we do not sleep, it will not set upon us as a thief, nor carry us off unprepared. For if we watch and be sober, it will not set upon us as a thief, but as a royal messenger, summoning us to the good things prepared for us. But if we sleep, it comes upon us as a thief.

But if thou remainest idle, thou wilt receive no great benefit.

Let no one therefore sleep, nor be inactive in virtue, for that is sleep. Do you not know how, when we sleep, our goods are not in safety, how easy they are to be plotted against? But when we are awake, there needs not so much guarding. When we sleep, even with much guarding we often perish. There are doors, and bolts, and guards, and outer guards, and the thief has come upon us. Why then do I say this? Because, if we wake we shall not need the help of others; but if we sleep, the help of others will profit us nothing, but even with this we perish.

It is a good thing to enjoy the prayer of the Saints, but it is when we ourselves also are on the alert. And what need, you say, have I of another's prayer, if I am on the alert myself? And in sooth, do not place yourself in a situation to need it; I do not wish that you should; but we are always in need of it, if we think rightly. Paul did not say, what need have I of prayer? and yet those who prayed were not worthy of him, or rather not equal to him; and you say, what need have I of prayer? Peter did not say, What need have I of prayer, for "prayer," it says, "was made earnestly of the Church unto God for him." (Acts 12:5.) And thou sayest, What need have I of prayer? On this account thou needest it, because thou thinkest that thou hast no need. Yea, though thou become as Paul, thou hast need of prayer. Do not exalt thyself, lest thou be humbled.

But, as I said, if we be active also ourselves, the prayers for us avail too. Hear Paul saying, "For I know that this shall turn to my salvation, through your supplication, and the supply of the Spirit of

Jesus Christ." (Philip. 1:19). And again, "That for the gift bestowed upon us by means of many, thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf." (2 Cor. 1:11.) And thou sayest, what need have I of prayer? But if we be idle, no one will be able to profit us. What did Jeremiah profit the Jews? Did he not thrice draw nigh to God, and the third time hear, "Pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer, for I will not hear thee"? (Jer. 6:16.) What did Samuel profit Saul? Did he not mourn for him even to his last day, and not merely pray for him only? What did he profit the Israelites? Did he not say, "God forbid that I should sin in ceasing to pray for you"? (1 Sam. 12:23.) Did they not all perish?

Do prayers then, you say, profit nothing? They profit even greatly: but it is when we also do something. For prayers indeed cooperate and assist, but a man cooperates with one that is operating, and assists one that is himself also working. But if thou remainest idle, thou wilt receive no great benefit. For if prayers had power to bring us to the kingdom while we do nothing, why do not all the Greeks become Christians? Do we not pray for all the world? Did not Paul also do this? Do we not entreat that all may be converted? Why do not the wicked become good without contributing anything of themselves?

Prayers, then, profit greatly, when we also contribute our own parts. Would you learn how much prayers have profited? consider, I pray, Cornelius, Tabitha. (Acts 10:3 and 11:36.) Hear also Jacob saying to Laban, "Except the Fear of my father had been with me, surely thou hadst now sent me away empty." (Gen. 31:42.) Hear also God again, saying, "I will defend this city for Mine own sake, and for My servant David's sake." (2 Kings 9:34.) But when? In the time of Hezekiah, who was righteous. Since if prayers availed even for the extremely wicked, why did not God say this also when Nebuchadnezzar came, and why did He give up the city? Because wickedness availed more....

And what need, you say, of prayer from another, when I myself please God? Never, O man, say this. There is need, aye, and need of much prayer....[He gives here several Biblical examples.] Knowing these things, therefore, let us neither despise the prayers of the Saints, nor throw everything upon them: that we may not, on the one hand, be indolent and live carelessly; nor on the other deprive ourselves of a great advantage. But let us both beseech them to pray and lift up the hand for us, and let us adhere to virtue; that we may be able to obtain the blessings promised to those who love Him by the grace and loving-kindness of our Lord Jesus Christ...

Upcoming Events 2011

15 November, Tuesday: Nativity Fast Begins, Pan-Orthodox Unction at St. Seraphim's, Dallas
26 February 2012 The Great Fast begins
15 April 2012 Pascha

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!