

33RD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST—Tone 8

Sunday of Zacchaeus.

Ven. Maximus the Confessor. Martyr Neophytus.

Vespers

At "Lord, I Call", sing the stichera verses (4) of the Resurrection in Tone 8.

Then the following stichera (3) to St. Maximus in Tone 4:

O blessed Maximus, you proclaimed to all the One Who was well-pleased to become man in His compassion, and is comprehended in two wills and energies. You stopped the gaping mouths of the most evil ones, who, through the wantonness of the devil, the fabricator of all wickedness,// wrongly proclaimed Christ as having only one will and one energy.

By the strength of your doctrines, O Father Maximus, you choked the evil-minded Pyrrhus, who spoke vain and foolish things. You underwent persecutions and sorrows, O blessed one: you were badly beaten, and your tongue was cut out; your divine hand, which you raised to God, was cut off,// yet with it you had written the most sublime doctrines, O righteous one.

Your tongue became as the pen of a ready scribe, sharpened by the Spirit, O Father Maximus, inscribing the writing of divine virtues with grace upon the tablets of our hearts, and conveying the doctrine of the incarnation of Christ,// Who willed to be made manifest to all mankind in two natures and one Person.

Then the following stichera (3) to the Martyr Neophytus in Tone 8

Oh, most glorious wonder! A dove descends from on high and speaks in a human voice to Neophytus the Martyr, illuminating him with an Angel's way of life, and sending the youth to contend most mightily. Oh, what godly deeds were done by the Martyr! He excelled in every contest.// By his prayers, save our souls, O Christ, since You are compassionate!

Oh, most glorious wonder! From his youth the wise Neophýtus performs miracles by the strength of the Spirit. By his prayers water pours out from a rock; he raises his dead mother back to life. Oh, what godly deeds were done by the Martyr! He excelled in every contest.// By his prayers, save our souls, O Christ, since You are compassionate!

Oh, most glorious wonder! As Neophýtus suffers bravely for Christ, he amazes his enemies with astonishing miracles. Thrown into the fire, he quenches it; he causes savage beasts to cower in fear. Oh, invincible might by which the athlete was made wondrous!// By his prayers, O God, save us!

After "Glory..." in Tone 6 (St. Maximus)

The proclamation of your deeds has gone out into all the earth, O righteous Father Maximus. Therefore you have found the reward of your labors in the heavens. You destroyed the ranks of demons; you attained the heights of Angels, whose life you followed blamelessly. Since you have boldness before Christ our God,// pray that peace may be granted to our souls!

After "Now and ever..." sing the Dogmatic in Tone 8

The King of heaven, because of His love for man, appeared on earth and dwelt with men. He took flesh from the pure Virgin; and after assuming it, He came forth from her. The Son is one: in two natures, yet one Person. Proclaiming Him as perfect God and perfect Man, we confess Christ our God!// Entreat Him, O unwedded Mother, to have mercy on our souls!

At the Aposticha, sing the verses of the Resurrection in Tone 8.

After "Glory..." in Tone 8 (St. Maximus)

We honor you, O Maximus our father, the instructor of a multitude of monks. We have indeed learned to walk rightly in your footsteps. You are blest, for having labored for Christ, you denounced the power of the enemy. You were a conversor with the Angels and a companion of the venerable and righteous ones.// Together with them, entreat the Lord that He may grant mercy to our souls!

After “Now and ever...” sing the Resurrectional Theotokion in Tone 8

O unwedded Virgin, who ineffably conceived God in the flesh! O Mother of God most high, accept the cries of your servants, O Blameless One! Grant cleansing of transgressions to all!// Receive our prayers and pray to save our souls!

Resurrectional Troparion, Tone 8

Thou didst descend from on high, O Merciful One! Thou didst accept the three day burial to free us from our sufferings!// O Lord, our Life and Resurrection, glory to Thee!

Troparion, Tone 8 (St. Maximus)

Champion of Orthodoxy, teacher of purity and of true worship, enlightener of the universe and the adornment of hierarchs: all-wise Father Maximus, your teachings have gleamed with light upon all things.// Intercede before Christ God to save our souls!

Troparion, Tone 4 (Martyr Neophytus)

Your holy martyr Neophytus, O Lord, through his suffering has received an incorruptible crown from You, our God. For having Your strength, he laid low his adversaries, and shattered the powerless boldness of demons.// Through his intercessions save our souls!

Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos



The paschal season of the Church is preceded by the season of Great Lent, which is also preceded by its own liturgical preparation. The first sign of the approach of Great Lent comes five Sundays before its beginning. On this Sunday the Gospel reading is **about Zacchaeus the tax-collector**. It tells how Christ brought salvation to the sinful man, and how his life was changed simply because he “sought to see who Jesus was” (Luke 19:3). The desire and effort to see Jesus begins the entire movement through Lent towards Pascha. It is the first movement of salvation.

Our lenten journey begins with a recognition of our own sinfulness, just as Zacchaeus recognized his. He promised to make

restitution by giving half of his wealth to the poor, and by paying to those he had falsely accused four times as much as they had lost. In this, he went beyond the requirements of the Law (Ex. 22:3-12).

The example of Zacchaeus teaches us that we should turn away from our sins, and atone for them. The real proof of our sorrow and repentance is not just a verbal apology, but when we correct ourselves and try to make amends for the consequences of our evil actions.

We are also assured of God's mercy and compassion by Christ's words to Zacchaeus, "Today salvation is come to this house" (Luke 19:9). After the Great Doxology at Sunday Matins (when the Tone of the week is Tone 1, 3, 5, 7) we sing the Dismissal Hymn of the Resurrection "Today salvation has come to the world," which echoes the Lord's words to Zacchaeus.

Zacchaeus was short, so he climbed a tree in order to see the Lord. All of us have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). We are also short in our spiritual stature, therefore we must climb the ladder of the virtues. In other words, we must prepare for spiritual effort and growth.



The Saint we commemorate today: St. Maximus the Confessor was born in Constantinople around 580 and raised in a pious Christian family. He received an excellent education, studying

philosophy, grammar, and rhetoric. He was well-read in the authors of antiquity and he also mastered philosophy and theology. When St Maximus entered into government service, he became first secretary (asekretis) and chief counselor to the emperor Heraclius (611-641), who was impressed by his knowledge and virtuous life.

St Maximus soon realized that the emperor and many others had been corrupted by the Monothelite heresy, which was spreading rapidly through the East. He resigned from his duties at court, and went to the Chrysopolis monastery (at Skutari on the opposite shore of the Bosphorus), where he received monastic tonsure. Because of his humility and wisdom, he soon won the love of the brethren and was chosen igumen of the monastery after a few years. Even in this position, he remained a simple monk.

In 638, the emperor Heraclius and Patriarch Sergius tried to minimize the importance of differences in belief, and they issued an edict, the "Ekthesis" ("Ekthesis tes pisteos" or "Exposition of Faith), which decreed that everyone must accept the teaching of one will in the two natures of the Savior. In defending Orthodoxy against the "Ekthesis," St Maximus spoke to people in various occupations and positions, and these conversations were successful. Not only the clergy and the bishops, but also the people and the secular officials felt some sort of invisible attraction to him, as we read in his Life.

When St Maximus saw what turmoil this heresy caused in Constantinople and in the East, he decided to leave his monastery and seek refuge in the West, where Monothelitism had been completely rejected.

The Fourth Ecumenical Council had condemned the Monophysite heresy, which falsely taught that in the Lord Jesus Christ there was only one nature (the divine). Influenced by this erroneous opinion, the Monothelite heretics said that in Christ there was only one divine will ("thelema") and only one divine energy ("energia"). Adherents of Monothelitism sought to return by another path to the repudiated Monophysite heresy. Monothelitism found numerous adherents in Armenia, Syria, Egypt. The heresy, fanned also by nationalistic animosities, became a serious threat to Church unity

in the East. The struggle of Orthodoxy with heresy was particularly difficult because in the year 630, three of the patriarchal thrones in the Orthodox East were occupied by Monothelites: Constantinople by Sergius, Antioch by Athanasius, and Alexandria by Cyrus.

St Maximus traveled from Alexandria to Crete, where he began his preaching activity. He clashed there with a bishop, who adhered to the heretical opinions of Severus and Nestorius. The saint spent six years in Alexandria and the surrounding area.

Patriarch Sergius died at the end of 638, and the emperor Heraclius also died in 641. The imperial throne was eventually occupied by his grandson Constans II (642-668), an open adherent of the Monothelite heresy. The assaults of the heretics against Orthodoxy intensified. St Maximus went to Carthage and he preached there for about five years. When the Monothelite Pyrrhus, the successor of Patriarch Sergius, arrived there after fleeing from Constantinople because of court intrigues, he and St Maximus spent many hours in debate. As a result, Pyrrhus publicly acknowledged his error, and was permitted to retain the title of "Patriarch." He even wrote a book confessing the Orthodox Faith. St Maximus and Pyrrhus traveled to Rome to visit Pope Theodore, who received Pyrrhus as the Patriarch of Constantinople.

In the year 647 St Maximus returned to Africa. There, at a council of bishops Monothelism was condemned as a heresy. In 648, a new edict was issued, commissioned by Constans and compiled by Patriarch Paul of Constantinople: the "Typos" ("Typos tes pisteos" or "Pattern of the Faith"), which forbade any further disputes about one will or two wills in the Lord Jesus Christ. St Maximus then asked St Martin the Confessor (April 14), the successor of Pope Theodore, to examine the question of Monothelism at a Church Council. The Lateran Council was convened in October of 649. One hundred and fifty Western bishops and thirty-seven representatives from the Orthodox East were present, among them St Maximus the Confessor. The Council condemned Monothelism, and the Typos. The false teachings of Patriarchs Sergius, Paul and Pyrrhus of Constantinople, were also anathematized.

When Constans II received the decisions of the Council, he gave orders to arrest both Pope Martin and St Maximus. The emperor's order was fulfilled only in the year 654. St Maximus was accused of treason and locked up in prison. In 656 he was sent to Thrace, and was later brought back to a Constantinople prison.

The saint and two of his disciples were subjected to the cruelest torments. Each one's tongue was cut out, and his right hand was cut off. Then they were exiled to Skemarum in Scythia, enduring many sufferings and difficulties on the journey.

After three years, the Lord revealed to St Maximus the time of his death (August 13, 662). Three candles appeared over the grave of St Maximus and burned miraculously. This was a sign that St Maximus was a beacon of Orthodoxy during his lifetime, and continues to shine forth as an example of virtue for all. Many healings occurred at his tomb.

The theology of St Maximus the Confessor, based on the spiritual experience of the knowledge of the great Desert Fathers, and utilizing the skilled art of dialectics worked out by pre-Christian philosophy, was continued and developed in the works of St Simeon the New Theologian (March 12), and St Gregory Palamas (November 14).



The **Holy Martyr Neophytus**, a native of the city of Nicea in Bithynia, was raised by his parents in strict Christian piety. For his

virtue, temperance and unceasing prayer, it pleased God to glorify Saint Neophytus with the gift of wonderworking, while the saint was still just a child!

Like Moses, the holy youth brought forth water from a stone of the city wall and gave this water to those who were thirsty. In answer to the prayer of Saint Neophytus' mother, asking that God's will concerning her son might be revealed to her, a white dove miraculously appeared and told of the path he would follow. The saint was led forth from his parental home by this dove and brought to a cave on Mt. Olympus, which served as a lion's den. It is said that he chased the lion from the cave so that he could live there himself. The saint remained there from the age of nine until he was fifteen, leaving it only once to bury his parents and distribute their substance to the poor.

During the persecution by Diocletian (284-305), he went to Nicea and boldly began to denounce the impiety of the pagan faith. The enraged persecutors suspended the saint from a tree, they whipped him with ox thongs, and scraped his body with iron claws. Then they threw him into a red-hot oven, but the holy martyr remained unharmed, spending three days and three nights in it. The torturers, not knowing what else to do with him, decided to kill him. One of the pagans ran him through with a sword (some say it was a spear), and the saint departed to the Lord at the age of sixteen.

