



Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Twenty Sixth Sunday After Pentecost

December 7, 2014

Father Robert E Lucas, Pastor;
Subdeacon Daniel J. Korba and Nikitas Tsokris,
Cantors

Rectory 215-862-9227; Parish Center 732-780-3158

We Are A Stewardship Parish Of Time, Talent and Treasure

The mission of our parish faith community is to teach the Gospel message in the rich tradition of the Orthodox Church; to enable people to reflect the image of Jesus Christ in every day activities of life; to offer spiritual formation through changing times; and to celebrate community among Orthodox believers in our Freehold area.

We of St. Paul the Apostle Parish dedicate ourselves to maintaining the sanctity of worship and spiritual enlightenment in a family environment that reaches and involves all ages and unifies all people.

We believe in the spirit of ecumenism in which we share our faith by word and example and extend our spiritual insights to all people.

We accept the responsibility of Christian Stewardship that through generous giving we may all experience a faith communion with Christ as the Center of our lives.

We dedicate ourselves to insuring the well-being of all people so that we may truly experience the message of Christ's salutary gospel.

We are a beacon on a hill with the eyes of many upon us; that beacon is the inspired Light of Christ which must shine brightly in our lives.

It is not ourselves we preach but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts, that we in turn might make known the glory of God shining on the face of Christ. This treasure we possess in earthen vessels to make it clear that its surpassing power comes from God and not from us. We are afflicted in every way possible, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in us 2 Corinthians 4: 5 - 8.

GLAD TIDINGS

+++ Today we have festal anointing on the occasion of this past week's simple feast of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker, Archbishop of Myra in Lycia. The customary greeting is "Christ Is Among Us!" to which we respond, "He Is And Shall Be!"

+++ The Annual St. Nicholas Day Luncheon will take place next Sunday, December 14 following the Divine Liturgy. Please bring a prepared food so we can enjoy a family gathering.

+++ We thank sincerely all the good souls who labored to make yesterday's Pirohi Sale a success. God bless you devoted souls!

+++ The Special Offering for flowers to beautify our parish church for the coming feast of the Nativity of our Lord will be taken on Sunday, December 14.

+++ The Bake Sale will take place Friday and Saturday, December 19 and 20. Packaged Cookies will also be available.

+++ Every Monday, we have prayerful devotions before the Myrrh bearing icon at 6:00 PM. Everyone is invited to be present in praise. The Birthgiver invites us to manifest our faith in response to her first shown love, to unite our prayers with hers for the salvation of our souls. Invite your friends and neighbors to join us.

+++ Please remember we are in the Nativity Fast which began yesterday. Impose seriously on yourself the prescriptions of the Church that our hearts and souls become worthy mangers of our Saviour on the feast of His Nativity. Fast from sin, meat and dairy products that your soul is enriched. Prior to all services, Confessions are heard, so come and unburden yourself from the sinful weight you carry.

+++ Please keep the intentions of these members of our parish intercession community in your daily prayers: Father George, Anna, Barbara, Betty, James, Yevlogia, Nicholas, Maria, Cynthia, Nicholas, Pani Anna Marie and Andrea.

+++ The sign-up sheet for both the Web Site and Bulletin sponsors is on the bulletin board in the kitchen. Please sign up as soon as possible. Do NOT make payment until your sign-up month has arrived. This will make it easier for Father to keep track of payments. Thanks in advance to all who support the parish in this way.

+++ We offer thanks to the Blessed Trinity for inspiring generosity in the souls of our faithful and the blessing of abundant grace in our midst with the offering received last Sunday: Tithe Offering, \$477.00; Candles, 23.00; Holyday, \$15.00; Flowers, \$10.00; Food Coupons, \$360.00; Kitchen, \$670.00, for a total of \$1555.00. We express our profound gratitude to the parishioner communicants who offer their God-given treasure and labored for the sake of the Lord and the good of our parish. God bless and reward you good and faithful souls!

+++ As faithful believers, we intercede and associate ourselves in prayer with the following who have prayed and offered seven day lights for their intentions: Father Lucas, Maria Idronmenos, Anna Zacharyczuk, Bob Gorbich, Marilyn Korba and Pani Buletza.

+++ We make a **PENNIES FROM HEAVEN** Canister available for our faithful to bring in pennies for our altar and its appointments. We are already in receipt of **\$1818.00** from this apostolate. Even your pennies can help and are a blessing to our parish.

Lessons From A Fence

Whoever hears these sayings of mine and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock

Matthew 7: 24.

When the recent storms we have faced on the East Coast occurred, a section of fence around a neighbor's house blew down in a howling wind. His first reaction was to blame the man who built it for him a few months before. But on further reflection, he knew the fault was his. As the fence was nearing completion, he told them man there was no need to replace four existing posts from the previous fence with new ones set in concrete. "Just attach the new fence to the old posts," were his instructions. "It will be fine." It was, until the violent winds came.

Our Lord taught us in a powerful story to emphasize the importance of building our daily lives on the solid foundation of obeying his instructions. "Whoever hears these sayings of mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on a rock and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, and it did not fall, for it was founded on a rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of mine and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand" Matthew 7: 24. – 26.

When the winds and rains assault and beat against the house, only the one built securely on a rock will remain standing.

Hearing God's Word is essential, but actually doing what He instructs, what He teaches us, is the key to weathering the storms of life. We will always be assaulted with temptation and the devil will not stop trying to seduce us to his side. But it is never too late to start building our faith life on the solid Rock of Jesus Christ.

As we overview our failures in advancing spiritually, we can return to the values of the Lord. He will not mislead us, not misdirect our efforts. He is intent we succeed in triumph. He leads and provides us an example. When the world around us is crumbling, our heavenly Father is the Rock on which we can securely stand.

Meditation

For the Christian community, the family is far more than "theme." It is life, it is the daily fabric of life, it is the journey of generations who pass on the faith together with love and with basic moral values. It is concrete solidarity, effort, patience, and also a project, hope, a future. All this which the Christian community lives out in the light of faith, hope and charity should never be kept to oneself but must become, everyday, the leaven in the dough of the whole of society, for its greater common good.

Hope and a future presupposes memory. The memory of our elderly people sustains us as we journey on. The future of society is rooted in the elderly and in the young; the latter, because they are the strength and are of the age to carry history ahead; the former, because they are a living memory for us now. A people that does not take care of its elderly, its children and its youth has no future because it abuses both memory and promise.

Questions for Reflection

Who is the one person in my family whose faith has shaped my own faith?

What are some ways that our family tries to live out belief in God and his Body, the Church?

Which virtue seems to be particularly strong in our family – faith hope or charity?

Why is memory important to the future?

What strengths do the children of our family have?

Where there is charity and love, God is there!

"Never Judge A Day By Its Weather"

In a particular home, the Byzantine Catholic parents and children took turns offering the prayer of grace at the breakfast table. One gloomy, foggy, damp day, when the sun could not be seen, one eight year old boy prayed, "We thank you dear Lord, for this beautiful day and for our food which Your grace has provided....." Presuming he prayed simply from habit, his mother asked why he thanked God for a beautiful day when the weather was anything but beautiful. He astonished the entire family by his perceptive reply: "Mother, never judge a day by its weather!"

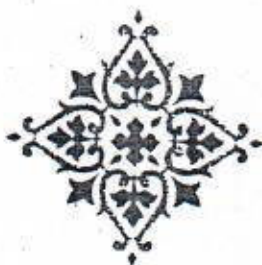
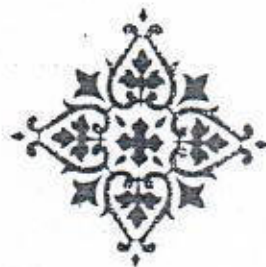
What amazing truths we sometimes learn from our children! Joseph in the Old Covenant recognized the very same truth. Several years after his brothers in jealousy sold him into slavery, he finally had the opportunity to confront them in Egypt where they, starving, came to seek food and assistance. He said, "You thought evil against me; but God meant it to be good." St. Paul learned to be content, however unfavorable his outward circumstances. He sang in prison. He also exhorts us give thanks *in*, not necessarily *for* everything. We do not have control of every circumstance in our lives, nor should we, but we know that everything can work toward good in our salvation if we permit God's grace to transcend it and transform it into a stepping stone instead of a stumbling block. Even when we cannot discern the good which will emerge for the benefit of our soul, we continue to trust in and praise our God because He rules and guides our lives. Thus, every day gives us an opportunity to revel in the new chance we have for renewing our relationship with Him and growing continually in holiness and perfection.

"This is the day which the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it" Psalm 118: 24. Each day is but a part of that greater purpose which our God is perfecting for each child who belongs to Him. In spite of what may confront us, our God has enduring plans for each of us who are believers. He desires our lives be enriched and ennobled. This is done a day at a time. He permits and utilizes all sorts of circumstances for this necessary spiritual growth to take place. Each day He renews His tender mercies and loving kindness towards us, so that greater will be our faithfulness. Unless we encounter adversity from time to time, how are we to enjoy and appreciate His blessings? Unless we appreciate the dismal reality of some days, how little would we come to know the true and lasting beauty of our God? When we see the presence of God's guiding hands in our daily living, our hearts and souls are filled with enduring trust. We sing His praises regardless of whatever transpires and interjects itself in our lives because we know our God permits and intends it to be the soil in which our deeper faith is anchored and given opportunity to express itself.

Each day should be looked upon as an opportunity for renewal and spiritual growth, for heavenly advancement. Blessed are they who see the presence of the Lord in each of our days which pass into eternal days when we shall be with Him forever!



TAKE THIS HE SAID *
THIS IS MY BODY *
MK 14 · 22



I MYSELF AM THE
LIVING BREAD *
JN 6 · 51

Home Rules

Always be honest
Count your blessings
Bear each other's burdens
Forgive and forget
Be kind and tenderhearted
Comfort one another
Keep your promises
Be supportive of one another
Be true to each other
Look after each other
Treat each other
like you treat your friends,
but most important,

Love One Another

God grant me the serenity
To accept the things
I cannot change;
Courage to change
the things I can;
And wisdom to know
the difference.



YOU Love ME

YOU LOVE ME, GOD; *I can be strong*
In the face of those who say I'm wrong.

YOU LOVE ME, GOD; *I can be free*
To express myself and just be me.

YOU LOVE ME, GOD; *I can be kind*
As you shine through both my heart and mind.

YOU LOVE ME, GOD, *so please help me*
To be the best me that I can be! ■



IN THIS HOUSE

We Do Second Chances

We Do Grace

We Do Real

We Do Real Faith

We Do Mistakes

We Do I'm Sorry

We Do Thank You

We Do Loud Really Well

We Do Hugs

We Do Family

We Do Love

**Have
purpose.**

**Love
your life.**

**Be
happy.**

**Control
your fate.**

**Respect
yourself.**

**Live
healthier.**

**Acquire
Virtue.**

**Pray
hard.**

Avoid occasions of sin.

JOB

Author—An unknown and gifted ancient who had inspiration and knowledge that only God could reveal to him. The authorship is attributed to an Israelite because of the repeated use of God's covenant name: YHWH. As transliterated from the Hebrew, it is commonly rendered, "Yahweh."

Date—There is some evidence that the life of Job was much earlier than the actual writing of the book. He is thought to have lived during the time of the patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—approximately 1600 BC.

Major Theme—*The justice of God in light of human suffering.* The major theme of the Book of Job is the profound theological problem of how the suffering of a just man relates to God in the midst of his testing. The theme of theodicy is explored throughout the book, with Job's friends attempting to provide the explanation for his suffering. The character of Job is a type of Christ who suffers unjustly and is rewarded for his godliness.

Background—Although this book is considered a Wisdom book, it is written as a poetic dialogue in a prose-narrative literary style. It is the longest ancient Hebrew poem that has ever been known to be composed. There was much difficulty throughout history with the various translations of this book because of the unusual language and style.

The Septuagint (Greek) translation is four hundred lines shorter than the accepted Hebrew text, perhaps because sections were omitted that were not understood. The ancient Syriac (Peshitta), Aramaic (Targum), and Latin (Vulgate) had similar translation difficulties.

In the Church, Job's words have been given a unique place at the end of the Divine Liturgy: "Blessed be the name of the Lord" (1:21).

Outline

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|--|---|
| I. Prologue (1:1—2:18) | III. Interlude on Wisdom (28:1—28) |
| A. Job's blessings (1:1—5) | IV. Monologues (29:1—42:6) |
| B. Job's testing (1:6—2:18) | A. Job's cry for vindication (29:1—31:40) |
| II. The Dialogues and Speeches (3:1—27:23) | B. Elihu's speeches (32:1—37:24) |
| A. Job's lament (3:1—26) | C. Discourses between God and Job (38:1—42:6) |
| B. First cycle of speeches (4:1—14:22) | V. Epilogue (42:7—22) |
| C. Second cycle of speeches (15:1—21:34) | A. God's verdict (42:7—9) |
| D. Third cycle of speeches (22:1—26:14) | B. Job's restoration (42:10—22) |
| E. Job's closing discourse (27:1—23) | |

Wisdom Of
The



Byzantine
Fathers

...person by person, become a choir, that being harmonious in love, taking up the song of God in unison, you all may, with one voice, singing to the Father through Jesus Christ, so that He may both hear you and perceive by your works that you are indeed members of his Son St. Ignatius of Antioch.

Even here in the Church the gradations of bishops, priests and deacons happens to be by imitation, in my opinion, of angelic glory and of the arrangements that scripture says, awaits those who have followed in the footsteps of the apostles and who have lived in complete righteousness according to the gospel St. Clement of Alexandria.

And before a man has, as far as possible, gained this superiority and sufficiently purified his mind and has far surpassed his fellows in nearness to God, I do not think it safe for him to be entrusted with rule over souls or the office of mediator, for such I understand it is what a priest is, between God and man St. Gregory the Theologian.

Knock, knock.
Who's there?

Behold, I stand at the door
and knock...



Reconciliation

Our Saviour came among us in the flesh in order to manifest God's enduring mercy for mankind. Because we stumble and fall in our pilgrimage journey toward our heavenly promised land, we who attempt to have communion with our heavenly Father notice very quickly our God is always ready to lift us up and restore us to grace-filled fellowship with him. Mercy is the essential hallmark of our God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is with a heart of mercy that He pities the miseries of his choice creation. The epistle of Titus says it best: *He saved us, not because of any righteous deed we had done, but because of his mercy* Titus 3: 5, for as the Psalms teach, *...for he is good, the Lord whose mercy endures forever and his faithfulness to all generations* Psalms 100: 5.

And the Psalm which is prayed by the priest and penitent before the Divine Liturgy begins, *Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness; in the greatness of your compassion wipe out my offense* Psalms 51: 3, 4. It is God's grace that flows into our souls from the mercy of God because we can do nothing good by ourselves according to the testimony of the Son of God. So our heavenly Father emphasizes for us the direct result of resurrection victory is the mercy of forgiveness of sin. Christ comes to the disciples on the very day of his triumphant victory and announces to them what heaven can now dispense to needy man because the victory over death has been achieved. *Whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven them; whose sins you retain, they are retained* John 20: 23.

So all the blessings and benefits which cover us from heaven are the result of God's vast mercy. When sin severs and separates us from the life of the Body of Christ, even from our very selves as his disciples, it is only reconciliation, penance, repentance that can restore us to communion with God once again. So our confession of sin, our repentance, our turn about is often referred to traditionally as the renewal of baptism, or as the re-establishment of that condition of life with God which was given us in the elementary initiatory sacramental Mysteries when we were inaugurated into discipleship with Christ. Certain grave sins or the prolonged separation from Holy Communion, do call for the act of sacramental penance.

When we violate the Ten Commandments we need to confess our sins in repentance. Also Christians living in communion with Christ are expected to humble themselves consciously before God and to receive the guidance of the church in Christian life explicitly by a spiritual father. It is the teaching of the Church that sacramental penance is necessary for those receiving Holy Communion when they have committed grave sin

or when they have been by their own activity separated from the Eucharistic meal on Sunday without valid reason. The only acceptable reason one can offer for absence at the Sunday Liturgy is illness so profound it does not permit us to come to Church or because we are physically away from the parish in which case we worship at church in that area. The only additional excuse is if we are working at the time of the celebration of the Eucharistic oblation. So this sacramental Mystery of mercy exists in the Church for repentance and reconversion of Christians who have fallen away from the life of faith.

There are three elementary main elements to the act of formal penance. First there is the necessity of sorrow for sin and of the breaking of friendship and communion with God. The second is an open and heartfelt confession of sin. The third element is the formal prayer of absolution through which the forgiveness of God through Christ is sacramentally extended mercifully to the repentant sinner. Thus, then follows the total and full reconciliation with the reception of the Body and Blood of the Saviour and genuine reconciliation of the repentant sinner with Almighty God and fellow believers according to the commandment of Christ. From this there obviously follows the necessity of a sincere attempt by the penitent to refrain from sin and to remain in that state of obedience to God and in uprightness of life before him and the faith community.

Of all the sacramental Mysteries, this particular one presupposes a firm belief and conviction that Christ himself is present in his Body, the Church through the grace of the Holy Spirit. A person without the experience of Jesus Christ in the Church will never understand what regular practice of confessing one's sin and apologizing to God for sin is vital for salvation. Only as we cherish a life of Christ in his Church will we also appreciate the necessity and blessing of heaven's mercies being poured into our soul.

This sacramental Mystery makes possible reunion with God after our willful separation, after our sinfulness. We know that only our God can forgive sin and this He chose to do through his disciples and their successors in the life of his Body and Bride, our Church. It is He who has advanced the necessity for repentance, for contrition, for sorrow, for absolute change in the soul of the sinner. This sacramental Mystery is offered us that our God may provide and even greater outpouring of his mercy on our soul that we, too, in utilizing its blessed grace, avail ourselves of his bountiful and enduring mercy.

Quoteable Quotes

"Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear – not absence of fear."
- Mark Twain

Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker

The veneration with which this saint has been honored in both East and West, the number of altars and churches erected in his memory, and the countless stories associated with his name all bear witness to something extraordinary about him. According to tradition, he was born at Patara, Lycia, a province of southern Asia Minor where St. Paul had planted the faith. Myra, the capital, was the seat of a bishopric founded by St. Nicander. The accounts of Nicholas given us by the Greek Church all say that he was imprisoned in the reign of Diocletian, whose persecutions, while they lasted, were waged with great



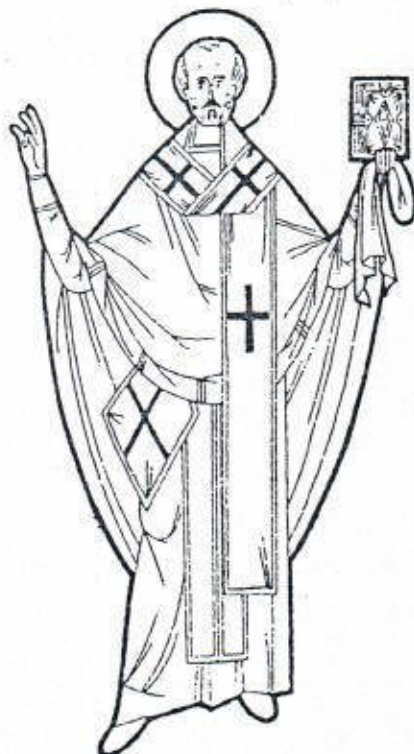
severity. Some twenty years after this he appeared at the Council of Nicaea to join in the condemnation of Arianism. We are also informed that he died at Myra and was buried in his cathedral. Such a wealth of literature has accumulated around Nicholas that we are justified in giving a brief account of some of the popular traditions.



He was very well brought up by pious and virtuous parents, who set him to studying the sacred books at the age of five. His parents died while he was still

young, leaving him with a comfortable fortune, which he resolved to use for works of charity. Soon an opportunity came. A citizen of Patara had lost all his money and his three daughters could not find husbands because of their poverty. In despair their wretched father was about to commit them to a life of shame. When Nicholas heard of this, he took a bag of gold and at night tossed it through an open window of the man's house. Here was a dowry for the eldest girl

ST. NICHOLAS



and she was quickly married. Nicholas did the same for the second and then for the third daughter. On the last occasion the father was watching by the window, and overwhelmed his young benefactor with gratitude.

It happened that Nicholas was in the city of Myra when the clergy and people were meeting together to elect a new bishop, and God directed them to choose him. This was at the time of Diocletian's persecutions at the beginning of the fourth century. The Greek writers go on to say that now, as leader, "the divine Nicholas was seized by the magistrates, tortured, then chained and thrown into

prison with other Christians. But when the great and religious Constantine, chosen by God, assumed the imperial diadem of the Romans, the prisoners were released from their bonds and with them the illustrious

Nicholas." St. Methodius adds that "thanks to the teaching of St. Nicholas, the metropolis of Myra alone was untouched by the filth of the Arian heresy, which it firmly rejected as a death-dealing poison." He does not speak of Nicholas' presence at the Council of Nicaea, but according to other traditions he was not only there but went so far in his indignation as to slap the arch-heretic Arius in the face! At this, they say, he was deprived of his episcopal insignia and imprisoned, but Our Lord and His Mother appeared and restored to him both his liberty and his office. Nicholas also took strong measures against paganism. He tore down many temples, among them one to the Greek goddess Artemis, which was the chief pagan shrine of the district.

Nicholas was also the guardian of his people in temporal affairs. The governor had been bribed to condemn three innocent men to death. On the day fixed for their execution Nicholas stayed the hand of the executioner and released them. Then he turned to the governor and reproved him so sternly that he repented. There happened to be present that day three imperial officers, Nepotian, Ursus, and Herpylion, on their way to duty in Phrygia. Later, after their return, they were imprisoned on false charges of treason by the prefect and an order was procured from the Emperor Constantine for their death. In their extremity they remembered the bishop of Myra's passion for justice and prayed to God for his intercession. That night Nicholas appeared to Constantine in a dream, ordering him to release the three innocent officers. The prefect had the same dream, and in the morning the two men compared their dreams, then questioned the accused officers. On learning that they had prayed for the intervention of Nicholas, Constantine freed them and sent them to the bishop with a letter asking him to pray for the peace of the world.

The traditions all agree that Nicholas was buried in his episcopal city of Myra. By the time of Justinian, some two centuries later, his feast was celebrated and there was a church built over his tomb. The ruins of this domed basilica, which stood in the plain where the city was built, were excavated in the nineteenth century. The tremendous popularity of the saint is indicated by an anonymous writer of the tenth century who declares: "The West as well as the East acclaims and glorifies him. Wherever there are people, in the country and the town, in the villages, in the isles, in the farthest parts of the earth, his name is revered and churches are erected in his honor." In 1034 Myra was taken by the Saracens. Several Italian cities made plans to get possession of the relics of the famous Nicholas. The citizens of Bari finally in 1087 carried them off from the lawful Greek custodians and their Moslem masters. A new church was quickly built at Bari. In the West St. Nicholas has often been invoked by prisoners, and in the East by sailors. One tradition has it that during his lifetime he appeared off the coast of Lycia to some storm-tossed mariners who invoked his aid, and he brought them safely to port. Sailors in the Aegean and Ionian seas had their "star of St. Nicholas" and wished one another safe voyages with the words, "May St. Nicholas hold the tiller."

St. Nicholas is particularly known for his love of children.

The Eastern saint was converted into a Nordic magician (Saint Nicholas—Sint Klaes—Santa Claus). His popularity was greatest of all in Russia, where he and St. Andrew were joint national patrons. There was not a church that did not have some sort of shrine in honor of St. Nicholas. So many Russian pilgrims came to Bari in Czarist times that the Russian government maintained a church, a hospital, and a hospice there. St. Nicholas is also patron of Greece, Apulia, Sicily, and Lorraine, of many cities and dioceses.



God gave Moses the 10 Commandments
(Exodus 20)



Moses and the burning bush(Exodus 3)



Numbers

Q A F L N Q A P R C R D T E B S
 N S E S O M G C E E E U C S G E
 S E L B I B G N O S U I L N T B
 E T Y C M P S O I N V B I E E I
 C I E S A U E M D R D R E G S R
 N L N T S N O N E Z E E P N T T
 I E R Q R R A S T F W B M O A B
 R A U L P L Z A F A L O M N M B
 P R O V I S I O N S T E B U E Z
 B S J C N K U D J Q D E G A N D
 H I R O S S E C C U S R U A T D
 T E R U T R A P E D Z H O C L E
 I A S M I R I A M V S T Q C H S
 A A T N U O M X S O Y L R A E E
 F T G S E I P S J N Z S G U D R
 E S T A B L I S H T R U O F X T

AARON

BIBLE

CANAAN

CENSUS

CONDEMNED

DEPARTURE

DESERT

EARLY history

ESTABLISH cities

FAITH

FOURTH book

GOD

ISRAELITES

JOSHUA

JOURNEY

LAND distribution

LEGAL matters

MIRIAM

MOAB

MOSES

MOUNT Sinai

NUMBERING

OFFERINGS

PENTATEUCH

PRINCES

PROMISED land

PROVISIONS

RECORDS

REUBEN

Marriage RULES

SERVICE

SPIES

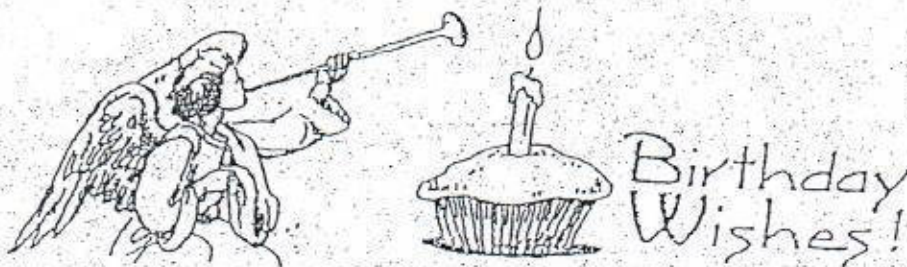
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Old TESTAMENT

THREE sections

TRIBES

WANDERINGS



We are pleased to greet those of our faithful communicants who celebrate their birthday this month. Our Lord has offered these souls yet another year of blessed life. The most obvious way He blesses us and participates in our life is by sharing his divine life with us in the Eucharist at the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. Thus we gather together and offer thanks for yet another year of life blessed by his most gracious hands. Today, we prayerfully remember in the Divine Liturgy the following souls who celebrate their birthday during this month:

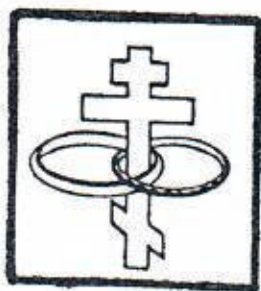
December 2 Father Robert E Lucas

December 3 Nikita Tsokris

December 29 Robert Henry

With a prayerful heart and grateful soul, our parish faith community asks the Lord to continue to bless these birthday celebrants with good spiritual and physical health for the coming year. We invite all to add their personal intercessory prayers so that with one voice and one heart we may also participate in the grace and joy of their celebration. As we wish them a happy and blessed celebration of their birthday, our ardent prayer resounds that the Lord our God will continue to bless them for

Many and Blessed Years!



WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

The Byzantine Fathers of the Church were wont to emphasize how ancient and how venerable marriage is in the sight of our God because it was established yet in paradise before the fall of Adam and Eve and brought to blessed perfection by Christ in Cana of Galilee. Its grace survived the sin of our first parents and it remains a sign of the presence of the Holy Trinity in our midst. It is a living symbol of the deep and abiding love between Christ and His Bride, our blessed Church. It is characterized in the liturgical life of the Church as a happy martyrdom. And it is precisely for this reason the sacramental Mystery of Marriage is such a joyous event. On the third Sunday of this month, we honor those of our good parishioners who observe their marriage anniversaries this month. They are specially remembered in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy and subsequently receive an individual and personal blessing of the Lord at its conclusion. Celebrating this month are:

December 2 Joseph & Kyra Choti

December 6 Robert & Joan Henry

We gratefully give thanks to the Blessed Trinity for having guided and strengthened the marriages of these believers, and their cooperation with sacramental grace to remain faithful to one another over the years. Like all who are faithful to Christ, they recognize the presence and necessity of the Holy Spirit not only in the marriage, but in subsequent family life as well. As we praise our God for their witness in our midst, let us also join them with our prayers and thanksgiving before the throne of the Lord. May they continue to praise His Holy Name by their love and devotion to one another for

Many and Blessed Years

MARTYRS FROM THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH

During the first three hundred years of the Christian Church, people believed in Christ and worshipped Him at the risk of their lives. This was the era of cruel persecutions by the pagan Roman Empire. Countless numbers of men, women and children were tortured and killed because of their faith. This was the age of martyrdom. In spite of all this, the Church grew in numbers day upon day. It has been well said: "The blood of the martyrs became the seed of the Church."

One of these martyrs was **ST. BARBARA**, who lived in the late third century. Her father was Dioscorus, a heathen. He isolated his lovely daughter in a tower, but she came to hear of Jesus Christ, believed in Him, and became a Christian.

Dioscorus was furious when he found out that Barbara had been baptized and had embraced the Christian faith. He denounced her to the civil authorities. The magistrate, Marcian, was captivated by her beauty and tried to persuade Barbara to deny Christ and to sacrifice to the pagan gods. She would have no part of it, and was then beaten and taken to prison. She was later executed by the sword.

The Troparion for the day of her remembrance sums up the thinking of the Church about her: "Let us honor St. Barbara the holy one, for she destroyed the wiles of the enemy and escaped from them like a bird, through the help and shield of the Cross."

What a need there is in our day for Christians to serve their Lord with such loyalty and dedication as expressed in the lives of the early saints. We bear their names, but not their deeds! May we emulate them as they followed Christ the Lord.

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