

The Confessor's Tongue for January 15, A. D. 2012

Thirty-First Sunday After Pentecost: SS. Paul of Thebes, John the Huttweller
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.

January 15: Ven. John the Huttweller

Ven. John Calabytes was the son of rich and famous parents who lived in Constantinople. He received a brilliant education, but, despising the vain world, he preferred "the narrow, painful and severest way instead of the broadest way", secretly left his parents home to settle in the Akoimitoi (Unsleeping) Monastery (where the divine services are done continuously day and night) in Bithynia to be tonsured a monk. With youthful ardor and zeal he took to the asceticism of the monastic way of life so that for the most zealous ascetics he soon became an example of unceasing prayer, obedience without murmuring, patient laboriousness and extreme fasting. Six years later, the Lord permitted a heavy attack on John from the devil: thoughts about his parents, of their love and tenderness, about their sorrow began to persistently pursue the ascetic. Then he to turn this temptation to the maximum for his asceticism and to defeat the devil by his own devices, decided to see his parents but in such a way that he would not be recognized by them. Having returned to Constantinople in beggars clothing unrecognized by anybody, he spent three years in a hut (tent) by the gate of his parental home. It is because of this he was called Hut-dweller. "Afflicted and oppressed" enduring cold and heat, not changing his decrepit sackcloth, continually talking with the Lord and the holy angels, being satisfied by words of the Gospel (given to him in adolescence, at his request, by his parents) and inseparable from him, he soon succeeded "in the measure of growth in the fulfillment of Christ". He was revealed to his parents only before his death, ordering them to bury him where he lived as a beggar and in that same sackcloth which he wore. He reposed in his young years (about 22-25 years old) in the middle of the 5th century. Over the place of his burial his parents built a temple of God and beside it a hostel for the oversight of beggars and strangers. In the twelfth century the Crusaders took his head to Besancon, France, and his other relics are now in Rome. V. Bulgakov, *Handbook for Church Servers*. Translated by Archpriest Eugene D. Tarris © All rights reserved.

Construction of Hall Expansion to Begin

The construction of the thousand square-foot expansion to our hall is to begin in the next week or so. Please be faithful in bringing your tithes and offerings to fund what has not yet been funded so that we need not dip into our church building fund.

Please mind the children. Construction sites are both dirty and present dangers. It would be best to keep the children out of the area unless a parent escorts them through it.

The hall expansion will be built first. The final phase will involve the widening of the driveway which

the city requires of us. This would have had to be done when the church was built in any case, so while that expense was not part of the original estimate for the project, it being a legitimate part of the church project may be paid out of the church construction fund. As the hall is completed, it is desirable that we repair and repaint the front of our existing building to match, so the whole face of the church appears clean and bright to the street.

Then, as soon as we feasibly may, we shall need to move ahead with building our church. This will take more money than we have collected at this time, probably \$200,000 more. But if we all will be faithful in offering a full tithe (10%) of our income, whatever it is, to the Lord in the parish now, we should be able to fund construction of the church without much difficulty and without a capital campaign. Of course, your special offerings towards construction are welcome and will move the projects forward faster.

Construction of a proper temple in which to worship God is becoming increasingly necessary as St. Maximus Church grows. Please pray that God will provide us with both wisdom and resources to build a house worthy of Him which will assist us in bearing witness to Him here in Denton County.

The Sacrifice of Praise

"Not for thy sacrifices will I reprove thee: for thy whole burnt offerings are before me continually.... Shall I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats? Sacrifice to God the sacrifice of praise; and render thy supplications to the Most High. And call upon me in the day of tribulation; and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.... the sacrifice of praise shall glorify Me..." Psalm 49

Under the law of Moses, God's chosen people the Hebrews offered sacrifices of animals—blood, fat, flesh—as well as wheat, wine, and oil. The worship of God required bringing the correct sacrifices at the right times.

The sacrificial system was, however, but a type, a shadow, a foreshadowing of something deeper which was to come fully only with Christ. It provided training and preparation for true worship in spirit and in truth. This is indicated more than once in the Old Testament. The Psalm itself declares that rather than the flesh of bulls and blood of goats of which God has no need, God desires the sacrifice of praise and the offering of supplications.

We Christians have been freed from the Law's prescribed sacrifices of animals, yet we are not free from bringing sacrifices and offerings to God. Our corporate worship, our coming together as the Church, is the primary time and place for making these sacrifices and offerings. In our worship, we hear the great deeds of God recounted to us, those done by Christ and those done through His saints, in

whom God is wondrous. We recall all the benefits He offers us, and we reflect on who He is.

Our response is our worship, which involves offering the sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving. Praise involves acknowledging God's attributes and honoring him for who He is and what He has done. Thanksgiving is our acknowledgment of His mercy towards us, an expression of our appreciation for the benefits He confers upon us. The word 'eucharist', in fact, comes from the Greek verb 'to give thanks.'

Moreover, we offer supplications to God in our worship, for ourselves, for others, for the Church, and for the world. Lifting our requests to God honors Him, for it implicitly declares that we believe He can and will do something about our requests. Not to offer supplications is to say that we do not think God can or will do anything in response.

As we better come to know God and more deeply realize what He has done and continues to do for us, we come to see the sheer folly and ingratitude in not regularly offering the sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord. He has given us life in this world. Through Baptism He has made us members of Christ's body and adopted us as His children and given us the inestimable privilege of naming Him "our Father." How can we neglect making the regular sacrifice of praise to Him in response? How can we begrudge a few hours out of the 168 in our week to acknowledge our Creator?

Attending the Vigil and the Liturgy and attentively participating is to make these offerings of praise, thanksgiving, and supplication to the Lord. We cannot neglect this duty and expect to experience the fullness of life in Christ.

Yet there is one thing more God desires of us beyond the offering of our lips. Most of all, He desires us, that we offer ourselves to him each week as we present ourselves to Him and stand before Him at the Divine Liturgy. He looks for us to surrender ourselves to Him, to offer ourselves to Him as living sacrifices. This has been His goal all along, to bring man back into full relationship with Him.

Our worship in the Church thus involves more than coming and being present at services. It calls us to attend, to be engaged, and to respond to God by offering to Him from our heart our praise, our thanks, our supplications, and, ultimately, ourselves. We must make this offering of ourselves again and again, because no sooner do we make it than we often pull ourselves back in fear or worry. We forget who we are in Christ and go back to serving created things rather than the Creator. Our worship reminds us who we are and calls us back to God, so that by the end of our lives we may truly have offered ourselves wholly to God as living sacrifices. *Fr. Justin Frederick*

Fr. Epiphanius Theodoropoulos (+1989)

A Petition for Prayer

When you would tell Fr. Epiphanius: "Father, matters on such-and-such a problem have reached an impasse. I am now at the limits of my endurance," he

would answer: "Prayer, my child, much prayer! God can either lift your cross, or give you strength to carry it unto the end. And don't forget. The impasse of men is par excellence the field of God's action. It is the opportunity of God."

"Do you consider it easy for me to pray in the state in which I am now?" a spiritual child of his once retorted. He received the answer: "Pray also to be able to pray!"

Never Neglect Prayer

A working couple once asked him, "Elder, when at night we return very tired to our home, we don't have the desire for prayer."

"How do you have the desire to eat? Just as you don't neglect food, no matter how tired you are, all the more so—and even more so—you should never neglect the food of the soul: communicating with God.

"Don't ever neglect prayer. At the table, in the morning, in the evening, at night. Especially, don't neglect Compline for any reason, no matter how occupied and tired you are. It is a matter of self-sacrifice and mainly of love. When a certain person, beloved of you, calls you up very late at night, how is it that despite your tiredness, you hook yourselves to the receiver and furthermore, sometimes one and two hours, without being impatient, but, on the contrary, you rejoice?"

On Holy Water

If water acts as a means of grace preeminently in the Sacrament of Baptism, it is also used as a means of sanctification. That is why Orthodox Christians are encouraged to drink from the water that has been blessed and to sprinkle themselves with it; they take it to their homes and keep it there to use from time to time. In all this, they are not guilty of superstition. If they act so, it is because they are convinced that in virtue of Christ's Incarnation, of His Baptism and Transfiguration, all material things can be made holy and Spirit-bearing: the transforming and redemptive grace of the Savior, extending to all things.

Bishop Kallistos Ware

One should always have at home enough Theophany water so that it will last the whole year, and make use of it at every need: in cases of illness, leaving on a journey, whenever one is upset, students when going to examinations. They do well who daily, before eating any kind of food, drink a little Holy Water. It strengthens the powers of our soul—if it is done, of course, with prayer and reverence, and one does not merely expect from it a mechanical result.

Archbishop John of San Francisco

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.

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!