August 13th: Saint Maximus the Confessor, abbot

Gospel text (*Mt* 5:13-16): Jesus said: «You are the salt of the earth (…). You are the light of the world (…). Your light must shine before others, so that they may see the good you do and praise your Father in heaven».

Saint Maximus the Confessor (579-662)

EDITORIAL TEAM evangeli.net (based on texts by Benedict XVI)
(Città del Vaticano, Vatican)

Today I would like to present the figure of one of the great Fathers of the Eastern Church. He is a monk, St Maximus, whose fearless courage in witnessing to - "confessing" - even while suffering (the cruel mutilation of his tongue and his right hand), the integrity of his faith in Jesus Christ, true God and true man, Saviour of the world, earned him Christian Tradition's title of Confessor.

Maximus was born in Palestine, the land of the Lord, in about 580. As a boy he was initiated to the monastic life and the study of the Scriptures. Maximus moved from Jerusalem to Constantinople and from there, because of the barbarian invasions, sought refuge in Africa. Here he was distinguished by his extreme courage in the defense of orthodoxy.

A theory had come into being which held that there was only one will in Christ, the divine will. To defend the oneness of Christ's Person, people denied that he had his own true and proper human will. But St Maximus immediately realized that this would destroy the mystery of salvation, for a man without a will, is not a real man but an “amputated” man.

—For St Maximus, this vision did not remain a philosophical speculation; he saw it realized in Jesus' actual life, especially in the drama of Gethsemane. In this drama of Jesus' agony, of the anguish of death, of the opposition between the human will not to die and the divine will which offers itself to death, in this drama of Gethsemane the whole human drama is played out, the drama of our redemption.