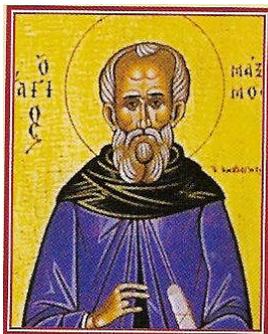


January 21

F. Our Ven. Father Maximus the Confessor



He was born of a noble family in Constantinople, received an excellent formation and was among the imperial counselors during the reign of Emperor Heraclius. Seeing the spread of the heresy of the Monothelites, which even caught the Emperor himself, he left the imperial court and became a monk in the Chrysopolis Monastery where later he became the Rector.

A thoughtful theological student of his time and a strict defender of Orthodoxy, Maximus sharply challenged the Monothelites, for which he was often exposed to rage and persecution by the enemies of the Church¹. Some times he was sent into exile and again called to Constantinople, from exhortation and seduction it passed over to threats, desecration and beatings, but Ven. Maximus remained unshakable in his religious convictions. Finally they cut out his tongue and cut off his right hand so that he could neither say a word nor proclaim the truth in writing. After all this he was sent to imprisonment in the Caucasus, in the land of the Laz in Mingrelia, where he died on August 13, 622, knowing beforehand the time of his death.

Ven. Maxim wrote many compositions. The best of these are those which represent spiritual life. In them there are observable deep and insightful ideas. Also a commentary on the liturgy having a theological-speculative character came down to us. See August 13.

Kontakion, tone 8

**Great Maximus, zealot of the Trinity,
Who clearly taught the divine Faith:
To glorify Christ in two natures, wills and energies;
Let us, O Faithful, honor him in worthy hymns, crying out:
Rejoice, O Preacher of the Faith.**

Epistle: Heb. 11:33-40; sel. 330. **Gospel:** Lk. 12:8-12; sel. 64.

Holy Martyr Neophytus

He came from the city of Nicaea and was brought up by his parents in strict Christian piety. It pleased God to glorify Neophytus with the gift of working wonders while he was still an adolescent. While still a youth "a dove which came from the highest" revealed to him "an announcement for man" and called him to the "way of salvation". Fulfilling the will of God, the holy youth left his parental home for the wilderness where he settled in a lion's cave. During the persecution of Diocletian, he voluntarily appeared in Nicaea and here bravely and loudly began to

expose the impiety of the pagan faith. The persecutors coming in a rage hanged the martyr on a tree, beat him with ox-hide strips and planed his body with iron. After this they threw him into a heated furnace, but the holy confessor remained unharmed. The torturers, not knowing what more to do with Neophytus, conspired to kill him and one of the pagans thrust a spear into the chest of the holy martyr. The holy sufferer departed to the Lord at the age of 16 in about 303-305 in Nicaea.

Holy Martyrs Eugene, Candidus (according to the Synodal Menologion, but according to the Menaion is Canidius), Valerian (Valerian) and Achilles

They suffered for the Christian faith during the reign of Diocletian and Maximian under the commander Lycius. Valerian, Candidus and Achilles hid in the Trebizond Mountains during the persecution, thinking it was better to live with wild animals than with the pagans. But they were soon found here by the torturers and led to Trebizond. For their courageous confession of the Christian faith the martyrs were beaten with ox-hide strips, planed with iron, "mercilessly with salt in the wounds" thrown into and scorched with fire. Within a few days St. Eugene was also arrested and subjected to the same torture. After the torture all four martyrs were thrown into a heated furnace. When they came out of the furnace unharmed, the pagans cut off their heads in the year 284.

Their service is sung in Compline.

Martyr Anastasius

A disciple of Ven. Maximus the Confessor and enduring exile together with him from the Monothelites, he wrote the life of his teacher and died in 666.

Martyr Agnes

She was born in Rome of Christian parents and was brought up by them in the rules of the Holy Faith. From her young years she sincerely gave all her soul to God and decided to devote herself to virginity. When she refused to marry the son of the city's mayor Symphonius, one of the associates of the latter revealed to him that Agnes was a Christian woman. The embittered mayor subjected the saint to terrible torture. During this torture St. Agnes through many signs and wonders converted 160 unbelievers to the Christian faith and was thrown into a heated furnace. When the holy sufferer remained unharmed by the fire, the mayor ordered a sword be thrust into her throat from which she died in about the year 304. All 160 pagans converted by her were decapitated. Many wonders were worked on the grave of St. Agnes. The relics of St. Agnes repose in a country church named for her on Via Nomentana in Rome, and her honorable head is in the Church of the Holy of Holies.

Cathedral of the Martyr Irene

There were three temples of St. Irene in Constantinople (see May 5). The temple mentioned here was at the passageway through the gulf of the Golden Horn. The relics of St. Irene repose in it and her head was found in a nearby women's monastery.

Ven. Neophytus of Vatopedi

He was a sexton in the Vatopedi Monastery. Once having become ill with a severe illness, he turned with fervent prayer to the All-holy Theotokos asking Her to heal him and suddenly heard a voice from the icon of the Theotokos speaking to him: "you have been given a year of life to prepare yourself for death". Wonderfully healed, Neophytus increased his monastic asceticism, preparing himself for his departure from this present life. After a year, one Sunday when he prepared for his reception of the Holy Mysteries, he again heard the voice from the Icon of the Mother of God that the time for his departure from this life has already come. After he received the Holy Mysteries, he peacefully departed to the Lord.

Vatopedi Icon of the Mother of God

This Icon is in the Annunciation Church in the old Vatopedi monastery on Mt. Athos. It received the name Vatopedi, because not far from this monastery where this wonderworking icon is found, Arcadius, the son of the Emperor, while still a youth fell into the sea from a ship and through the wonderful intercession of the Mother of God was transported unharmed to the shore where he was found under a bush near the monastery. It follows that from this event that the name Vatopedi means: "bush of the child". Emperor Theodosius the Great, in memory of the wonderful deliverance of his son, adorned and enriched the Vatopedi monastery. On the Vatopedi icon the Mother of God is depicted with her face turned to the right shoulder because she on January 21, 807 turned her face to the Hegumen of the monastery standing in prayer near the holy icon on the other side and announced to him the intention of robbers to pillage the monastery. The Hegumen took the appropriate precautionary measures and the monastery was protected from plunder. In memory of this wonderful event a perpetually lit lampada is burned before the Vatopedi Icon. On Mt. Athos this icon is called "Consolation" or "Comfort".

Repose of the Ven. Maxim of the Greek

He was born in Arta [Ambracia], Albania. He studied in Paris under the famous, learned John Laskaris and then completed his secular formation in Florence and Venice. After completing his studies, he went to Mt. Athos and here

was tonsured a monk in the Vatopedi Monastery where he received his theological formation.

By invitation of Great Prince Basil Ivanovich, he arrived in Moscow in 1518 for an analysis of the Greek books found in the grand-prince library. He was not only charged with the analysis but also the translation of those books, which appear to have not been translated into the Slavonic language. In addition he was assigned to correct the church liturgical books. He was assigned a place in the Chudov Monastery to do this work. The erudition and intelligence of Maximus were evident to the Russians so they recognized him as a learned person. Many gathered around him for conversations about the "book" and the Tsar himself and some of the confused hierarchs were converted to this decision. With all his deep and extensive knowledge, he was distinguished by the ardor of his character.

Crude mistakes that crept into the church service books confused Maximus, and he sharply and openly spoke out that the service books are rather incorrectly written. Ignorant followers of the old ways saw in Maxim's responses the reviling of holy things and murmured. They even started to reproach him that he is spoiling the old Slavonic books. Metropolitan Barlaam, protecting Maxim, was forced to leave his cathedra and his successor Metropolitan Daniel joined the accusers of Maximus. The Grand Prince himself was angry with Maximus because he chastised the prince for his desire to divorce his first wife Solomonia because of her barrenness and to enter into a second marriage with Princess Helen Glinskaya.

Maximus was accused as a heretic. First he was imprisoned in the Moscow Simonov Monastery (1525), and then he was transferred to the St. Joseph of Volokolamsk Monastery. Here he was tormented with hunger, cold, smoke, and other annoyances so that "he was dealt sometimes as if dead". In 1531 he was again tried, excluded from communing the Holy Mysteries and in fetters was sent to the Tver Monastery of the Child. Maximus pined in prison for more than twelve years and only after the death of Metropolitan Daniel and Great Prince Basil Ivanovich was his destiny eased a little. By the resolution of Metropolitan Joasaph, Maximus now could go to church and partake of the Holy Mysteries. In 1545 the Eastern Patriarchs asked Tsar Ivan to release Maximus to Mt. Athos; but the Tsar disagreed and ordered him transferred for a rest in the Trinity-St. Sergius Laura (1551). Here Ven. Maximus predicted to the Tsar, once present on a pilgrimage, the death of his son the Tsarevich. After many years of labor and suffering, the Venerable One peacefully departed to the Lord on January 21, 1556. His relics repose in a hidden place in the Trinity - St. Sergius Laura (see Moscow Diocese).

Ven. Maximus wrote many compositions. The following among them were protected: A letter to Tsar Ivan - "About those who do not shave the beard", a Canon to the Holy Spirit, a translation of a sermon of Cyril of Alexandria about repentance and a list from the translation of the explanatory Psalter, a translation of the homilies of St. John Chrysostom on John's Gospel, a sermon to the Latins about the Holy Spirit, four sermons - "about how it is necessary to observe the Symbol of Faith", research into the Orthodox faith and the correction of the books of the Russians, decisions on the use of grammar, rhetoric, philosophy, and others.

The original compositions of Ven. Maximus are numerous with varied contents but are for the most part very insignificant in volume, so that all of them (about 134) are contained in three little booklets. They are done in the form of reflections and deliberations, in the form of church sermons and homilies, as messages, conversations, historical tales, prayers and sacred hymns, fragments, notes and sometimes in a few lines. These compositions are treated with the greatest respect: they are gathered in collections written in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, were cited by later writers on a par with the creations of the Holy Fathers and were brought into other collections.

¹By the way, according to his conviction, after public debate about the faith with the Monothelite Pyrrhus, Patriarch of Constantinople, the latter renounced the heresy, arrived with Ven. Maximus in Rome and here in 645, in the presence of the clergy and of Pope Theodore, a zealous overseer of Orthodoxy, transmitted to the Pope the certificate of the denial of heresy, after which Theodore solemnly reunited Pyrrhus to the church. Thus, the schismatics unfairly think that Ven Maximus desired for himself the hierarchical right and made the reception of the order about Patriarch Pyrrhus, who fell into heresy and then repented.

*S. V. Bulgakov, **Handbook for Church Servers**, 2nd ed., 1274 pp. (Kharkov, 1900) pp. 0040-0042.
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