

Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Sunday After Theophany

January 8, 2012

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 Feast of Theophany, the manifestation of our God. Our celebration today is concluded with Festal Anointing. The customary greeting is "Christ Is Among Us!" to which we respond, "He Is And Shall Be!"

+++ Those who would like their homes sanctified with the newly blessed water of Christ's baptism, please advise Father as soon as possible.

+++ We give thanks as we are pleased to acknowledge gifts to the parish during this holyday season from non-parishioners: \$100.00 each from Diana Boyes of Palm Beach Gardens, Fl, Theresa Shwahla of Freehold, NJ, in memory of husband, +Stephen and Atty. Judith Martyak of Doylestown, Pa.

+++ 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 this past week: Tithe Offering, [REDACTED]; Candles, [REDACTED] Nativity of our Lord, [REDACTED]; Parish Dues, [REDACTED]; Holyday, [REDACTED] Kitchen, [REDACTED]0, for a total of \$[REDACTED]. We express our profound gratitude to the parishioner communicants who offered 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! The attendance was 44 adults and 13 children last Sunday.

+++ 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, Pani Lucas, Maria Idromenos, Anna Zacharyczuk, Eleni Pallas, Debra Szmaida, Paul Szmaida, 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 \$[REDACTED] from this apostolate. Even your pennies can help and are a blessing to our parish.

+++ For the expansion of our much needed parochial facilities, our parish pledge support to date totals \$[REDACTED]. As we thank the Lord for inspiring generosity in the hearts of our faithful, we also thank the donors for accepting the challenge of the Lord in building up His Body. We cordially invite and look forward to receiving additional and increased pledges from all our devoted parishioners.

+++ 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 \$[REDACTED] 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 remember only those who are present for the entire Divine Liturgy should come forward to receive Communion. The entire Liturgy means "Amen" to "Amen."**

+++ May all glory, adoration and worship be accorded our God in the Holy Trinity by all the faithful of our parish with one mind, one soul and one heart each day of the week!

LORD



TEACH
US

Investing

Do not wear yourself out to get rich; have the wisdom to show restraint. Cast but a glance at riches and they are gone, for they will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle Proverbs 23: 4, 5.

But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers as it is today Deuteronomy 8: 18.

If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best of the land Isaiah 1: 19.

He sought God during the days of Zechariah, who instructed him in fear of God. As long as he sought the Lord God gave him success 2 Chronicles 26: 5.

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers Psalms 1: 1 - 3.

Carefully follow the terms of this covenant, so that you may prosper in everything you do Deuteronomy 29: 9.

If they obey and serve him they will spend the rest of their days in prosperity and their years in contentment Job 36: 11.

The Hedge

Have you not surrounded him and his family and all that he has with your protection?

Job 1: 10

Job was a perfect and upright man” a real saint, and as such he was providentially protected by a “hedge” of angels and the sheltering and protective love of God. “When the afflicted man called out, the Lord heard and from all his distress he saved him. The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him and delivers them” Psalms 34: 7, 8; “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent to serve those who are to inherit salvation” Hebrews 1: 14?.

Yet truth be told, no true servant of the Lord escapes the eye of the adversary. Satan and his hosts are constantly seeking to trap us and hinder us as we walk the pilgrim pathway to the City of God. Nothing, however, can harm us or come inside the hedge, unless our heavenly Father allows it

We are guarded on all sides by his presence for He is **before** us “I, the Lord your God teach you what is for your good, and lead you on the way you should go” Isaiah 18: 17; **behind us**, “While from behind a voice shall sound in your ears, ‘this is the way, walk in it.’” Isaiah 30: 21; to the **right** of us, “I set the Lord ever before me; with him at my right hand I shall not be disturbed...” Psalms 16: 8; to the **left** of us, “Where the north enfolds him, I behold him not; by the south he is veiled and I see him not” Job 23: 9; **above** us, “O Lord your kindness reaches to heaven; your faithfulness to the clouds; your justice is like the mountains of God; your judgments like the almighty deep” Psalms 36: 6, 7; **underneath** us, “He spread out the primeval tent; he extended the ancient canopy” Deuteronomy 33: 27; and in the New Covenant, is even **within** us, “Are you not aware that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you” 1Corinthians 3: 16?

When adverse things happen and negative circumstances befall us, we must recognize in the depths of our soul and admit immediately they come to us with divine permission and definite purpose.

How many of the saints, true children of God that they are, become extremely ill. In weakened condition, they are severely attacked by the evil one. St. Jerome was known to say, “I have a

terrible conflict with the enemy today.” Once the devil said to a most pious resister of evil, “You have been my enemy all your life and now I have you bound securely so I shall have my revenge on you at your death bed.”

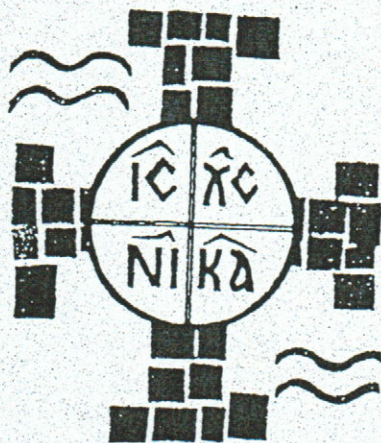
How many of those who were victorious to the end answered, “Dirty devil, the Lord has put a hedge about me and you cannot touch me.” When the saints cried out in vigorous and meaningful voice as did the Lord in the desert, “Devil, be gone,” the old serpent just flees and for the time being, the friend of Christ is freed from temptation.

Just so the pious believer and disciple of Christ must have no further doubts, for he recognizes his divine security and protection.

In the care of our heavenly father, we, too, can be at peace because He has given a promise and his grace for this is planned because the child of God rests securely in the hollow of God’s powerful and blessed hand.

When our heavenly Father allows extraordinary trials, He also prepares for his people extraordinary comforts and consolations.

with
this
sign
conquer



LOVE AND SACRIFICE ARE INSEPARABLE

Besides the spiritual implications of tithing, there are some purely mundane, but vitally important aspects as well. Tithing gives a single person a new perspective on the value and blessing of earthly treasure. It shows earthly treasure can do and perform heavenly goals. Ten per cent from the average paycheck these days is a sizable piece of change. It is hard to part with whether you are over-generous or not. Human nature revolts at giving itself away, but perhaps no more than we have taken away from us, by our government, a much higher portion of our earned treasure. And while we complain and even resent it, we still submit to the governmental initiative.

But once it is given, more attention is then paid to the remaining ninety per-cent. There enters a tendency to be frugal which should not, certainly, be associated with abject stinginess.

Participating in God's tithe also teaches parent to teach children the true value of money, that it is not frivolous or an entitlement. It means then that not all children will be preoccupied with thoughts of outlandish clothing and absurd hair styles.

Love and sacrifice cannot be separated. All love, whether it be that of warm respect, devoted love for parents or the consuming love of husband and wife, or the devout, reciprocal, complete love between God and man, all love presupposes and assumes sacrifice. In all cases love is proven and deepened by positive acts of sacrifice.

No one can give oneself more completely than does God to us. His love of man is so great that He gives us His entire self. He gives us human life. He gives us a world and all that is in it.

And yet this counts for almost nothing because there is so much more. "God so loved the world that He gave his only-begotten Son that whoever believes in him might have eternal life."

Such astounding and halting love is unbelievable. That God should sacrifice Himself, humiliate Himself by assuming physical human nature, that He should become man and that Godman should sacrifice His life for sinful man. As if this were not enough, the greatness of God's love for man seems almost divinely reckless when He would allow Himself to be a sacrifice on the Cross for the sake of our salvation.

How do we properly and adequately respond to such overwhelming and astounding love? Could God do more to prove His love? He gives all of creation for man's service; He gave Himself at Bethlehem and on the Cross to serve our happiness and salvation; He constantly gives Himself, His love, His power, His strength, His virtues, in the Holy Eucharist. Would that man could give himself completely to God as God has given Himself to man! To give all back to God would mean absorption in divine love. Our God desires our hearts, our minds, our souls, all freely and willingly offered and returned to Him but all He has ever asked by way of material, tangible sacrifices is a simple token. He asks for the tithe as a sign, a gesture, a representation of man's love for the first Lover.

This means sacrifice. Sacrifice that suits the dignity of the Beloved as well as be representative of the lover. If man seeks to sacrifice his most precious gifts – his mind, his will and his soul – then the symbol of that giving must be precious.

The tithe as God prescribes it is indeed representative; tithing is God's plan to eliminate material things from man's love, from his preoccupation. It is wealth that is often most precious to man and can be made holy, can be sanctified in this way; and it strikes at the roots of many tendencies to sin and to selfishness, all of which contradict most dramatically our love response to God.

Those who rightly permit their love to influence their spirit of sacrifice, their soul of expression, have happily learned the meaning of the stark truism, "Sacrifice is usually difficult and even irksome. Only true love can make it easy and perfect love can make it a joy."

Assuredly God will help us if we give witness to the sincerity of our hearts and intentions. People who oppose tithing, oppose God's will for their lives and do not have the slightest notion of what God can do, how He can turn their lives around if they submit themselves truly to His will. They will learn we have not begun to exhaust His generosity. He will help us if we acknowledge His total and complete dominion over our lives in tithing.

It is not easy to feed the world, it is not simple to save souls and lead them to redemption. Yes, we would rather just simply say our prayers properly, would rather just abstain on Fridays and some times on Wednesdays and we would rather just visit the poor. But obviously, by the witness of God Himself, that is not enough. We are capable of much more and God desires more from us. Believers ought be the first to respond to His initiative for salvation and worldly treasure. Otherwise, we will be witnesses to the prophetic fulfillment of His words, "I was hungry... I starved of hunger... I died of hunger while you were satisfied.."

Our Lord always asks,

"Do you not know...?"

1 Corinthians 6: 2.

Do not let it be said of you,

"You neither knew nor heard.."

Isaiah 48: 6.

*"Why are you disturbed; why do such
ideas cross your mind" ?*

Luke 24: 38.

Knowing
things
has never
been easier.

Be certain to read the Parish Bulletin
every week.

It will help you grow in faith
commitment to Christ.

Time To Come

Some Thoughts on the Seven Last Words of Christ

First Word: *Father forgive them for they know not what they do.* Must it forever be true that the greatest tragedy of life is not what happens to souls, but what they miss? And what greater tragedy is there than to miss the peace of sin forgiven because it leads to missing heaven?

Second Word: *Amen I say to you, this day you shall be with me in paradise.* Our Lord does not suffer alone on the Cross; He suffers with us. That is why He united the sacrifice of the repentant thief with His own.

Third Word: *Woman behold your son; behold your mother.* Mary was invited not only to become the Mother of God, but to be the mother of men; not only the Mother of holiness, but also the Mother of those who seek, like her, to be holy.

Fourth Word: *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me!* Nothing more solemn exists on the face of God's gracious earth than the awe-inspiring moment when the Holy Spirit descends upon the meager gifts offered on the altar at the Divine Liturgy which is not so much a prayer, nor a hymn of praise as it is a Divine Act within which we are awesomely privileged to participate at a given moment in time.

Fifth Word: *I thirst.* The cry of Christ was an appeal for communion, that last in a long series of shepherding calls in the unending quest of God for man. Men may hunger for God, but God thirsts for man.

Sixth Word: *It is finished.* Our Lord finished His work, but we have not yet finished ours. His vocation was fulfilled in achieving our salvation. Ours will not be until we enter the portals of heaven to join Him. He pointed the way we must follow. He laid down the Cross at the finish, but we must now take it up. He completed redemption in His physical body, but we have not yet completely applied it to our souls. His finish is our beginning. Now we make our own what He accomplished for us in the life of His Body, the Church.

Seventh Word: *Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.* In that last word and last gospel is revealed the rhythm of life. The end of all things must in some way get back to their beginning. As the Son goes back to the Father, as the body returns to dust, so the soul of man which came from God is one day destined to go back to God, without the interference, but with the cooperation of man.

Did You Know That ...

- ...character is much easier kept than recovered?
- ...the soul, like a parachute, only functions well when it is open - to God?
- ...we should not judge the wine by the barrel it is in?
- ...we are not satisfied to be right unless we can prove others to be quite wrong?
- ...America's national flower is the concrete cloverleaf?
- ...there never was a good war or a bad peace?
- ...if you do not like to work, you still have to work to earn enough money so that later you will not have to work?
- ...no one has ever loved anyone the way everyone wants to be loved?
- ...fanaticism consists in redoubling your effort when you have forgotten your aim?
- ...education is what you get from reading the small print; experience is what you get for not heeding it?
- ...only the young die good?
- ...every "maybe" has a wife who is called "maybe not"?
- ...when man is all wrapped up in himself, he makes a very small package?
- ...they who do not know how to live must make a merit of dying?
- ...children may close their ears to advice, but they keep their eyes open to example?
- ...what is the use of running when you are not on the right road?
- ...the best thing about the future is that it only comes one day at a time?

REFLECTIONS ON OUR OWN BAPTISM

The Feast Day of the Theophany of our Lord is one of the most solemn and significant days on our Church Calendar. It is a day of great theological meaning, as the Holy Trinity was made manifest to the world at the banks of the River Jordan when Christ came to be baptized in its waters. It is also a day when the "Great Blessing of Water" takes place in our churches and homes are blessed with the newly sanctified water.

This great holy day, however, should also be a time of personal reflection for us. As we re-live the baptism of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, it is an appropriate time for us to think about our own baptism, and what its significance is for us.

In the 10th article of the Nicene Creed, we profess and acknowledge our belief in "... one Baptism for the remission of sins." Baptism is the first of the Seven Mysteries (Sacraments) that are offered to Orthodox Christians as a way of receiving God's grace. In Baptism, we are truly "born again" in a spiritual sense. As Christ explained to Nicodemus, it is essential that we all be "born of water and the spirit." According to the theology of our Holy Orthodox Church, when we are baptized, we are literally beginning our journey to eternal life. Through this Sacrament, we are buried with Christ, resurrected with Him and united to Him. When we are baptized, we become a Christian - in the words of the Apostle Paul, we "put on Christ" - and are joined to the Church. Through our godparents, we proclaim our love for Christ, our desire to serve Him and our willingness to "go and teach all nations" about Him. By virtue of our Lord's baptism in the Jordan by John, water was set apart by God as the means by which the Holy Spirit would bring to us new life and entrance into God's Heavenly Kingdom.

The Orthodox Weekly Bulletin Vestal, Cliffwood, New Jersey Litho in U.S.A.