

The Confessor's Tongue for February 26, A. D. 2012

Thirty-Seventh Sunday After Pentecost: Expulsion of Adam from Paradise; Cheesefare

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.

From the Triodion on the Fast

Fasting as man, the Lord, overcame the tempter; and so He gave us an example, showing us what lies within our power and setting limits for us.

Make ready, O my soul, and cleanse thyself before the Passion of the Lord, that thou mayest keep festival with Him in spirit at His Resurrection.

The gateway to the Fast has been opened; the arena of abstinence lies here before us. Let us rouse ourselves with fiery eagerness, and so we shall receive God's grace to quench the burning flames of our offenses.

The blessed season of the Fast has dawned, and shines upon us with the light of repentance. Let us draw near with love and reverence, and greatly rejoicing, let us shake off the darkness of sloth.

Accepting the Fast as a gift, let us glorify the Giver who established it for our salvation. With all our strength, let us observe it, and so receive from our Creator the forgiveness of our trespasses.

Moses, when of old he fasted on Mount Sinai, was granted the vision of God; and Elijah as borne up in a chariot of fire.

The approaching Fast calls us to repentance: let us run the race with eager hearts, and learn what is the gift of abstinence.

Fasting kills the passions that destroy the soul and the pleasures which bring death upon us, and it sets in order the impulses and movements of the heart. With faith, then, let us eagerly accept the Fast.

The Fast enabled Moses to share in the vision of God. Follow his example, O my soul: establish within thyself by fasting a path of ascent to God, and thou wilt behold His glory.

Helped by the coming season of the Fast, may we refrain from every sin. Let us not turn aside to things below, let us not run with slothfulness; but, in a few short days, through contrition of heart, let us wipe away the stains of many years, singing the praises of our only God.

The path of holiness lies open before us today. See, the arena of the Fast is made ready for us all. Striving lawfully for the prize, let us pray to Christ to grant us from on high a peaceful Lenten season.

From Various Matins Canons of Cheesefare Week

Prayer for the Start of the 40-Day Fast

O God, Hope of all the ends of the earth, and of those who are far off at sea, who didst foretell these holy days of fasting in the Law, and in the Prophets, and the Evangelists: Do Thou count all of us worthy to pass the course of the Fast in purity, to preserve the Faith undivided, and to keep Thy commandments all the days of our lives. Bid an Angel of peace to preserve our comings-in and goings-out for every good work, being obedient together and

together pleasing Thee unto a perfect communion of Thy most-pure Mysteries. And accept, O Master, the bending of the knees and the fasting of Thy servants, granting unto all of us spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus our Lord, with Whom Thou art blessed, together with Thy most-holy, good, and life-giving Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Not only in the twentieth century, but, in fact, since Adam and Eve, "this world" was always an obstacle to the fulfillment of God's demands. There is, therefore, nothing new or special about our modern "way of life." *Fr. Alexander Schmemmann*

Why Some Christians Fall Away

St. Nicholas of Zicha (+1956)

Why do some people, well-educated, baptized as Christians, fall away from Christianity into philosophy or learned theories, alleging them to be something truer than Christianity? For two main reasons: either from an utterly superficial knowledge of Christianity, or from sin. A superficial knowledge of Christ rejects Him, and sin flees from Christ like a felon from judgment. Superficial and guilty Christians have often become as bitter enemies of Christianity as are pagans. To the superficial and the guilty it is more comfortable to bathe in the shallow pool of human thought than in the dangerous depths of Christ. Those who sincerely set themselves to follow Christ are constantly invited by Christ to a greater and greater depth, as He once said to the Apostle Peter, "Launch out into the deep." St. Mark the Ascetic writes that one understands the Law of God insofar as one fulfills His commandments. 'Ignorance urges man to speak against that which is helpful, and insolence breeds vice.'

From St. Gregory Palamas on Illness

There are times when illness is better for sinners than good health, because it helps them towards salvation and blunts their inborn evil impulses. Inasmuch as it repays the debt of sin by means of suffering, it makes them able to receive healing of their souls in the first instance, then healing of their bodies. This happens most of all when the sick person, understanding that the affliction is a remedy from God, bears it courageously, falls down before God with faith, and asks for forgiveness, through whatever works he can manage. *Homily 10 on Mark 2:1-12*

St. John of Kronstadt on Candles in Church

Do not grudge burning a wax taper before the image of the Lord during prayer; remember that you burn it before the Light inaccessible, before Him who enlightens you with His light. Your candle is as though a burnt offering to the Lord. Let it be a gift to God from your whole heart. Let it remind you that

you yourself should also be a burning and shining light. *He was*, says our Lord of John the Forerunner, *a burning and a shining light.*

I offer light to the Lord in order that He may bestow the light of grace, spiritual light, upon me, that He may lead me from the darkness of sin into the light of the knowledge of God and of virtue; I offer fire that the fire of the grace of the Holy Spirit may be kindled in my heart, and that I may quench the fire of the vices of that miserable heart. I bring a light that I myself may become a light, burning and shining to all that are in the church.

It is well to place candles before the icons. But it is still better if you bring as a sacrifice to God the fire of your love for him and your neighbor. It is well that the one should accompany the other. But if you place candles before the icons and have no love for God and your neighbor in your heart, if you are grasping, if you do not live in peace with others—then, your offering to God is useless.

I am an infirm, carnal, sinful man. I am not always able to bring to my Lord a heart burning with faith and love—but at least I bring, as a carnal, material man, a material gift as a gift to heaven, a lighted candle. May the Lord look down from heaven upon this little gift of my zeal, and may he give me more in return. He alone is rich, and enriches all, whilst I am poor and needy. He dwells amid light inaccessible, whilst I am in darkness. I am of little faith; may He grant me the gift of faith. I am poor in love; may He enrich my heart with this priceless heavenly treasure. I am powerless to do good; may He give me that power. From *Spiritual Counsels: Select Passages from My Life in Christ*, SVS Press

Participation in Lenten Services

Fr. Alexander Schmemmann

*Lent is not just a time not to eat certain foods. It is a time for spiritual renewal, for repentance, for rededication of the Christian's whole life to Christ. This takes a certain effort on his part. The Church assists him by orienting her services to this work of repentance and renewal. The Christian who takes his faith seriously and recognizes his need for the fast will find much help in the divine services. Thus, a complete fast will include increased attendance at the divine services. Fr. Alexander Schmemmann discusses this in the following excerpt from his book *Great Lent*.*

No one...can attend the entire cycle of lenten worship. Everyone *can* attend some of it. There is simply no excuse for not making Lent, first of all, the time for an increased attendance of an participation in the liturgy of the Church. Here again, personal conditions, individual possibilities and impossibilities can vary and result in different decisions, but there must be a decision, there must be an effort, and there must be a "follow-up." From the liturgical point of view, we may suggest the following "minimum" aimed not at the spiritually self-destructive sense of having fulfilled an obligation, but at receiving at least the essential in the liturgical spirit of Lent.

In the first place, a special effort must be made on the parish level for a proper celebration of the *Forgiveness Sunday Vespers*....It must become one of the great "parish affairs" of the year....

The next priority must be given to the first week of Lent. A special effort must be made to attend at least once or twice the *Great Canon of St. Andrew*. As we have seen, the liturgical function of these first days is to take us into the spiritual "mood" of Lent, which we described as "bright sadness."

Then, throughout the entire Lent, it is imperative that we give at least one evening to attend the *Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts* with the spiritual experience it implies—that of total fasting, that of the transformation of at least one day into a real expectation of judgment and joy. No reference to conditions of life, lack of time, etc., are acceptable at this point, for if we only do that which easily "fits" into the conditions of our lives, the very notion of lenten effort becomes absolutely meaningless. Not only in the twentieth century, but, in fact, since Adam and Eve, "this world" was always an obstacle to the fulfillment of God's demands. There is, therefore, nothing new or special about our modern "way of life." Ultimately, it all depends again on whether or not we take our religion *seriously*, and if we do, eight or ten additional evenings a year at church are truly a minimal effort. Deprived of that evening, however, we are depriving ourselves not only of the beauty and depth of the lenten services, not only of a necessary spiritual inspiration and help, but of that which, as we shall see in the next section, makes our fasting meaningful and effective.

March Namedays

- 1 Becki Stevenson (St. Eudokia)
- 10 Frieda Gluschenko (Martyr Galina of Corinth)
- 17 Patrick St. Jean (St. Patrick of Ireland)
- 17 Owen Terry (St. Patrick of Ireland)
- 17 Patricia Lydon (St. Patrick of Ireland)
- 20 Svetlana Birthsel (the Samaritan Woman)
- 31 Calvin Terry (St. Joseph the Patriarch)

March Birthdays

- 5 Hannah Stokes (2007)
- 8 Claire Terry (2007)
- 11 Irena Birthsel (2011)
- 12 Anna Stokes
- 14 Joel Brown
- 15 Pam Northam
- 16 Gary Goble
- 16 Gregory Johnson (2007)
- 19 Mark Jackson
- 24 Noah Birthsel (2000)
- 25 Ash Davis
- 27 Basil Birthsel (2009)
- 27 Peter Johnson

Upcoming Events 2012

- 9-14 April Holy Week: Set aside time now to come.
- 15 April Pascha, the Feast of Feasts

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!