

Maximus

August 13

Maximus Confessor was born in Constantinople about 580. His family belonged to the old Byzantine aristocracy, and Maximus was afforded a good education. He proved an able leader and became Imperial Secretary under Emperor Heraclius. But he resigned. Driven by spiritual passion, he entered a monastery and eventually became the abbot. His theological and literary skills blossomed. The Greek church was inundated with his writings, and men as brilliant as John Scotus Erigena in the West and John of Damascus in the East drew wisdom from his pen.

In the course of time, Maximus led the fight against a heresy called Monothelism—the teaching that Christ had a divine, but no human, will. This became the fight of his life. For many years, Maximus in the East and Pope Martinus I in the Western church held the line for orthodoxy—that Christ has two natures (human and divine), and two wills (not separated or mixed but in harmony).

The emperor, unimpressed, advanced Monothelism. Pope Martinus was deposed, imprisoned with common criminals, exposed to cold and hunger, and finally banished to a cavern on the Black Sea where he died in 655. Maximus was treated even worse. Though now a feeble 73-year-old man, he was seized, dragged across the empire, placed on trial in Constantinople, and banished to a remote spot where he suffered greatly from cold and hunger. After several months, a commission was sent to interview him, headed by Theodosius, Bishop of Caesarea, a Monothelist. Maximus so eloquently defended the two natures of Christ that Theodosius left a converted man.

Another delegation was sent, and the emperor offered Maximus great rewards to convert to Monothelism, and great suffering if he refused. He refused and was beaten, spat on, robbed of his possessions, imprisoned for six years, then flogged. His tongue and right hand were whacked off. He was displayed at a pillory in each of the 12 quarters of the city, then imprisoned for the rest of his life—which proved only a few weeks. He died **August 13, 662** at age 82. But his sufferings paved the way for the triumph of his doctrine.

The Word became a human being and lived here with us. We saw his true glory, the glory of the only Son of the Father. From him all the kindness and all the truth of God have come down to us. *John 1:14*

¹Morgan, R. J. 2000, c1997. *On this day : 265 amazing and inspiring stories about saints, martyrs & heroes* (electronic ed.) . Thomas Nelson Publishers: Nashville. Used with permission.