

# The Confessor's Tongue for February 19, A. D. 2012

Thirty-Sixth Sunday After Pentecost: Last Judgment, Meatfare

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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## Metropolitan Jonah to Consecrate Chrism

For the first time since his election as Primate of the Orthodox Church in America in November 2008, His Beatitude, Metropolitan Jonah will consecrate Holy Chrism in conjunction with the celebration of the Vespertine Liturgy of Great and Holy Thursday at the Monastery Church of Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk here April 12, 2012.

The consecration of Chrism is a Rite reserved for the Primate of autocephalous Orthodox Churches. The last time Holy Chrism was consecrated in the Orthodox Church in America was in 2004.

Chrism, unlike Holy Unction and other blessed oils used in Orthodox rites, contains a number of ingredients, including olive oil, white table wine, styrax, benzoin, aromatic incenses extracted in oil, roseoil, basil, balsam, Venetian turpentine, galangal, oils of bergamot, clove, marjoram, thyme and sandalwood, and extracts of ginger root, calamus root, nutmeg, and orris root. The final choice, however, is based on the availability of fragrant oils.

"The preparation for the Consecration of Holy Chrism will begin on Holy Monday morning, April 9, prior to the celebration of Hours and the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts," according to Archpriest John Jillions, OCA Chancellor. "Once the process begins with the opening prayer service and the blessing of the ingredients, the Chrism is heated and stirred continuously until Holy Wednesday evening. While the Chrism is being stirred, the Holy Gospels are read continuously by priests, except when divine services are celebrated."

After the Holy Chrism is consecrated, it is then distributed to all parishes and missions for use in the celebration of the Holy Mysteries. *from OCA.org*

## Meatfare: Sunday of the Last Judgment

The first name of this Sunday is explained by the fact that from it the permission to eat meat is ended, and the second name comes from the Gospel reading about the future all-inclusive Dread Judgment of the living and departed, which is described in all church services. By the commemoration of the Dread Judgment the Holy Church more strongly prompts the sinners to repentance and points out the true meaning of hope in the mercy of God. God is merciful but at the same time He is the Righteous Judge, having to render to everyone according to his deeds; therefore sinners should not be mistaken concerning their responsibility for their moral condition and abuse of the long-suffering God. Recalling the Dread Judgment and turning our mental eyes on "the eternal fire, the multitude in darkness and the Tartarus, the dread worm, the gnashing of teeth and the unceasing anguish that befalls those who have sinned without measure", "the

inscrutable trembling and dread", "the incorruptible torture" and "the soul corrupting Hades", the Holy Church inspires us with the idea of the absolute necessity of repentance both of amending and preliminary plaintive prayer to the Lord, while there is still time and opportunity, and on behalf of all of us exclaims: "today let abstain from food, let us make haste to do good deeds and let us worthily repent our transgressions". The Holy Church especially calls us for spiritual struggles of philanthropy, so this order of struggles is the most possible for everyone and is most proper during the of time of fasting and repentance: "Knowing the commandments of the Lord, let this be our way of life: let us feed the hungry, let us give the thirsty drink, let us clothed the naked, let us welcome strangers, let us visit those in prison and the sick: Then the Judge of all the earth will say even to us: 'Come, O blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you'"

From: *S. V. Bulgakov, Handbook for Church Servers.*  
Translated by Archpriest Eugene D. Tarris © 2002.

## Steps to Fasting During the Great Fast

Fasting, especially during the Great Fast can be not only difficult but also intimidating when we consider the full strictness of the fast. One may readily be tempted to think it is not possible to follow and so not try at all. Yet fasting is something we learn to do; we begin simply and, with God's help, we move forward in it year by year.

The following steps are offered to help break down fasting for us so we can both have a sense of where we are in our fasting and how we can make incremental progress in it to approach the Church's norms for fasting as closely as we can.

The Church gives us a norm for fasting in order to combat our self-will and to unite us a common way of fasting. While we should endeavor to follow the norm for fasting, it does represent a rather drastic change from the eating habits of most Americans. Some take right to it, but others may have to work into it gradually. Each year, we seek to keep what we have done in the past and build upon it, taking an additional step forward in our fasting, along with our prayer and almsgiving.

Observing steps 1-7 below represents fasting as many of the faithful practice it today and should be attainable by most of us over time, while steps 8-11 bring us very close to the norm.

The primary purpose of fasting is to strengthen our prayer, to make us conscious of our dependence on God, to increase our hunger for God, and to help us cut off the passions. Fasting without prayer will do us little good, indeed, prayer and fasting are usually mentioned together in the Scriptures. If we try to fast without prayer, or with very little, the Fast will seem burdensome rather than beneficial. But fasting

combined with prayer is a powerful means of bringing us humbly before God to receive His grace to help us in our time of need—which is every day of our lives.

The rules of fasting are given to keep us from being arbitrary and self-willed in our fasting, but they are not to be interpreted with a “dour and pedantic legalism”, for as St. Paul writes, “the kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom 14:17). So though we should seriously attempt to follow the rules of the Fast, we must realize that the Fast is made for us, not we for the Fast.

It has always been held that the rules of fasting should be relaxed in the case of anyone elderly, in poor health, with child, etc.

As always, if you have any questions, please see your father-confessor. If you feel the norms of the fast are too much for you given your experience, health, age, etc., you should seek counsel to help you discern God’s will for you in how you keep the fast rather than granting yourself a dispensation from it.

The steps below do not necessarily have to be followed in order.

Step 1: Quit eating between meals. Instead of snacking, take water or fruit juice.

Step 2: Eliminate alcohol during the Fast except on the days it is permitted (see calendar).

Step 3: Eliminate meat, meat products, and dairy products on Wednesdays and Fridays. (This is what is called for most weeks of the year anyway.)

Step 4: Eliminate meat, meat products, and dairy products on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

Step 5: Eliminate meat, meat products, and dairy products during Clean Week (the first week of the fast) and Holy Week, when the fasting is stricter than during the other weeks of the Fast.

Step 6: Eliminate meat, meat products, and dairy products all days during the Fast. (If eliminating both meat and dairy is too difficult for one in steps 3-6, start with meat and then go back through steps 3-6 with dairy).

Step 7: Eliminate fish all days during the Fast except Palm Sunday and Annunciation (or follow steps 3-6 in regards to fish).

Step 8: Skip breakfast on weekdays during Clean Week and Holy Week.

Step 9: Skip breakfast and lunch on weekdays during Clean Week and Holy Week.

Step 10: Skip breakfast on all weekdays during the Fast.

Step 11: Skip breakfast and lunch on all weekdays during the Fast.

Step 12: Read the introduction on Fasting written by Kallistos Ware in the *Lention Triodion* to get more details on which days one doesn’t eat at all and on which days “dry eating” is practiced.

*At Every Step:* Remember tithing and almsgiving. If you don’t tithe, increase the percentage of your regular giving. Give alms over and above tithes (the money saved from not eating out, not eating meat,

etc.) to worthy causes or to our own almsbox to help the needy. The logic of fasting is that by doing it, we save money that otherwise would have been spent on food which we then give to those in need. Also, it is very difficult to make great spiritual progress without putting God first in this area of our lives, by offering our tithes and offerings out of love for Him, giving Him the first part of our increase and not our leftovers—or nothing. Where our treasure is, there our heart will be also.

*At Every Step:* Remember that our physical fasting from food is combined always with prayer. A little bit of consistent prayer every day is better than a lot of prayer occasionally. Prayers before and after Holy Communion are always very important and should be prayed faithfully. In every case, we strive to strengthen and increase both the quality and quantity of our prayer during the Fast. If we ask God for grace to pray longer and more fervently during the Fast and do it, we’ll find that our capacity for prayer outside of the Fast has increased.

The services of the Church are an essential part of our prayer. While few of us can attend every service offered during the week, all of us can attend at least some of the lenten weekday services. We should Confess and receive Holy Communion as frequently as possible to help sustain us during the Fast. Everyone should make a special effort during Clean Week and Holy Week to attend as many services as possible.

Be sure you are reading the Scriptures, and do some extra spiritual reading to nourish your soul—the life of a Saint or a work on the spiritual life. See your priest if you need a recommendation. Cut out the spiritual junk food of TV, movies, secular music, novels, etc.

Regarding marital fasting: the norm during the Fast is to abstain from marital relations. If, however, we find ourselves too weak to bear this, it is better for us come together as a couple during the Fast than to abstain from one another only to fall into one sort of temptation or another. At least we should abstain during Clean Week and Holy Week. Questions regarding this matter should be addressed to one’s confessor or spiritual father.

Last of all, it is God and His glory that we seek to perceive more clearly and know more intimately. Our hunger pangs and our cravings for the “forbidden” foods remind us of how we need to hunger and thirst after righteous and God Himself so that God can satisfy us.

May God grant us all a blessed and profitable fast!

#### Upcoming Events 2012

26 February, 6:00 p.m. Forgiveness Vespers: everyone expected to attend!

27 February — 3 March Clean Week, Great Canon, First Presanctified Liturgy of the Fasts!

15 April Pascha, the Feast of Feasts

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!