

# The Confessor's Tongue for January 1, A. D. 2012

Twenty-Ninth Sunday After Pentecost: St. Basil, Circumcision of Christ

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.

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## Notes on the New Year

New Year. At the present time we celebrate January 1 as the beginning of the new year. Forty five years before the Nativity of Christ the Romans celebrated the New Year on January 1 instead of March 1, as they had before, and spent this day in licentious noisy games in disguises, in mad entertainment and abominable dissolution; therefore Christians for a long time did not dedicate this day as the New Year, and their days of the New Year looking at the different countries and times were: March 1, March 25, September 1, September 23 and December 25. In 1594 French King Charles IX established that the year begins on January 1; eventually other western countries accepted this establishment. At first Russia began the year on March 1, and then later on September 1. At the end of 1699 Emperor Peter 1 issued a decree to begin the civil year on January 1, and 1700 was the first year, which began with this month.

The name *January* is given this month because it was dedicated to Janus by ancient Romans, represented by two faces - in front (young) and behind (old) - meaning that he stands between two times: his one face looks forward, and the other looks back at the year just expired. *V. Bulgakov, Handbook for Church Servers. Translated by Archpriest Eugene D. Tarris © All rights reserved.*

## January 1: Circumcision of Christ

Circumcision was established by God in the Old Testament as a sign of the covenant of God with Abraham and his posterity. The Lord Jesus Christ on the eighth day after His Nativity was obliged to undergo, in the accordance with the law, the rite of circumcision (Gen 17:14; Lev. 12:2-3) with the assigning to him the name of Jesus (Luke 2:21; 1:31). The Old Testament circumcision in the New Testament has conceded its place to the sacrament of baptism, of which it was a prototype (Col. 2:11-12). In the East evidence for the celebration of the Circumcision of the Lord arises in the fourth century. Stephen the Sabbaite wrote the Canon for the Circumcision in the seventh century. Commemorated on this feast together with the Circumcision in the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ and the naming Him Jesus the Holy Church sings: "Today the Master, circumcised in the flesh, is called Jesus"; "on the eighth day the Master was circumcised as a Child: He received the name Jesus for He is the Savior and Lord of the world"....By celebrating the circumcision of the Savior and His naming the Holy Church confirms our faith in that unchangeable truth that He is the God-man, "and yes, not as the heretics say that he became incarnate as an illusion, but he truly has flesh and was not opposed to the law, but its fulfiller". Together with this example of the Savior, Who, "did not disdain

circumcision of His flesh", "today of His own will was circumcised in the flesh", and, "the law fulfilling the law of the Creator", "gave to His own Self an image and a plan for the salvation of all", the Holy Church teaches us to be constantly obedient and submissive to the laws for our own good and for a Christian example to others. The circumcision which the Lord accepted as a sign of the covenant of God with man, and the name as a seal of His Service for the salvation of the world (Mt. 1:21; Mark 16:17; 9:38-39; Luke 10:17; Acts 3:6,16; 19:13; Phil. 2:9-10), inspire us, that as we enter into the New Covenant with God we should be circumcised "with a circumcision made without hands, by cutting off the body of sinful flesh, in the circumcision of Christ (Col. 2:11). Our Christian name must not be a dead sound, but the living testimony that we are devoted to the service of God and we are in a beneficial union in Him for His glory and our eternal salvation and blessedness. *V. Bulgakov, Handbook for Church Servers. Translated by Archpriest Eugene D. Tarris © All rights reserved.*

## January 1: St Basil the Great

St. Basil the Great was born in 329 in Caesarea, Cappadocia from god-fearing and noble Christian parents. The child's first education was received from his god-fearing grandmother Macrina, and his first instruction in the rules of eloquent speech was from his father in Neocaesarea. Reaching a youthful age, St. Basil traveled to the then prominent cities to complete his education.

In Athens he met Gregory the Theologian and submitted himself to him and for the rest of his life remained his faithful friend. Here he studied grammar, rhetoric, astrology, mathematics, philosophy and medicine, and has attained the most brilliant success in these subjects. Having a brilliant mind and wisdom, St. Basil at the same time distinguished himself with good moral behavior, humility and a pure way of life.

Having returned to Caesarea, St. Basil often fulfilled the duties of a lawyer. Then, having accepted baptism, together with the rank of Reader, he became interested in monasticism, and went to study monastic life in Syria, Palestine and Egypt. Returning from his travels, he settled in a hermitage near Neocaesarea, devoting himself to the ascetical efforts of fasting and prayer. Together with this, seeking true knowledge and striving for divine wisdom, he was engaged in the study of Holy Scriptures, and compared translations of them, and also studied the works of Origen.

When danger threatened the faith, St. Basil left the hermitage and was revealed as a most fervent fighter for Orthodoxy. In 364 he was ordained a presbyter in the church in Caesarea. Now his zeal never knew weariness: he devoted all of himself for

service to the Lord and indefatigably taught the congregation, sometimes preaching twice a day, in the morning and evening, and sometimes after the sermon in one church he went to preach in another. The sermon blossomed so wonderfully in the mouth of St. Basil, that he sometimes postponed teaching until the next day.

Caring for the spiritual needs of his parish, St. Basil also did not disregard the physical. During a famine the inhabitants of Caesarea have found him a generous benefactor.

In 370 St. Basil was installed as the Bishop of Caesarea and in this rank, and not abandoning his ascetical paradigm of life, he fervently cared for his clergy from the first server at the altar to the last, all becoming wiser, and demanding from all strict virtue. St. Basil himself loved the beauty of the church, the elegance of the temple, harmony in worship, and this feeling inspired those around him. His very appearance: his bearing, the pale determined face, deep eyes, his calm body language of importance raised a feeling of piety in everyone. By word and purity of life that fervently edifies all his flock in faith and piety, he was "the father of orphans, protector of widows, and wealth for the poor, consolation of the ill, and guide of the wealthy, a staff for the old", "and a teacher of virtue for the youth who lived the monastic life". With burning Christian love for his neighbors, St. Basil built shelters, alms-houses, and hospitable hospices. Courageous and devoted, he was always ready for any work and deprivation for the sake of the welfare of neighbors. St. Basil was not concerned about any danger for his own life, for he not only visited, but also embraced lepers, thus giving them great joy to feel the intimacy of his devoted love for them.

As a wise defender of Orthodoxy, St. Basil "with strong divine words you brought down heresies" and "with sermons you poured out teachings to the god-fearing world". Humble and meek, condescending and merciful to sinners with infirmities, but unshakable in faith and ready to endure all for the truth of Christ, St. Basil was a strict chastiser of the evil adversaries of faith and more than anything cared about the purity of Orthodoxy not only in Caesarea but also in the entire Eastern Church. "He, in the words of St. Gregory the Theologian, neither slept nor dozed and because of his efforts he exhausted the rest of his body, yet up to now he did not find the cure for evil". And only due to his efforts the church in Caesarea was saved from Arianism. St. Basil died in 379 at the age of 50. From his service in the Church and his unusual high moral and selfless life St. Basil is named "the great" and is glorified as the "glory and beauty of the Church", "star and eye of the universe", "teacher of dogma", "chamber of learning", "leader of life". The following works of St. Basil have reached us: nine discourses on The Six Days, thirteen discourses on the Psalms, twenty five discourses on various events, five books Against the Arians and one

On the Divinity of the Holy Spirit, rules for church deans, a typikon for monastics, prayers and the Liturgy known by his name. V. Bulgakov, *Handbook for Church Servers*. Translated by Archpriest Eugene D. Tarris © All rights reserved.

### **Parish Priorities for 2012**

Three major projects needing attention confront our parish in 2012.

First, our new hall addition awaits building. We are approaching a new architect to get our plans stamped so we may secure a permit to build. If all goes reasonably well, we should have this completed before Pascha. We have raised \$52,000 of the estimated \$62,000 the project will cost, and we'd like to raise the last \$10,000 before April. As part of this project, we'll need to widen the driveway entrance to the parking lot.

Second, as our new addition will contrast with the general shabbiness of the rest of the exterior of our building (except the porch), we need to find a way to move ahead on repairing and painting at least the side of the building facing the street. Old, defective windows upstairs need replacing. Cleaning, repair, and painting are needed upstairs. While we have been slowing raising money for an exterior facelift from soda sales and designated gifts, quicker movement forward is desired. While maintenance is rarely so inspiring as new construction, it is part of our good stewardship of what God has given us, and it sends a positive message to those who see our building.

Third, we have a new church to build. This will demonstrate to Denton that we are here to stay and will provide a larger, traditional, and clearly public space in which to worship (as opposed to worshipping in what appears to be a house). The church is roughly estimated to cost \$250,000. We already have more than \$50,000 raised for this purpose, and we have the diocese to back us. What we need to do is to begin making pledges within the parish to raise money and actively soliciting funds from outside the parish. This is a very attainable project in the near future if we will get down to work in faith that God will provide in response to our efforts.

While this necessarily involves money, ultimately this is spiritual work. It takes faith to dig deeper into our pockets to give in order to build an building for worship that expresses the beauty of the Church and her Head and our love for both. It takes faith to wait on the Lord for solutions without complaining or negative talk and not to despair in the face of obstacles. This work will test our faith: that is one of the reasons God calls us to do it, that He may show Himself faithful and mighty on our behalf.

When the children of Israel built the tabernacle to worship God, they offered their best, and they gave so much, Moses had to ask them to stop giving. Solomon's temple in Jerusalem, which replaced the tabernacle, was a glorious building, representing the best Israel could give. May our growing love for the

God who made us and deigns to share His life with us through His Son made flesh motivate us to offer our best to Him here in Denton, Texas, as testimony of our love for Him and a witness to the truth of the Orthodox Christian Faith in our city and county.

Israel funded the construction of the tabernacle with free-will offerings, over and above the tithes and alms prescribed by the law, and so must we. But, truth be told, if all of us who are gainfully employed would actually give that first ten percent, the tithe, of our monthly income to Christ as part of our regular worship of Him and a token of our love, we would have the money we need to fund construction. For Christ's sake, I will ask all of us this year to go above and beyond our tithes to make offerings to build a suitable house in which to worship God, but I also appeal to all of us who are not to offer a true tithe of our incomes in faith that God will, in fact, bless us and give us a sufficiency for all our needs. *Fr. Justin Frederick*

### Parish Schedule for 2012

A few changes have been made to the regular parish schedule for 2012 that should be explained for your understanding and benefit.

Matins will normally be served Tuesday through Friday at 7:00 a.m. The typical weekday Liturgy, if there is no special feast during the week, will follow Matins on Thursdays. Confession will be available on the other days after Matins.

Vespers will be served Tuesdays at 3:00 followed by Confession to accommodate those for whom the other scheduled times do not work. Vespers will also be served Wednesdays at 7:00 and Thursdays at 6:00, followed by Confession.

Vigil will be celebrated on Saturdays at 5:00 followed by Confession, as it is now; for feasts, the usual time has been 7:00 during the week, but we may experiment with 6:00.

Another literal All-night Vigil will be considered for the Nativity of the Theotokos (Sept 8) or for St. Innocent (Oct 6).

Classes will normally be held on Wednesday evening (Basics of Orthodoxy) at 8:00 after Vespers, and Thursday at 4:30 before Vespers. Until the new hall space is completed, it is not logistically feasible to offer an adult class on Sundays after Liturgy. Once we have space, Fr. Justin may offer something once or twice a month, or another instructor may.

Fr. Justin will be taking Mondays off this year. Please do not call him at home on that day unless it is truly an emergency. He will be trying something new on Fridays, spending a good bit of the day at the Diocesan office in Dallas to take care of deanery work, to study, and to minister to Russian speakers. The Late Vocations Class may meet there on Fridays in 2012.

Please keep your priest and your parish in your prayers during 2012! *Fr. Justin Frederick*

### The Third Part of the Orthodox Catechism: On Love

*St. Philaret of Moscow, 1839*

481. What should be the effect and fruit of true faith in the Christian? Love, and good works conformable thereto. In Jesus Christ, says the Apostle Paul, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love. Gal. v. 6.

482. Is not faith alone enough for a Christian, without love and good works? No; for faith without love and good works is inactive and dead, and so can not lead to eternal life. He that loveth not his brother, abideth in death. 1 John iii. 14. What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. James ii. 14, 26.

483. May not a man, on the other hand, be saved by love and good works, without faith? It is impossible that a man who has not faith in God should really love him; besides, man, being ruined by sin, can not do really good works, unless he receive through faith in Jesus Christ spiritual strength, or grace from God. Without faith it is impossible to please God: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him, Heb. xi. 6. For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. Gal. iii. 10. For we through the spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. Gal. v. 5. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. Eph. ii. 8, 9.

484. What is to be thought of such love as is not accompanied by good works? Such love is not real: for true love naturally shows itself by good works. Jesus Christ says: He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: if a man love me, he will keep my word. John xiv. 21, 23. The Apostle John writes: For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. 1 John v. 3. Let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. 1 John iii. 18

#### On the Law of God and the Commandments.

485. What means have we to know good works from bad? The inward law of God, or the witness of our conscience, and the outward law of God, or God's commandments.

486. Does holy Scripture speak of the inward law of God? The Apostle Paul says of the heathen: Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another. Rom. ii. 15.

487. If there is in man's heart an inward law, why was the outward given? It was given because men obeyed not the inward law, but led carnal and sinful

lives, and stifled within themselves the voice of the spiritual law, so that it was necessary to put them in mind of it outwardly through the Commandments. Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions.. Gal. iii. 19

488. When and how was God's outward law given to men? When the Hebrew people, descended from Abraham, had been miraculously delivered from bondage in Egypt, on their way to the promised land, in the desert, on Mount Sinai, God manifested his presence in fire and clouds, and gave them the law, by the hand of Moses, their leader.

489. The Ten Commandments are:

1. Thou shalt have no other God's before Me.
2. Thou shalt not make any graven image.
3. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord Thy God in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.
5. Honor thy father and thy mother, that it may be well with thee, and that thy days may be long upon the earth.
6. Thou shalt not kill.
7. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
8. Thou shalt not steal.
9. Thou shalt not bear false witness.
10. Thou shalt not covet.

490. You said that these Commandments were given to the people of Israel: must we, then, also walk by them? We must: for they are in substance the same law which, in the words of St. Paul, has been written in the hearts of all men, that all should walk by it.

491. Did Jesus Christ teach men to walk by the Ten Commandments? He bade men, if they would attain to everlasting life, to keep the Commandments and taught us to understand and fulfill them more perfectly than had been done before he came. Matt xix. 17, and v.

#### On the Division of the Commandments into Two Tables.

492. What means the division of the Ten Commandments into two tables? This: that they contain two kinds of love--love to God, and love to our neighbor; and prescribe two corresponding kinds of duties.

493. Has not Jesus Christ said something of this? When asked, Which is the great commandment in the law? he replied: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. Matt. xxii. 36-40.

494. Are all men our neighbors? Yes, all; because all are the creation of one God, and have come from one man: but our neighbors in faith are doubly neighbors to us, as being children of one heavenly Father by faith in Jesus Christ.

495. But why is there no commandment of love to ourselves? Because we love ourselves naturally, and without any commandment. No man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it. Eph. v. 29.

496. What relative order should there be in our love to God, our neighbor, and ourselves? We should love

ourselves not for our own, but for God's sake, and partly also for the sake of our neighbors; we should love our neighbor for the sake of God; but we should love God for himself, and above all. Love of self should be sacrificed to the love of our neighbor; but both should be sacrificed to the love of God. *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. John xv. 13. He that loveth father or mother more than me, saith Jesus Christ, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. Matt. x. 37.*

497. If the whole law is contained in two commandments, why are they divided into ten? In order the more clearly to set forth our duties towards God, and towards our neighbor.

498. In which of the Ten Commandments are we taught our duties towards God? In the first four.

499. What are these duties? In the first commandment we are taught to know and worship the true God. In the second, to abstain from false worship. In the third, not to sin against God's worship even by word. In the fourth, to keep a certain order in the time and acts of God's worship.

500. In which of the Ten Commandments are we taught our duties towards our neighbor? In the last six.

501. What are these duties? In the fifth commandment we are taught to love and honor those of our neighbors who are nearest to us, beginning with our parents. In the sixth, not to hurt the life of our neighbor. In the seventh, not to hurt the purity of his morals. In the eighth, not to hurt his property. In the ninth, not to hurt him by word. In the tenth, not to wish to hurt him.

502. Do not the Ten Commandments include also our duties towards ourselves? Yes; these duties are implied in the commandments of the second table relating to our neighbors; for our duty is to love our neighbor as ourselves.

#### January Namedays

- 1 Geoff Stevenson (St. Basil)
- 1 Emily Johnston (St. Emelia, mother of St. Basil)
- 10 Rick Joines (St. Gregory of Nyssa)
- 12 Tatiana Garner (Martyr Tatiana)
- 12 Tatiana Tabet (Martyr Tatiana)
- 14 Nina Johnston (St. Nina of Georgia)
- 14 Nina Sylantjeva (St. Nina of Georgia)
- 17 Dax Stokes (St. Anthony the Great)
- 17 Colin Stokes (St. Anthony the Great)
- 17 Antonia Colias (St. Anthony the Great)
- 24 Pamela Ward (St. Xenia of St. Petersburg)

#### January Birthdays

- 3 Ben Lyda
- 4 Sandra Pascale
- 9 Isabel Stone
- 21 Katherine Frederick (2002)
- 24 Christopher Jones
- 24 Olive Betz (2010)
- 24 Elijah Brown (2011)
- 25 Anya Brown (2008)

#### Upcoming Events 2011-2012

- 20-21 January: Feast of St. Maximus: Vigil 7:00 p.m., Liturgy 9:00 a.m., feast to follow.
- 26 February: Forgiveness Sunday (all parishioners are expected to attend) Great Lent Begins
- 15 April: Pascha

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!