

The Confessor's Tongue for March 18, A. D. 2012

Third Sunday of Lent: Veneration of the Precious Cross; St. Cyril of Jerusalem

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.

18 March: St. Cyril of Jerusalem

St. Cyril was born of god-fearing parents in Palestine in 315. As a well-educated and god-fearing man, shining "with brilliant spiritual wisdom", he was early accepted into the clergy of the Jerusalem church and in 346 became a presbyter, assigned as a catechist and a preacher. Installed as a bishop in 350, he was a fervent defender of Orthodoxy, and tirelessly struggled against heresies: Arians, Macedonians, Manicheans and others. The heretics retaliated against him for this, and, because of their intrigues, he more than once lost his see, but each time he was returned by god-fearing emperors. The Holy Church glorifies him, as the "guide of teachers, grace of priests, and divine advocate of the church of Christ" and "defender of the faithful". St. Cyril participated in the Second Ecumenical Council, and died in the year 389. Among his writings are eighteen catechetical lectures for those preparing for Holy Baptism and five Mystagogical Catecheses for those illumined by Holy Baptism.

From the Triodion

Now that we have come, my Christ, to the middle of the time of abstinence, and have reached the veneration of Thy life-giving Cross, falling down before it we call upon Thee: Mighty art Thou, who lovest mankind, and mighty are Thy works, for Thou hast made manifest Thy precious Cross. In fear we venerate it as we cry: Glory to Thy boundless compassion. *Matins of Monday of the 4th Week*

This is a holy week of light, in which the precious Cross is exalted in the sight of all the world. With souls enlightened let us come, kissing it with fear and love, and let us glorify in songs Christ who was crucified upon it. *Monday Matins Canon*

Let us humble the passions of the body through abstinence from food and the rejection of pleasures, and let us embrace with faith the Wood of the Cross: for it is exalted before us for our veneration, and it halloweth all men with the grace of God. So let us cry aloud unto the Lord: We thank Thee, O compassionate Master, who through the Cross dost save our souls. *Monday Vespers of 4th Week*

Nailed upon the Cross, Thy side pierced by the spear, Thou wast counted as a lifeless corpse; and Thou wast given gall to drink, O longsuffering Master, who by the hand of Moses hast made sweet the waters of Marah. Therefore I entreat Thee and I pray: uproot the bitter passions from my understanding, and grant that I may worship at Thy holy Passion. *Tuesday Vespers of the 4th Week*

I have surpassed the Publican in my transgressions, yet I do not vie with him in his repentance; I have not gained the virtues of the

Pharisee, yet I imitate his self-conceit. O Christ my God, in Thy supreme humility Thou hast upon the Cross destroyed the devil's arrogance: make me a stranger to the past sins of the Publican and to the great foolishness of the Pharisee; establish in my soul the good that each of them possessed, and save me.

Tuesday Vespers of the 4th Week

Having reached the middle of the sea of abstinence, let us look towards the haven of salvation, the season of Thy voluntary Passion, O Lord. In Thy lovingkindness and Thy mercy, grant us also to behold in peace the day of Thy glorious Resurrection.

Wednesday Matins of the 4th Week

The Fast that now bringeth us blessings hath now reached its midmost point: it hath helped us to receive God's grace in the days that are past, and it will bring us further benefit in the days still to come. For by continuing in what is right we attain yet greater gifts. We therefore cry to Christ, the Giver of all good: "O Thou who for our sakes hast fasted and endured the Cross, make us worthy to share uncondemned in Thy divine Passover [Pascha]. May we spend our lives in peace and rightly glorify Thee with the Father and the Spirit." *Wednesday Vespers*

From the Arena

St. Ignatius Brianchaninov

[From his very entry into the Church, a Christian] should occupy himself with all possible care and attention with the reading of the Holy Gospel. He should make such a study of the Gospel that it may always be present in his memory, and at every moral step he takes, for every act, for every thought, he may always have ready in his memory the teaching of the Gospel. Such is the injunction of the Savior Himself. This injunction is linked with a promise and a threat. In sending His disciples to preach Christianity, the Lord said to them: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20).

The promise consists in the fact that the person who fulfills the commandments of the Gospel will not only be saved but will also enter into the most intimate union with God and become a divinely built temple of God. The Lord said: "He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who love Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will reveal Myself to him" (John 14:21).

From these words of the Lord, it is evident that the commandments of the Gospel must be so studied that they become the possession, the property of the mind; only then is the exact, constant fulfillment of them possible such as the Lord requires. The Lord

reveals Himself to the doer of the commandments spiritually, and He is seen with the spiritual eye, with the mind. The person sees the Lord in himself, in his thoughts and feelings transfigured by the Holy Spirit. On no account must the Lord be expected to appear to the eyes of sense. This is clear from the words of the Gospel that follow those we have just quoted: "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode in him" (John 14:23).

The threat to a person remiss in the fulfillment of the commandments of the Gospel is contained in the predication for him of unfruitfulness, estrangement from God, perdition. The Lord said: "Without Me, you can do nothing. if anyone does not remain in Me, he is lopped off like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned. Remain in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will remain in My love" (John 15:5-6, 9-10). "Not everyone who calls Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those who do the will of My Father in heaven. On that day [the day of judgment] many will say to Me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Thy name, and expel demons in Thy name, and do many miracles in Thy name?' And then I will confess to them, 'I have never known you. Depart from Me, you whose work is sin'" (Matthew 7:21-23).

The giver, teacher, and model of humility, our Lord Jesus Christ, called His all-holy, almighty, divine commandments 'the least' on account of the very simple form in which they are expressed and which makes them easy to understand and easy to carry out for every type of person, even the most uneducated. But at the same time the Lord added that a deliberate and constant breaker of even on commandment 'will be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven,' or, according to the explanation of the holy Fathers, will be deprived of the heavenly Kingdom and will be cast into the fire of gehenna.

The Lord's commandments are "Spirit and life." They save the doer of them. They restore a dead soul to life. They make a carnal and worldly person spiritual. On the other hand, a person who neglects the commandments ruins himself and remains in a carnal and worldly state, in a fallen condition, and develops the fall in himself. "The carnal man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him" (I Corinthians 2:14). And therefore it is indispensable for salvation to be changed from a carnal man into a spiritual, from the old man into the new. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God." And therefore it is essential for salvation to be freed not only from the influence of the flesh or coarse passions, but also from the influence of the blood by means of which the passions act on the soul. "Those who go far from Thee [not by position of body but by disposition of soul which dodges from doing the will of God] will perish. Thou destroyest all who go awhoring from Thee" by following their own

will and their own understanding by refusing the commandments of the Gospel or the will of God. The latter necessarily accompanies the former. "But it is good for me," as a true [Christian], "to cling to God, to put my trust in the Lord" (Psalm 72:27-28).

The Arena, Chapter 1

From the Priest: Confession

Three weeks remain before Holy Week. If you have not been to Confession since the beginning of the Fast, or if your regular time for confession will fall due before Pascha, you should plan on coming to Confession before Holy Week.

If you have not been to Communion in months, you should make a concerted effort to prepare to make a good Confession that you might prepare to receive Communion at Pascha.

If you have been communing on an 'expired' Confession (two months or more since your last Confession, you should stop communing and prepare yourself for Confession.

For all: please try to make your confessions before Holy Week if at all possible. Your priest will hear your confession during Holy Week if necessary, but, unless it was unavoidable, he will be much happier if you plan ahead to do it before the last minute. Thank you! *Fr. Justin*

Veneration of the Cross

The Third Sunday of Lent is given to us for the veneration of the Precious Cross. At Vigil on Saturday evening, the Gospel is not be brought out for veneration. Instead, at the end of the Great Doxology, the Cross decorated with flowers, is brought out for veneration by the faithful. Special hymns are appointed to be sung at this time.

At the Liturgy on Sunday, the hymn "Before Thy Cross, we bow down in veneration..." is sung in place of "Holy God". Customarily, the Cross is venerated by all at the end of the Liturgy with prostrations, marking a rare exception to the rule of not doing prostrations on Sundays, or on a day when we have received Holy Communion.

The Cross is left out in the church through the Ninth Hour on Friday. When we enter the church, we normally venerate the Cross first making full prostrations instead of our usual bows.

Upcoming Events 2012

28 March: Complete Great Canon Wed evening.

8 April Palm Sunday

15 April Pascha, the Feast of Feasts

GLORY BE TO GOD IN ALL THINGS!