



# **Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church**

**24 BURKE ROAD**

**FREEHOLD, NJ 07728**

**Sunday Of Orthodoxy**

**March 20, 2016**

**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**

**+++ This Friday is the solemn feast of the Annunciation. In anticipation, the Divine Liturgy will be celebrated Thursday evening at 7:00 PM. Please come and join us in prayer and praise.**



+++ This Saturday is the second All Souls Day along with the Synaxis of St. Gabriel the Archangel. The Divine Liturgy and Memorial Service will be celebrated at 9: 00 AM. Please come and join us in prayer for our departed souls.

+++ May this season of the Great Fast be an encouragement to all of us in growth of the soul in our advancement towards heaven.

+++ There will be no Pirohi Sale in March.

+++ Please keep the intentions of these members of our parish intercession community in your daily prayers: Barbara, Betty, James, Yevlogia, Nicholas, Maria, Cynthia, Patricia, 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, \$238.00; Candles, \$14.00; Kitchen, \$4219.00; Special Gift, \$1300.00; Self Sacrifice Gift, \$10.00; Food Coupons, \$120.00; for a total of \$5888.00. 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 \$1860.00 from this apostolate. Even your pennies can help and are a blessing to our parish.

+++ Please be certain to see a member of the Parish Council if you would like to help our parish by using **Shop Rite Food Coupons** available in \$20.00 denominations. We invite **ALL** to be caring and supportive and use Grocery Coupons for food shopping as we have gratefully realized \$6750 on this project to date!

+++ The Clothing Drive is a permanent on-going project in our parish. Please bring any type of clothing and fabrics along with stuffed animals and shoes for the benefit of our parish. The bags can be left in the vestibule or on the front porch of the rectory. Please invite your friends and neighbors to assist us in disposing of unwanted clothing, shoes and fabrics.

+++ We invite all pray the Lord our God grants us the grace of enrichment of our spiritual lives for his glory.

LORD



TEACH  
US

### Dealing With Parents And In-Laws

*For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh, so they are no longer two, but one* Mark 10: 7, 8.

*Honor your father and mother which is the first commandment with a promise: that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on earth* Ephesians 6: 2, 3.

*A wise son heeds his father's instructions, but a mocker does not listen to rebuke* Proverbs 13: 1.

*Listen my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching. They will be a garland to grace your head and a chain to adorn your neck* Proverbs 1: 8, 9.

*Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves* Romans 12: 10.

*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves* Philippians 2: 3.

*He who robs his father and drives out his mother is a son who brings shame and disgrace* Proverbs 19: 26.

*Listen to your father who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old* Proverbs 23: 22.



## **WISDOM! BE ATTENTIVE**

*We bow before Your sacred image, O gracious Lord, and beg forgiveness for our offenses, O Christ our God; for You, of Your own will, deigned to ascend the Cross in Your human nature to deliver from bondage to the enemy those whom You created. Wherefore we gratefully cry out to You: "Through Your coming to save the world, O Saviour, You have filled all with joy". Troparion, Sunday of the Holy Images.*

*O Mother of God, through you in the Incarnation, the indescribable Word of God became describable, for through the divine goodness the Word spoken from eternity became an Image. May we who believe in salvation clothe ourselves with the same Image both in word and deed Kontakion, Sunday of the Holy Images.*

*Blessed are You and worthy of praise, O Lord God of our fathers, and glorious forever is Your Name. Prokimenon, Sunday of the Holy Images.*

*In you, O Woman, full of grace, the angelic choirs and the human race - all creation -rejoices. In you, O sanctified Temple, mystical Paradise and Glory of virgins, He Who is our God from before all ages became a child. For He made your womb into a throne and made it greater than the heavens. In you, O Woman full of grace, all creation rejoices. Praise be to you! Hymn Instead of "It is Truly Proper", Sunday of the Holy Images.*

*In truth, the Church of Christ is adorned with the finest ornament by the holy icons of Christ our Saviour, of the Holy Mother of God and of all the glorified saints. In keeping the icon of Christ which we praise and venerate, we do not risk being led astray. May those who do not believe this be put to confusion. For it is our kneeling before the incarnate Son and the veneration of His icon that is a glory for us Vesper Hymn, Sunday of the Holy Images.*

## From the Apostles

Our loving and merciful Father decreed in the Law of the Old Covenant, that the sons of Israel give tithes each year of all they possessed and if they did so they would be bountifully and generously blessed in all their endeavors.

The holy apostles, knowing this law was for the assistance and advancement of souls, decided it should also be fulfilled in a higher and more perfect way, that it should be pervasive in the very lives of believers. Thus they commanded us to dedicate a tithe of our lives each liturgical year in order to consecrate them to God that we might be blessed in all our works and relieved of the burden and weight of sin.

The season of the Great Fast is the tithe of spiritual commitment to Christ. It is roughly one tenth of the year devoted entirely to God, the mortification of our flesh and the overcoming of sin. The holy apostles thus consecrated through tithing a portion of the year to achieve repentance for the annual cleansing from sin, so necessary to worthily celebrate the Resurrection of Christ.

Whoever keeps careful watch over himself as is proper during these days will be rewarded, even if as a human being, weak as he is, has sinned in weakness or carelessness, but aspires after and achieves repentance and sorrow for sin. God has offered us these days so that by diligence and abstinence, particularly from sin, in humility and repentance, a person may be cleansed of sins and his soul relieved of this burden.

Purified and being made a new reborn person through change of heart produced by sincere fasting and serious penance, the believer goes forth to the holy day of the Resurrection. He takes part in the holy Mysteries and benefits from their grace and remains in spiritual joy and happiness, feasting then with the Lord for the whole fifty days until Pentecost. The time of the Passover, as it has been said, is the Resurrection of the soul. The outward sign of this is that we do not kneel in church during the victory season.

Everyone desiring to purify himself of the sins of the year during the Great Fast must first of all restrain himself from the pleasure of eating because it is this that caused all man's evil. Likewise a person must take care not to break the fast without necessity or to look for pleasurable things to ingest. Neither should he weigh himself down



by overeating and overdrinking until he is full.

There are two kinds of gluttony. One concerns taste. A person does not eat much, but he wants it to be particularly tasty. Such a person derives pleasure from the food he eats and is spiritually defeated by this attitude.

Another person is concerned only with filling or satiating himself. He does not ask for tasty or fancy food; he only wants to eat to fill his stomach. Literally, he lives to eat rather than eating to live. Both forms of gluttony must be guarded against and abandoned by one who desires to be cleansed of sin. They are not in accord with bodily needs but with vicious bodily passion. When they are tolerated, they lead a person into deep sin and alienation from salvation and God.

We must not only keep a sharp watch over our diet, but we must also keep away from all other kinds of sins., so that as our stomach fasts, so also may our tongue as we abstain from slander, calumny, deceit, idle talk, railing anger and all other vices which have their source within us.

Let our eyes keep the fast as well by not looking at trivialities, not letting

themselves wander freely. Let us also fast with the hands and feet; not allowing them to carry us to places not beneficial for our soul.

Leaving behind all the evil to which our senses are inclined, may we come to the holy day of the Lord's Resurrection renewed and cleansed and made worthy to share in the holy Mysteries as a continuing and important way of life – St. Dorotheos of Gaza.

## Be Strong!

Be strong!

We are not here to play, to dream or drift;

We have hard work to do, and loads to lift.

Shun not the struggle; face it,  
It is God's gift.

Be strong!

Say not the days are evil; who's to blame?

Or fold your hands as in defeat; O shame!

Stand up, speak out and bravely,  
in God's name.

Be strong!

It matters not how deep entrenched the wrong,

How hard the battle goes, the day how long.

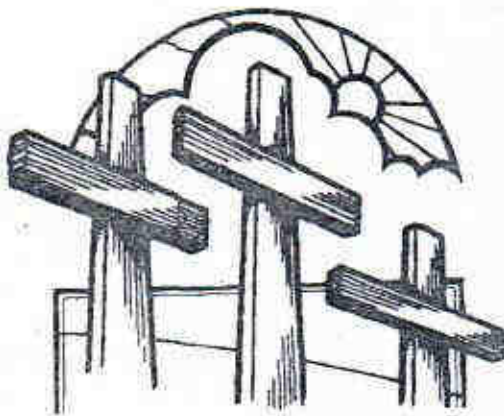
Faint not, fight on!  
Tomorrow comes the song!

# WORKING FOR THE FUTURE...

## The Beatitudes \*

- 3    <sup>a</sup> "How blest are the poor in spirit:  
     the reign of God is theirs. <sup>b</sup>
- 4    Blest too are the sorrowing; they shall  
     be consoled. <sup>c</sup>
- 5    [Blest are the lowly; they shall inherit  
     the land.] <sup>d</sup>
- 6    Blest are they who hunger and thirst  
     for holiness;  
     they shall have their fill. <sup>e</sup>
- 7    Blest are they who show mercy;  
     mercy shall be theirs. <sup>\*</sup>
- 8    Blest are the single-hearted <sup>\*</sup>  
     for they shall see God. <sup>f</sup>
- 9    Blest too the peacemakers; <sup>\*</sup> they  
     shall be called sons of God.
- 10   Blest are those persecuted for holiness'  
     sake; <sup>\*</sup> the reign of God is theirs. <sup>g</sup>
- 11   Blest are you when they insult you and  
     persecute you and utter every kind  
     of slander against you because of  
     me. <sup>h</sup>
- 12   Be glad and rejoice, for your reward  
     is great in heaven;  
     they persecuted the prophets before  
     you in the very same way. <sup>i</sup>





### *Our Goal For The Great Fast*

"But when Jesus heard  
that, he said unto them,  
They that be whole  
need not a physician,  
but they  
which are sick."  
(Matthew 9:12)

This prayer from the Presanctified  
Liturgy defines our task for the Great Fast:

*Almighty God, Who made all creation  
in wisdom  
and by Your inexpressible providence  
and goodness  
has brought us to these holy days  
for the purification of body and soul  
for the controlling of our bodily  
passions  
for the hope of the Resurrection,  
Who, during the forty days gave the  
Covenant into the hands of  
Moses in characters divinely written by  
You:  
Enable us also, O Holy One, to fight  
the good fight;  
to accomplish the course of the Fast;  
to preserve in wholeness the Faith;  
to crush under foot the heads of  
invisible serpents;  
to be counted a victor over sin;  
and so uncondemned to attain  
the holy Resurrection.  
For all honor and glory is given to  
your noble and worthy Name,  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
now and ever,  
and unto ages of ages.  
Amen.*

## So That You May Grow

There are many things that you and I as mortals cannot do; we must depend on the Creator and Sustainer of life to do them for us. But there are so many more things that we can do, and God expects us to use our brains, our bodies, our energies and our talents to do them, in order that we may grow.

What are some of the things God expects us to do? First, He expects us to bounce back from our setbacks, to overcome our obstacles, and to rise above our adversities. In His infinite wisdom, He wants us to exercise our abilities, to stretch our spiritual muscles, and to grow strong in the process.

Second, God expects us to transform negatives into positives, and to see the possibilities in our problems, and to turn burdens into blessings. By so doing, we grow in character and in wisdom.

Third, God expects us, as His children, to be instruments of love, peace and good will. He expects us to be expressions of joy, harmony and generosity. He wants others to see God in us, to experience God through us, and to enjoy with us. God does not physically hug the lonely person; He gives to us that privilege and responsibility. He does not verbally encourage the distressed and despondent individual; that is what you and I are here to do. God does not take food to one who hungers; He hands that opportunity to us, so that we may grow and be blessed.

"God will do everything you can't do, so that you may live; He will do nothing you can do, so that you may grow."

## Anchor Cross

The anchor is a symbol of the Christian's hope in Christ. "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure" (Hebrews 6:19, NIV).

The early Christians used this cross during the days of persecution.

They saw hope in the anchor's cross, while non-Christians saw nothing but an anchor.



Perhaps the words of the Carpenter, promising rest, are so compelling because of our endless desire and quest to rest—not just to rest in the body, but to rest the heart, to find peace, to finally settle down in a valley fertile with contentment.

*Come to me, all of you who are tired and have heavy loads, and I will give you rest.*

MATTHEW 11:28



# Did You Know That ...

- ...a smile loosens stiff hearts and melts angry icebergs?
- ...you should never confuse your means with your meaning?
- ...there are those who do and those who wouldacouldashoulda?
- ...honestly, simplicity is the best policy?
- ...you can never have enough of a real thing?
- ...man should not consider his material possessions his own, but common to all, so as to share them without hesitation when others are in need?
- ...everyone is the age of their heart?
- ...we should close the door on a dark past?
- ...you should not try to forget mistakes, but don't dwell on them?
- ...past sins should not have any of your energy, or any of your time, or any of your space?
- ...just as no one can force you into belief, so no one can be forced into disbelief?
- ...you cannot sweep other people off their feet, if you cannot be swept off your own?
- ...instead of looking at life as a narrowing funnel, we can see it ever widening to choose the things we desire, to take the wisdom we learned and create something lasting for ourselves?
- ...freedom means choosing your own burden?
- ...scripturally speaking, freedom is being free from sin by God's grace?
- ...it is those who have a deep and real inner life who are best able to deal with the irritating details of outer life?

## PRAYERS FOR THE DEAD

There has never been any doubt that the merciful Father wanted us to be concerned in fraternal charity about our loved ones after He called them from this earthly existence. Even before the coming of the Messiah, and His revelation, we find this rather clear statement of fact in the Old Testament:

"It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they be loosed from their sins." (II Machabees 12:46).

Because the souls of the faithful departed are unable to obtain help for themselves, but can be aided by our prayers, the Church, since its very inception has taught her children never to cease offering prayers for the dead. To the Pharisees, who accused Him of casting out devils by the power of the devil, the King of Eternal Life said:

"All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him, but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." (Matthew 12:31,32).

Looking upon this statement of Christ, we conclude it furnishes the highest authority for believing that the Church is neither limited to time or space, as she so ardently maintains. We must advance and maintain the efficacy of prayer for the souls of the faithful departed or we must abandon the deeply felt and cherished belief in the sublime importance of prayer and intercession and place a broad limitation on the sacred promise made by mankind's Saviour:

"Whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive." (Matthew 21,22).

The catacombs of ancient Christianity deliver to us an eloquent argument for the acceptance by the early Church of an intimate union with the souls of the beloved dead. On innumerable tombs are inscribed epitaphs which are immortal testimonies to the faith of Christ's early followers in life after death and the absolute necessity for offering to God oblations, prayers, and sacrifices for their salvation.

Many illustrations in the catacombs can be brought forward and all exhibit ample proof that the early Christians believed that death interposes no barrier to the prayers of those who they left behind in the world. The writings of the early Fathers of the Church particularly supply abundant evidence of the common practice of praying for the dead.

At the Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D., a discussion took place which intimately concerns itself with this problem. A certain Dioscurus was admonished by the Fathers as he had failed to fulfill a sacred trust delegated to him. He was accused of failing to perform the very least that was required of him in reference to the dead — he had not even offered incense to God to commemorate the dead. It is quite obvious that such a matter would never have reached the concern of the Council had



it been an act which the Church disallowed as contrary to her teaching and practice.

The blessed Augustine says,

"It has come down to us from the Fathers, and is universally held in the Church, that we should pray for those who died in the Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ when they are commemorated in their proper place at the Sacrifice." (De Verbi Apostoli, V).

St. Ambrose, admonishing Gratian and Valentinian, thus speaks:

Blessed are you both, if my prayers shall be of any avail! No day shall pass by you in silence, no prayer of mine shall pass over you unhonored, night shall fly past you without receiving the boon of some earnest prayer. I will attend you with all my oblations." (De Obitu Valentiniani Consolatio 78).

He further states that if we have loved them during life, we should not abandon them after death, but by our prayers, ask that they have peaceful rest in eternity with God.

Epiphanius argues that the Church has no other alternative but to perform this duty because she received it as a traditional practice from the hands of the Fathers. St. John Chrysostom goes to the extent of saying that the practice received Apostolic sanction:

"... not in vain was this law laid down by the Apostles." (Hom. iii, ad Philip).

Eusebius, the historian of the early Church narrates how at the tomb of Constantine:

"... a vast crowd of people, in company with the priests of God, with tears and lamentation offered their prayers to God for the emperor's soul." (Vita Constantini, libro iv.)

Again Blessed Augustine in his "Confessions" brings before us his own practice. After minutely describing his feelings at the burial of his mother, he gives the very words of the prayers which he offered in her behalf, after God had bound up the wounds of his broken heart.

"I pour out unto Thee, our God, tears of a far different kind for Thy handmaid; ... although she, having been quickened in Christ even before she was released from the burden of the flesh, had so lived that Thy name should be praised by her faith and conversation, yet I dare not say that since Thou didst regenerate her in baptism, no word fell from her lips in violation of Thy commandment; ... I therefore, O God of my heart, my praise and my life, setting aside for awhile her good deeds for which I gladly give Thee thanks, do now entreat Thee for my mother's sins."

Arnobius, writing a vivid description of the persecution of Christians near the conclusion of Diocletian's reign, that reach such proportions that Sacred Scripture was ordered to be burned, and churches razed to the ground, raises the question:

"What have our places of assembly done that they should be so cruelly destroyed, in which we pray to the Most High God, and seek peace and pardon for all men; for magistrates, armies, kings, friends, and

foes; for those still living, and for those who have been set free from the bondage of the flesh?" (Adv. Gen. IV. 36).

Tertulian brings to a close the testimony of the early Fathers by frequent reference to the prevalence of the custom.

"We offer the oblations for the dead on the anniversary of their birth." (De. C. Mil. c.3). In another instance, speaking of a widowed Christian woman, he states,

"She prays for his (her husband's) soul, and requests refreshment for him meanwhile, and fellowship in the first resurrection; and she offers sacrifice on the anniversaries of his falling asleep." (De Monogam. c.10).

This chain of Patristic evidence which carries us back to the second century is corroborated by the service books of the Church. In these, it is quite obvious that the religious sentiment and pious opinions and feelings of the faithful find expression. There is no doubt that the Apostles attached great importance to the most sacred ordinance of renewing the redemptive act of Calvary in the sacrifice of the Divine Liturgy. There is no question but that its infinite graces were applied to the souls of the faithful departed.

The Liturgy of St. James, the earliest compiled formal worship of the Church includes the following prayer:

"Remember O Lord God, the spirits of all flesh, of whom we have made mention, and of whom we have not made mention, who are of the true faith from righteous Abel unto this day; do Thou Thyself give them rest there in the land of the living, in Thy kingdom, in the delight of Paradise, in the bosom of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, our holy fathers; whence pain and grief and lamentation have fled away; there the light of Thy countenance looks upon them, and gives them light forever."

Likewise in the Coptic Liturgy of St. Cyril, we read:

"Be merciful, O Lord, grant rest to our fathers and brothers, who have fallen asleep, and whose souls Thou hast received. Remember also all the saints who have pleased Thee since the world began."

From the preceding citations, where the future state is referred to, followers of Christ felt it was a holy and pious thing to pray for the dead as the scriptures convinced them to believe that a man's final disposition is not reached until the day of judgement; and though the Church in all her supplications breathes the spirit of a sure and certain hope, yet so long as the final judgement is delayed, the prayers and the offering of requiem Liturgies is certainly in accordance with pious Christian instincts and the traditions of the Church.

Members of Christ's Church today should gain merit for their own souls by ever remembering their beloved dead both in their private prayers, in their devotions and by having the most perfect prayer, the sacrifice of the altar offered for them. Certainly if Heaven receives an abundance of our solicitations for our beloved departed dead, not only will their souls benefit, but our spiritual lives will become enriched because we have concerned ourselves with the welfare of others in the Christian spirit.



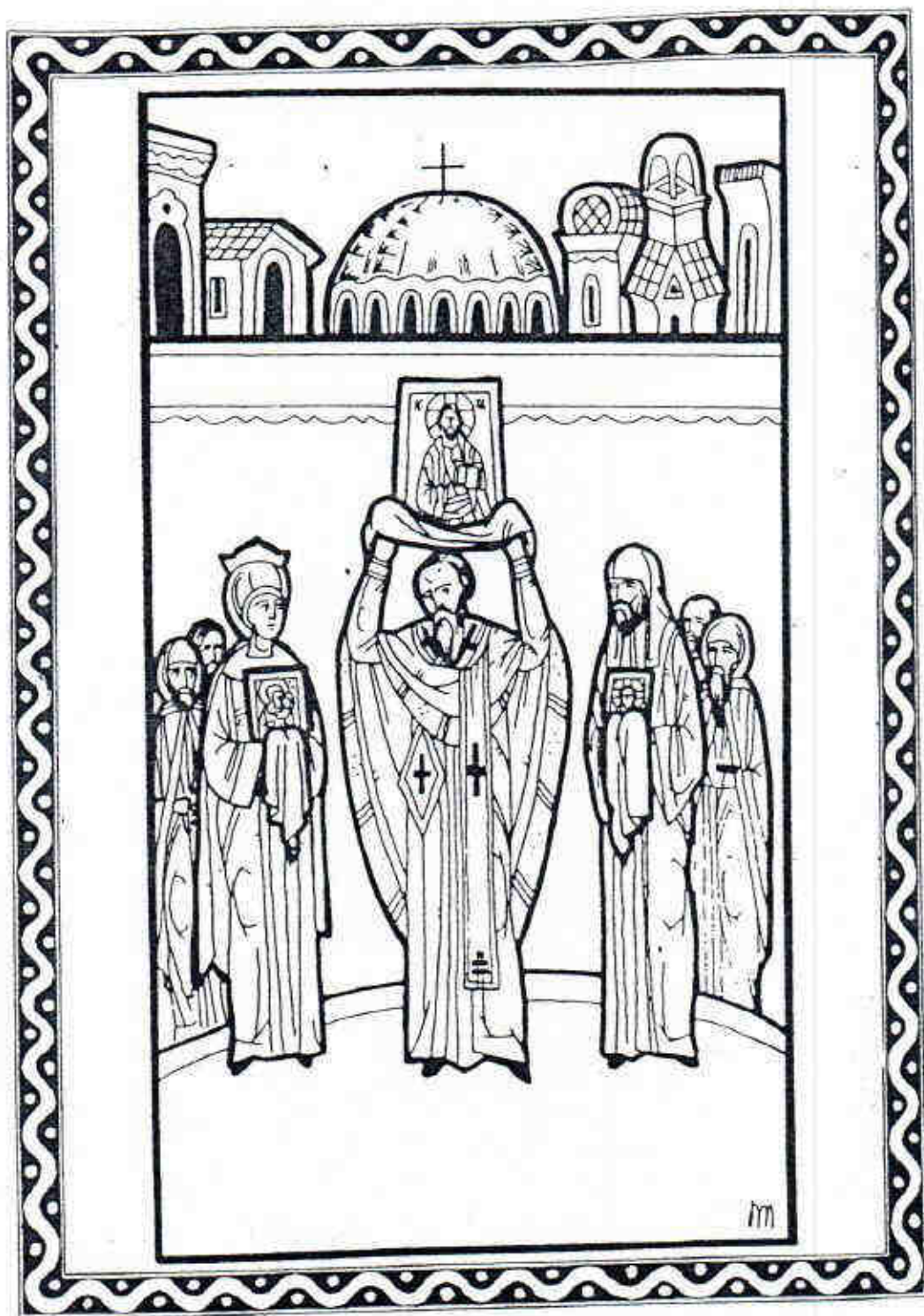
True followers of Christ should never forget the souls of their beloved in eternity for lack of prayers. The promptings of generosity in offering our time and means can be intimately concerned about those who have preceded us in death. It is not unlikely that the same generous devotion will be favorably received by some soul, perhaps yet unborn, who will in turn offer prayers and sacrifices for the repose of our soul when at last we are called to eternity.

Man can never estimate the countless numbers who will be admitted into the many mansions of Christ simply because Christians cared enough to petition God for mercy on their souls. Man yet on earth is in a distinctly advantageous position because he has an opportunity to show his love for souls in need of prayers. One cannot consider himself an ideal Christian or a devoted follower of the Saviour who has not of his time and means contributed in asking the salvation of the souls of our beloved departed dead by personal prayers, devotions and requesting frequently that the Sacrifice of the Liturgy be offered for their repose.

Rev. Robert E. Lucas.



GOD WILL WIPE AWAY EVERY  
TEAR FROM THEIR EYES; THERE  
WILL BE NO MORE DEATH, NOR  
SORROW, NOR CRYING; AND THERE  
SHALL BE NO MORE PAIN, FOR THE  
FORMER THINGS HAVE PASSED  
AWAY. *REVELATION 21*





## THE SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY

The Sunday of Orthodoxy is a celebration of a spiritual homecoming. On this feast we remember the restoration of Holy Icons to their rightful place in Orthodox teaching and understanding, in our local parish churches and homes and in individual lives and daily piety of all believers in Jesus Christ.

Holy Icons had been banished from the Church by the heretical Emperor Leo in 730 AD, but in 787, the Seventh Ecumenical Council, meeting in Nicea, upheld the tradition concerning the proper veneration of sacred images of the Lord and his saints as well as sacred events in salvation history. Bitter struggles followed between iconoclasts and true believers for the next half century. In 843, though, Empress Theodora sealed a decisive victory for the Orthodox teaching and on the first Sunday of the Great Fast, restored holy icons to the churches in a majestic procession. Ever since that day, Orthodox faithful have re-enacted this mighty work of God by processions and commemoration of all who strove and suffered and died in that era for the fullness of True Faith in the Incarnate God.

Icons are not mere decorative art; rather, they are a necessary component of our belief in the Word made flesh. Icons speak with unmatched eloquence of the way of salvation. They preach the high calling which is ours in Christ Jesus. They proclaim the Apostolic promise of "...Christ in you, the hope of glory" Colossians 1:27. They inspire us and exhort us to put aside all worldly cares so that we may receive the King of all within our very being, so that we may be transformed, so that we may radiate His glory and grace and mercy.

According to our Orthodox tradition, holy icons do much more than simply teach. Holy icons bless us as well. They bless us with power and healing; they bless us with conviction of sin and repentance; they bless us with assurance and hope and God's grace. For, as the Apostle Paul declares, "God, who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness,' is the one who has shone in our hearts to give the light of knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" 2 Corinthians 4: 6. Through every icon, the face of Christ shines forth upon us as well. Through every representation of his image, whether in the icons of the Lord himself or of the saints in whom Christ himself lives, the knowledge and presence of God is granted us.

Therefore, as Orthodox Christians, we chant aloud this day, "Your spotless icon, O Good One, we venerate, beseeching forgiveness of our sins, Christ our true God..." Dismissal hymn, Sunday of Orthodoxy. For in beholding the beauty of the Lord, in receiving the grace of his countenance and, in recognizing the heights of his divine glory, we are at the same time come to know the very depth of our sinful condition, we realize how far we have fallen short of the glory of God. Like the Prodigal Son, we come to our senses and consider our former dignity, our present misery and our future hope. We cherish the presence of our Father. We yearn for the uncreated light of His countenance. We seek once again the authentic personhood, the genuine humanity which we once had but now have lost through disobedience and sin.

In this sense, the Sunday of Orthodoxy celebrates a still more profound and spiritual homecoming. Humanity was fashioned in the image and likeness of God, but through sin and disobedience we have distorted and effaced the divine image which we were intended to bear. In our unique Orthodox understanding of sin and redemption, the work of salvation is nothing less than the restoration of the image of God within us, "What you have done is put aside your old self with its past deeds and put on a new man, one who grows in the image of his Creator Colossians 3: 10; "All of us, gazing on the Lord's glory with unveiled faces, are being transformed from glory to glory, into his very image by the Lord who is the Spirit" 2 Corinthians 3: 18, through the grace of the Holy Spirit who abides in us and heals us and renews us. Holy Icons depict human nature as it is truly meant to be: a reflection of the very energies of God.

By God's grace we recover and purify the image of Christ within us – we become partakers of the divine nature, "By virtue of them, he has bestowed on us the great and precious things he promised, so that through those you who have fled a world corrupted by lust might become sharers of the divine nature" 2 Peter 1: 4, through the Holy Mysteries of the Church, through keeping to the commandments of God and through prayer and fasting and alms - giving. It is especially appropriate, therefore, that the annual remembrance and commemoration of the homecoming of holy icons falls in this blessed season of the Great Fast, for the message of icons and the purpose of the Great Fast are one and the same. We fast and pray and venerate holy icons so that like the saints, we ourselves may become true icons, true images of the Lord Jesus Christ. We labor in faith so that we too may say with the great Apostle Paul, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and delivered himself up for me" Galatians 2: 20.



The powers of darkness oppose our efforts for salvation. Like the iconoclasts of old who attacked holy icons with axes and torches, the forces of the evil one strive always to deface, destroy and defile the image of God in humanity. For what portrays evil in our modern society better than the Orwellian image of a boot trampling a human face? All of the great crimes against humanity in this country – legalized abortion, genocide around the globe, racism, pornography, sexual perversion, child abuse – are these not also a devaluation of the image of God in our selves? Are these not degradations of the dignity of God in our fellow human beings? "...then we curse man, though they are made in the likeness of God" James 3: 9.

We are exhorted to honor the image of the invisible God which shines forth to bless us from the faces of holy icons and within the dignity of our own being. Honor the image of God in yourselves purifying and brightening it through this holy season of prayer and fasting and repentance. Honor the image of God in others by speaking out for the oppressed, by assisting the needy, by working for justice, and by helping the helpless. Unquestionably, those who honor the person of Jesus Christ in the least of his brethren (Matthew 25: 40, 45), will be honored on the day of judgment with the never – ending reward of beholding for all time the face of the immortal King and our God. "They shall see him face to face, and bear his name on their foreheads" Revelation 22: 4.



ST.  
EPHREM

THE  
SYRIAN





## *St. Ephrem the Syrian*

St. Ephrem the Syrian is venerated by the holy Church as a great and God-bearing teacher of repentance and interior purification and transformation. Achieving true spirituality, he witnesses that each Christian believer has this as the highest purpose in life.

He was born in a poor pious family. In his youth he was irritable, quarrelsome, even blasphemous. Once he was imprisoned, having been accused of stealing sheep. While imprisoned, he underwent a spiritual change; the Lord called him to repentance and it was so deep that he was completely reborn spiritually. Upon being released, he went to the Syrian desert and became an ascetic.

He nourished himself on the plants of the region and being a teacher of repentance, he began each sermon from a severe conviction of his own sins. He wrote many remarkable prayers which are used in the Church of Jesus Christ today, including the penitential, "O Lord and Master of my life!..." which is such an integral part of the spiritual dimension of the Great Fast. He is remembered in the life of the Church on January 28 as well as on the very first Sunday of this most sacred time of the liturgical year.

"O holy Ephrem, your constant meditation on the final judgment made you shed abundant tears of sorrow, making of your labors examples that we would follow and emulate, awakening the slothful to repentance. You are indeed a father of high renown" Kontakion of St. Ephrem the Syrian.

## Antiochian Christians

The earliest Church in Antioch owes its origin to the dispersal of believers after the martyrdom of St. Stephen the deacon. A number found themselves in the old city of Antioch, the center of Arabic population, "...making the message known to none but the Jews" Acts of the Apostles 11: 19. But some among the new converts began to speak of the truth of Christ to Greeks and local inhabitants who were mainly Syrians. God's grace was abundant so that in very short time, there was a host of converts. "News of this eventually reached the ears of the Church in Jerusalem resulting in Barnabas being sent to Antioch" Acts of the Apostles 11: 22.

Barnabas labored among them for a while, then went off after St. Paul, and having found him, brought him back to Antioch. "For a whole year, they met with the Church and instructed great numbers" Acts of the Apostles 11: 26. The Church gradually grew in numbers and in faith commitment. It soon became a center for learning when a renown Catechetical school was established for educational and evangelical purposes.

In short time, St. Peter became the first bishop of Antioch prior to going onto Rome. This community was blessed with illustrious spiritual leaders. St. John Chrysostom in the fourth century, himself of Syrian origin, testifies that St. Ignatius of Antioch was consecrated third bishop of the see at the hands of St. Peter the Apostle. It is to this faith community that the famous hymnologist of the Eastern Church, St. Ephrem the Syrian owes his origin.

The Church in this community gradually grew so that it eventually became a center of faith in the area, growing in prestige to one of the ancient Patriarchates of the Eastern Church. It continues to exercise its apostolic mission until this day in dual existence as a Byzantine Catholic and an Orthodox ecclesiastical jurisdiction.

God's revelation to us attests that it was in this place that early believers received their distinctive identity. "It was in Antioch that the disciples were called Christians for the first time" Acts of the Apostles 11: 26.



*The Prayer  
of  
St. Ephrem the Syrian*

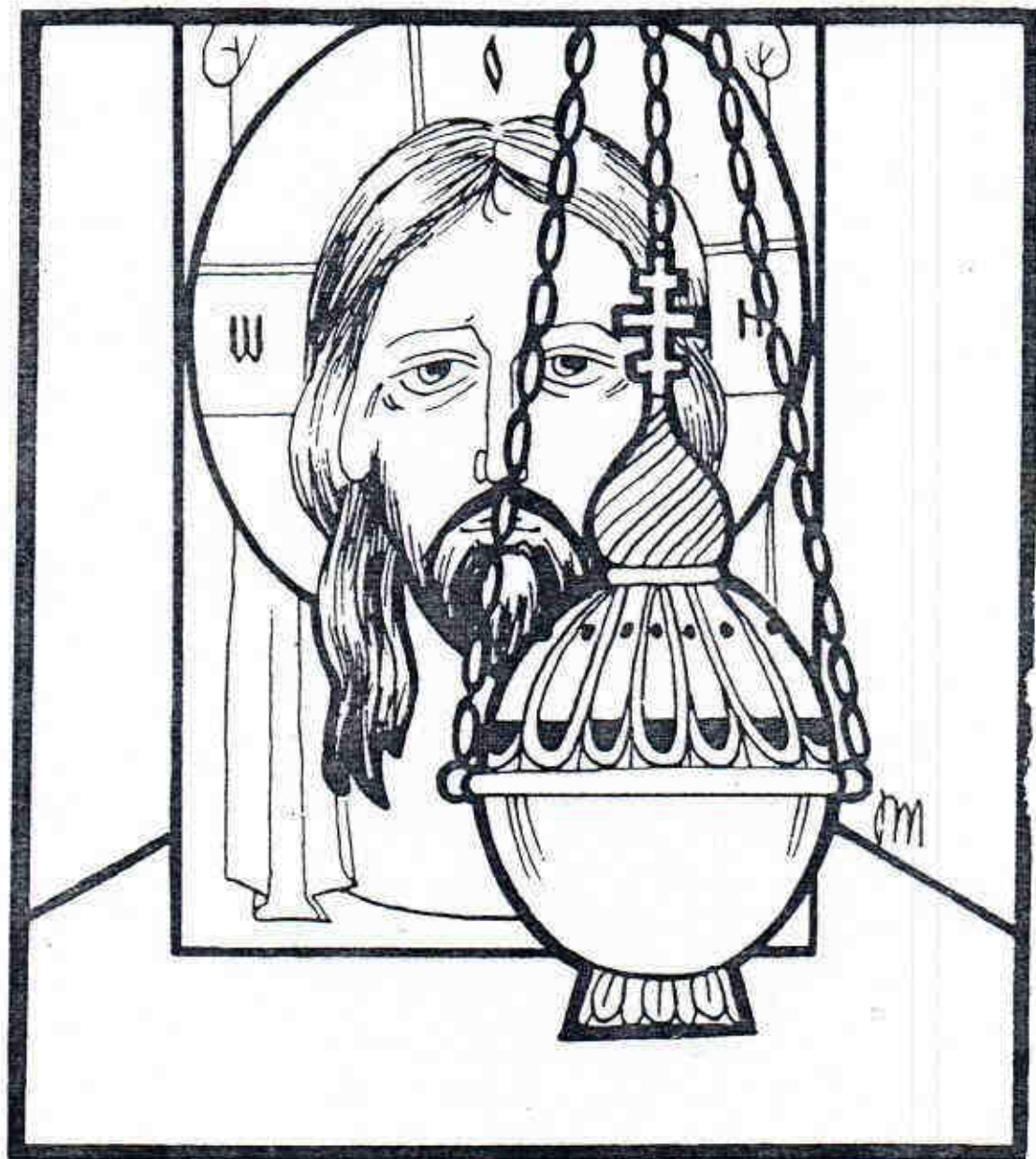
*O Lord and Master of my life!  
Take from me the spirit  
of laziness, despair, lust for power  
and vain talking.*

*But give to me, Your servant,  
the spirit of purity,  
humility, patience  
and love.*

*Yes, Lord and King,  
grant me to see my own sins  
and not judge my brother.*

*For blessed are You,  
forever and ever.*

*Amen.*



The Great Fast



## *Escapes*

*Match the person with the escape.*

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| 1. Paul     | a. He escaped on horseback from enemy Israelites.   |
| 2. Abiathar | b. After this murderer escaped to Seirath, he blew a trumpet and mustered an army.                                      |
| 3. Jacob    | c. When he heard wicked cities were going to be destroyed, he escaped to Zoar.  |
| 4. Elijah   | d. With the help of his wife, who let him down a window, he escaped from his father-in-law, who was trying to kill him. |
| 5. Lot      | e. Being warned by an angel in a dream, he escaped to Egypt with his wife and child.                                    |
| 6. Joseph   | f. To escape stoning by the Jews, he "escaped out of their hand" and went beyond Jordan.                                |
| 7. Benhadad | g. To escape his brother, who wanted to kill him, he fled to his uncle.   |
| 8. David    | h. While Doeg was carrying out the slaughter of priests, he managed to escape.  |
| 9. Ehud     | i. To escape a vengeful queen, he "arose and went for his life and came to Beersheba."                                  |
| 10. Jesus   | j. Disciples let him down a wall in a basket so he could escape enemy Jews.   |

# THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE

Find the hidden words.

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

EVENING

PRAY

DISCIPLES

ASLEEP

SPIRIT

BETRAY

FLESH

JUDAS

WEAK

JESUS

1. j (Acts 9:23-25)
2. h (1 Sam. 22:18-20)
3. g (Gen. 27:42-43)
4. i (1 Kings 19:1-3)
5. c (Gen. 19:17, 22)
6. e (Matt. 2:13-14)
7. a (1 Kings 20:19-20)
8. d (1 Sam. 19:10-12)
9. b (Judges 3:21-27)
10. f (John 10:31, 39-40)



AKATHIST FOR THE  
REPOSE OF THE DEPARTED



## Kontakion 1

You who by your inscrutable providence prepare the world for eternal beatitude, who appoints to all the time and manner of their earthly end; forgive, Lord, the sins of those who have died in past ages and receive them into the place of light and rejoicing and open your paternal embrace to them in mercy and hear us who celebrate their memory and sing:

Lord of indescribable love, remember your servants who have fallen asleep!

## Ikos 1

You who save Adam and the whole human race from eternal perdition, Good One, You who sends your Son into the world, by whose Cross and Resurrection life eternal dawns on us, we trust in your infinite compassion and look for the incorruptible kingdom of glory. We implore you to grant it to our departed souls and we pray, Lord, gladden souls wearied by the storms of life, that they may forget earthly sorrows and mourning. Hear them in the depth of your bosom as mothers hear their children and say to them your sins are forgiven. Lord, receive them into your blessed calm haven, open to them the palaces of the angels and saints that they may rejoice in your divine glory.



**Lord of indescribable love, remember your  
servants who have fallen asleep!**

## **Kontakion 2**

**Enlightened by the illumination of the All-Highest,  
Saint Macarius heard a voice from a pagan skull:  
When you pray for those suffering in the place of the  
dead, there is comfort for the heathen. O wondrous  
power of Christian prayer, by which even the nether  
regions are enlightened! Both believer and non-  
believers receive consolation when we cry out for the  
whole world: Alleluia!**

## **Ikos 2**

**The words of Isaac the Syrian are recalled: The heart  
of the merciful offers prayers with tears every hour  
for people and all creation, that they may be  
preserved and purified. Wherefore, we also boldly  
ask of the Lord help for the dead from all ages, crying  
out: Lord, send down to us the gift of flaming prayer  
for the departed; Lord remember all who have  
charged us, unworthy though we be, to pray for them,  
and disregard the sins they have forgotten. Lord,  
have mercy on all who have been buried without  
prayer. Lord receive into your tabernacle all who in**

sorrow or joy have suddenly finished their course.

Lord of indescribable love, remember your  
servants who have fallen asleep!

### Kontakion 3

We are to blame for the calamities of the world, for the suffering of dumb creatures and for the diseases and torments of blameless children, for through the fall of man the beatitude and beauty of all creation is marred. Christ, our God, greatest of innocent sufferers, You alone have power to forgive all. Forgive, then, all and every thing, return to the world its former prosperity, that both the living and the dead may find peace, crying out: Alleluia!

### Ikos 3

Gentle Light, Redeemer of the world, who embrace the whole world with your love, behold, your cry from the Cross for your enemies is heard. Father, forgive them! And in the name of your all-forgiveness, we dare to pray our heavenly Father for the eternal repose of your enemies and ours. Lord, forgive those who have shed innocent blood, those who have sown our path of life with sorrows, those



who have built their success on the tears of their near and dear ones; Lord, condemn not those who persecute us with slander and malice, repay with mercy those whom we have wronged or offended through ignorance and allow our prayer for them be holy through the sacramental Mystery of Reconciliation.

Lord of indescribable love, remember your servants who have fallen asleep!

#### Kontakion 4

Lord, save those who have died in severe suffering, those who were murdered, those buried alive, those who were drowned or burned, those who were torn by wild beasts, those who died of famine, cold or storms, or by falling from heights, and grant them eternal joy for the sorrow of their end, that they may bless the time of their suffering as a day of redemption, singing: Alleluia!

#### Ikos 4

To all who have been taken by the grave in the brightness of youth, who have pierced the earth with the thorny crown of suffering, all who never saw earthly happiness, Lord, offer reward through the

compassion of infinite love. Lord, reward those who died under the heavy burden of labor, Lord receive into the mansions of paradise, youths and maidens who have departed and vouchsafe them rejoicing at the supper of your Son; Lord soften the grief of parents over the loss of their children; give rest to all who have no family, those who are alone, who have no one to pray for them, that their sins may vanish in the rays of your all-forgiveness.

Lord, of indescribable love, remember your servants who have fallen asleep!

### Kontakion 5

Lord, You have given death as a last means to bring us to understanding and repentance. In its threatening light earthly vanity is exposed, carnal passions and sufferings become subdued, unruly reason is humbled, eternal righteousness is revealed; therefore inveterate sinners and atheists on their deathbed confess your eternal being and cry out to your loving kindness: Alleluia!

### Ikos 5

Father of all consolation, You brighten with the sun,

delight with fruit and gladden with the beauty of the world both friends and enemies. We believe even beyond the grave your loving kindness, which is merciful even to all rejected sinners, does not fail. We grieve for hardened and lawless blasphemers of holiness; Lord, may your saving and gracious will reign over them. Have compassion on those wounded by pernicious unbelief, and who do not know You here on earth, that they may know and love You in heaven; Lord, forgive those who die without repentance, save those who have committed suicide in darkness of mind, that the flame of their impiety may be extinguished in the sea of your grace.

Lord, of indescribable love, remember your servants who have fallen asleep!

### Kontakion 6

Terrible is the darkness of a soul separated from God, the torments of conscience, the gnashing of teeth, the unquenchable fire and the undying worm. I tremble at such a fate, as for myself, I pray, you who suffer in the place of the dead, may our song descend on you as refreshing dew. Alleluia!



## **Ikos 6**

**Christ, our God, your light has shone on those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, and those in the place of the dead, who are not mindful of You. Having descended into the nethermost parts of the earth, bring into joy those who have separated from you by sin, but who have not renounced You, O Lord. Your children suffer, forgive them; for they have sinned against heaven and before You. Immeasurably serious are their sins, but also infinite is your mercy. Visit the bitter destitution of souls, far removed from You. Lord, have mercy on those who hate the truth out of ignorance, let Your love be to them not a burning fire, but the cool delight of Paradise.**

**Lord, of indescribable love, remember your servants who have fallen asleep!**

## **Kontakion 7**

**Desiring to give a helping hand to those in repose, Lord, open yourself to the living, appearing to them in mysterious visions and inspiring them to prayer that they who remember the departed may do good works and labors of faith for them, crying aloud, Alleluia!**

## **Ikos 7**

The universal Church of Christ offers prayers every day for those in repose, every hour the sins of the world are washed away by the most pure Blood of the Divine Lamb, from death to life and from earth to heaven the souls of the departed ascend through the power of prayer for them before the altar of God. Lord, may the intercession of the Church for the departed be a ladder to heaven; Lord, have mercy on them through the intercession and mediation of the most holy Birthgiver of God and all the saints. Pardon them for the sake of the faithful who cry out day and night. Lord, for the sake of innocent children have mercy on their parents and by the tears of mothers redeem the sins of their children. Lord, for the sake of the prayers of innocent sufferers by the blood of martyrs spare and have mercy on sinners. Lord, receive our prayers and alms as a memorial of their virtues.

Lord of indescribable love, remember your servants who have fallen asleep!

## **Kondakion 8**

The whole world is a common sacred cemetery; in every place is the dust of our fathers and brethren.

Christ our God, who alone loves us unchangeably, forgive all that have died from the beginning until now, that they may sing with boundless love: Alleluia!

### Ikos 8

Behold the day comes as a fiery furnace, the great and terrible day of the Last Judgment when the secrets of man will be laid bare, the books of conscience will be opened. Be reconciled to God cries the Apostle Paul; be reconciled before that terrible day. Help us, Lord to fill up with the tears of the living that which is lacking in the dead. Lord, let the sound of the angel's trumpet be to them the tidings of salvation and assure them joyful forgiveness of sin at the hour of judgment. Lord, crown with glory those who suffer for You and overlook the sins of the weak with your goodness. Lord, who knows all by name, remember those who have been saved in the monastic orders, remember blessed pastors with their spiritual children.

Lord of indescribable love, remember your servants who have fallen asleep!

### Kondakion 9

Swiftly bless passing time, every hour, every moment



brings eternity closer to us. A new sorrow, a new gray hair are heralds of the world to come; they are witnesses of earthly corruption; they proclaim that all passes away, that the eternal kingdom draws near, where there are neither tears nor sighing, nor mourning, but the joyful never-ending song: Alleluia!

### **Ikos 9**

As a tree, little by little, loses its leaves, so also our days, with each year, decline into weakness. The festival of youth fades. The lamp of rejoicing is extinguished, the isolation of old age approaches, friends and family die. Where are the young merry makers, joyful and happy? Silent are their tombs, but their souls are in your hands; their glances are felt from the world beyond the grave. Lord, You who are the brightest Sun; illuminate and warm the abode of those who have fallen asleep. Lord, let the time of our bitter farewell pass forever, assure us a joyful reunion in heaven. Lord, cause that all may be one with You. Lord, restore to the departed the unity of childhood and the genial spirit of youth and let eternal life be to them a Passover Festival.

**Lord of indescribable love, remember your servants who have fallen asleep!**

## Kontakion 10

Shedding silent tears at the graves of our loved ones, we pray with hope and with expectation we cry aloud: Tell us, Lord, that their sins are forgiven! Give our soul a secret revelation concerning this, that we may sing: Alleluia!

## Ikos 10

Looking back, our eyes behold afar the whole path of life from the first day until now already have died a multitude of people who did good things for me. Rendering to them a debt of love, I cry out: Lord, assure heavenly glory to my parents and those nearest and dearest to me, who watched over my childhood cradle, who nurtured and brought me up; Lord glorify in the presence of the holy angels those who proclaimed the word of salvation to me, who taught me right and truth by the holy example of their lives. Lord, delight with hidden manna those who ministered to me in difficult days. Reward and save all my helpers and benefactors.

Lord of indescribable love, remember your servants who have fallen asleep!

## Kontakion 11

Death, where is your sting, where is your former darkness and terror? Now you are welcome, for you unite us inseparably with God. Great peace, you are the mystical sabbath. The Apostle cries out, I have a desire to die and to be with Christ. Gazing upon death as on a gateway to life eternal, we cry out, Alleluia!

## Ikos 11

The dead shall rise and those in the graves shall stand up, and those who are alive on earth shall be joyful, for they shall arise with spiritual bodies, radiantly glorified, incorrupt. Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord: I will bring upon you a spirit of life, I will cover you with flesh; rise out of the ancient past, you who are redeemed by the Blood of the Son of God, restored to life by his death. Over you is the light of the Resurrection. Lord, open now to them the depth of your perfection. You shine upon them the light of the sun and moon, that they may see also the glory of the radiant choirs of angels. You have delighted them with the majesty of the rising and setting of the light of heaven; may they also see the unfading light of your divinity!



Lord of indescribable love, remember your servants who have fallen asleep!

### Kontakion 12

Flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of God; however long we live in the flesh we are separated from Christ, but if we die we live for eternity. Our incorruptible body must put on incorruption so that in the light of the unfading day, we may sing: Alleluia!

### Ikos 12

We await meeting with the Lord, we want the bright dawn of the Resurrection, we expect the raising of our near and dear ones from the grave and the restoration of the dead to the most reverent beauty of life. We triumph in the coming transfiguration of all creation and cry out to our Creator: Lord, who created the world for the triumph of joy and goodness, who raise us up to holiness out of the depth of sin, grant the dead to reign in the midst of this new creation, that they may shine in heaven on the day of their glory, Lord, let the divine Lamb be to them the unfading light. Lord, grant us also to celebrate with them a Passover incorruptible; unite the dead and the

living in unending joy.

Lord of indescribable love, remember your servants who have fallen asleep!

### Prayer

God of spirits and of all flesh, You trampled death, and broke the power of Satan, and granted life to your world, now grant rest, O Lord to the soul of your departed servant (Name), in a place of light, joy, and peace, where there is no pain, sorrow, or mourning. As a kind and gracious God, forgive every sin committed by him (her) in word, deed or thought, since there is no person who lives and does not sin. You alone are without sin, your justice is everlasting justice and your word is truth.

O Lord, grant rest to the souls of your departed servants, the most holy patriarchs, most blessed metropolitans, archbishops and bishops, the venerable priests and deacons, those who have served you in the Church as monastics and founders of this holy temple.

Remember gracious Lord our Orthodox forefathers, fathers, brethren, and sisters here and everywhere laid to rest, officers and soldiers who have laid down their lives for faith and fatherland, the faithful slain in civil wars, those who were drowned, burned, frozen to death, torn by wild beasts, those who finished the course of their lives without repentance and had no opportunity to be reconciled with the Church and with their enemies, those who took their own lives in madness of mind.

Remember Lord those who asked us to pray for them, for whom there is none among the believing to pray for them, those who were not assured Christian burial and for the servants of God (Names) in a place of light, in a place of repose, from which all sickness, sorrow and mourning are fled away. Pardon every sin committed by them in word, deed, or thought, because You are a good God, the Lover of mankind, for there is no man that lives and does not sin; for You alone are without sin. Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness and your word is truth.

For You are the Resurrection and the life and the repose of your departed servant (Names) O Christ our God, and to You we ascribe glory, together with your eternal Father an most holy and good and life-creating Spirit, always, now and ever and forever. Amen.





## ICONS: NOT FOR THE EYE BUT FOR THE HEART

**I**cons are the artistic heritage of the church. Many edifices are covered inside with icons, not so much as decorative pieces, but to assist in worship, prayer and meditation. It has been said that an icon is not so much a painting as it is a "presence."

It took centuries for the Church to define and accept the role of iconography. After years of conflict, the Seventh Ecumenical Council in 787 at Nicea proclaimed that icons are to be honored like other material symbols such as the Holy Cross of our Lord. And in 843 the final victory over the use of icons was established and the First Sunday of the Great Fast designated as a time of triumph of the true faith over heresy.

One of the champions in the defense of icons was St. John of Damascus. He wrote in the eighth century, "The old God was not depicted at all. But now that God has appeared in the flesh and lived among men, I make an image of the God who can be seen. I do not worship matter but I worship the Creator of matter, who for my sake became material and deigned to dwell in matter, effecting my salvation."

The teaching aspect of iconography was well described by St. Nilus of Sinai (5th Century): "Let the hand of the artist fill the Church on both sides with images from the Old and New Testaments, in order that those who cannot read the Divine Scriptures should, by looking at the painted images, bring to mind the valiant deeds of those who served God with all sincerity and be themselves incited to rival the glorious and memorable exploits through which they exchanged earth for heaven . . ."

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