**St. Methodius of Olympus**

Bishop and ecclesiastical author, date of birth unknown; died a martyr, probably in 311

His feast day is September 18.

We are indebted to St. Jerome for the earliest accounts of him (Illustrious Men 83). According to Jerome, Methodius was Bishop of Olympus in Lycia and afterwards Bishop of Tyre (Lebanon). Various attempts have been made to clear up the error concerning the mention of Tyre as a subsequent bishopric of Methodius. Jerome further states that Methodius suffered martyrdom at the end of the last persecution, i.e., under Maximinus Daia (311). It is possible that Methodius was transported to Tyre during the persecution and died there.

Methodius & Callistus

Methodius had a very comprehensive philosophical education, and was an important theologian as well as a prolific and polished author. Chronologically, his works can only be assigned in a general way to the end of the third and the beginning of the fourth century. He became of special importance in the history of theological literature, in that he successfully combated various erroneous views of the great Alexandrian, Origen. He particularly attacked his doctrine that man's body at the resurrection is not the same body as he had in life; also his idea of the world's eternity and the erroneous notions it involved. Nevertheless he recognized the great services of Origen in ecclesiastical theology. Like him, he is strongly influenced by Plato's philosophy, and uses to a great extent the allegorical explanation of Scripture. Of his numerous works only one has come down to us complete in a Greek text, viz., the dialogue on virginity, under the title: "Symposium, or on Virginity" (Symposion he peri hagneias), which is the subject of our reading.

In the dialogue, composed with reference to Plato's "Banquet", he depicts a festive meal of ten virgins in the garden of Arete (virtue), at which each of the participators extols Christian virginity and its sublime excellence. The divine image in human beings is restored by chastity/virginity; the body then obeys the soul. Methodius taught that Jesus Christ remained a virgin His whole life as an example for men: "What then did the Lord, the Truth and the Light, accomplish on coming down to the world? He preserved His flesh incorrupt in virginity with which he had adorned it. And so let us too, if we are to come to the likeness of God, endeavor to aspire to the virginity of Christ." (Symposium 1.5)”. The dialogue concludes with a hymn on Christ as the Bridegroom of the Church. See Chapter 2 of Discourse 11 (Click [Here](https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/062311.htm)) for the hymn.

Biblical Reflection:

Read lines 158-166 (Revelation 14:1-4) and footnote 11, especially, the quote from St. Augustine. Jesus is the Way, the Light and the Life. St. Methodius and St. Augustine seem to be walking us down a path that the way to perfection and completeness (body and soul) is the path of virginity. Wisdom, through the exercise of the Cardinal Virtues (see footnote 9), appears to be the road. What will you do to set your body and soul on the path? What needs to change?

CCC Reflection:

Read CCC 1618-1619 and CCC 2349. CCC 1619 tells us that virginity of the sake of kingdom of heaven is an “unfolding of baptismal grace,… a sign which recalls that marriage is reality…which is passing away.” (note Mark 12:25; 1 Cor 7:31). CCC 2349 explains three forms of the virtue of chastity (from St. Ambrose). How are you allowing the baptismal grace to unfold in your life? Single, married or widowed? What are you willing to do for the kingdom and what does that tell you about the centrality and precedence of Christ in your life (CCC 1618)? What is necessary to cooperate with God’s unfolding of baptismal grace in your life?

Spiritual Reflection:

Read lines 35-43 (and footnote 3) and re-read quote from Saint Augustine (footnote 11). Like St. Methodius, St. Augustine certainly, with scriptural proof from Revelation, elevates the virtue of chastity and the state of virginity above all others. There appears to be reward for those willing to offer to God the burning, unpleasant salt of sacrifice and truth. We must make sacrifices (oblations with salt) to God. Has your salt gone flat or does it yet sting, purify and disinfect?