



Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Sunday after Theophany

January 12, 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

+++ 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.

+++ Today we solemnize the blessing of water which was postponed from this past Monday. The Divine Liturgy is concluded with festal anointing.

+++ **Work on the bathrooms is scheduled to begin Tuesday morning. Please pray it will be completed quickly.**

+++ **Pirohi Schedule for the New Year: February 1 and March 15.**

+++ **Please keep the intentions of these members of our parish intercession community in your daily prayers: Anna, Ryan, Barbara, Betty, James and Michael.**

+++ **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, 589.00; Nativity of our Lord, \$552.00; Candles, \$30.00; Holyday, \$32.00; Energy, \$135.00; Parish Dues, \$175.00; Diocesan Dues, \$285.00; Food Coupons, \$500.00; Kitchen, \$733.00, for a total of \$3031.00. 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! 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, Anna Zacharyczuk, Eleanor Korba, Robert 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 \$1715.00 from this apostolate. Even your pennies can help and are a blessing to our parish.**

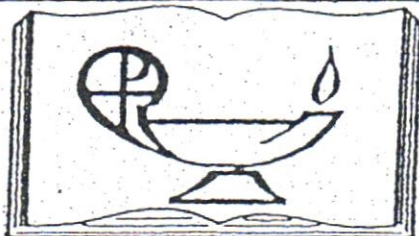
+++ **Please be certain to see a member of the Parish Council if you would like to help our parish by using Shop Rite Food Coupons available in \$20.00 denominations. We invite ALL to be caring and supportive and use Grocery Coupons for food shopping as we have gratefully realized \$5600 on this project 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.**

+++ **Please pray the Lord our God grants us an enrichment of our spiritual lives for his glory.**

+++ **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

Priestly Example

The life to which God has called us is not one of incontinence; it is a life of holiness, and to despise it is to despise, not man, but God, who has implanted the Holy Spirit in us 1 Thessalonians 4: 7, 8.

All ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord; all the families of the nations shall bow down before him Psalms 22: 28.

A heart to serve you, O God, a heart ready to serve you...only through God can we fight victoriously Psalms 107: 2, 14.

The lost sheep; I will find, the strayed sheep I will bring home again; bind up the broken limb, nourish the wasted frame, keep the well-fed and the sturdy free from harm; they shall have a true shepherd Ezekiel 34: 16.

And he said to them, every scholar, then, whose learning is of the kingdom of heaven must be like a rich man, who knows to bring both new and old things out of his treasure house Matthew 13: 52.

Sweet it is to praise the Lord, to sing, most high God, in honor of your name, to proclaim your mercy and faithfulness at daybreak and at the fall of night Psalms 91: 2.

Lord God of Hosts, listen to my prayer...look favorably on him whom you have anointed. Willingly would I give a thousand of my days for one spent in your courts! Willingly lie there forgotten in the house of my God Psalms 183: 9 - 11.

Whose Calendar???

In the Book of Exodus, our heavenly Father explicitly points out potential problems in daily living as He commands Israel, the Chosen People, to set aside time for holy feast days: *Three times in the year you shall keep a pilgrim feast to me. You shall keep the feast of Unleavened Bread...You shall keep the feast of the grain harvest....You shall keep the feast of the fruit harvest....Three times in the year shall all your men appear before the Lord God* Exodus 23: 14 17.

Such feasts were for the spiritual good of the people of Israel because they caused them to turn their attention to the Lord and Creator, honoring, worshipping and making sacrifice to him as covenant expressions of their love and devotion. Holydays served to remind individual believers of the grace available for sanctification and as a confirmation of faith response to Christ's first shown love. They demonstrate the continued on-going involvement of our heavenly Father in the lives of his faithful children.

Moreover, once a week, they were to rest from their labor and ordinary activity in the Lord's presence: *Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work; but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work* Exodus 20: 8 – 10.

The observance of the holy days and the Sabbath was an expression of both Israel's fidelity to Almighty God and Israel's identity as a holy people. In the prophets, Israel is rebuked for failing to keep the Sabbath; the people also failed to keep the Passover regularly as false gods often enticed them into idolatry.

In the New Testament, our Lord recognized these holy days. On many occasions He is described in God's revelation to us going up to Jerusalem for one or the other of these feasts. His observance of them gave sanction to the Church to set aside times for certain feasts and other commemorations to

recall the significant events in our Lord's own earthly life which fulfilled Old Testament Law. These observances in the life of the Body of Christ to this day are established for our continued remembrance and participation. Some, however, see them as optional and thereby ignore them, but they do so at their own peril. There are even priests who are too lazy to celebrate and, being convinced the people do not want to attend, deny themselves the grace of prayerful celebration and altogether abandoned holy day celebration and remembrance while their bishops do not even notice such neglect, or perhaps, even sanction it!

And because of this, one by one, the holydays of the Church are being overshadowed by secularizing forces, by false new gods. The religious meaning of most of these great commemorations has been lost, even abandoned particularly in the United States, to all but the most observant worshippers.

One significant reason for the loss of the grace of holy day celebration is that we have been seduced to describe and refer to them by their western names. Orthodoxy has its own correct language, but does not know it. Just look at any Orthodox publication to see how eagerly Christmas, Easter, Lent, Advent, Assumption, Mass are used which do not and cannot manifest the essence of what they purportedly are used to describe. Thus our people assume they mean for us the same as they do for the heterodox westerners and ignore their meaning and significance. In addition our inferiority is demonstrated if we do not seem have and use a word or language to actually describe what our Church means, advances and believes in and so must utilize the usage of, again, those in spiritual opposition to us.

In the West, the preparatory season for the Nativity of our Lord which formerly was a period of forty days has been reduced by some to a few weeks and by others, to too much trouble. As such this period should be marked by repentance and prayerfulness in anticipation of the arrival of the Saviour among us. It is a time of spiritual hope and joy. In our eagerness to greet the Son of God, the soul ought to be meditative, given to introspection and preparation. Cleansing from sin should be paramount that the Saviour find us

eager to receive him in our hearts. It is **NOT** the time for partying, feasting, exchanging gifts or singing joyful carols all of which should be deferred until the feast of the Incarnation is celebrated. It is a time of concentrating on the Christ Child, not ourselves in narcissism.

But we all know that here in America with its attractive pagan underbelly, all sorts of merriment that knows not Christ nor his spirit pervades even what the Church expects and teaches. It is far more important for us to be integrated into the non-believer society than to practice the treasure of our faith. So we overindulge in shopping, and commerce and deflect most of the attention away from making a holy preparation into a pagan bacchanalia. If the Lord disliked the money changing in the temple, in his Father's house, what would He think of our preoccupation with shopping, and commerce during the season of preparation for his birth in which He is given absolutely minor and little consideration. His feast day is being used to destroy souls and denounce faith. Rather an interesting observation for genuine believers, is it not, that this holy day is respected and known primarily for all the money it generates to the economy of the nation?

In acquiescing to a change in the name of the Nativity feast to the secularist Christmas, we contributed to the dissipation, far from its original center of the Birth of the Saviour. Everybody celebrates the holiday which has long ago lost its holyday status and no one is affirmed, made better or reduced to facing truth in the celebration. It takes bold action to remind the world that "Jesus is the reason for the season." In a secularized society for which the "Merry Christmas" greeting is considered guilty of harboring a religious twist, has slipped into "Happy Holidays" in the interests of political correctness which we treasure beyond the salutary truth of Christ.

And the secondary and tertiary days of the Nativity holyday? Who even knows about them? We ignore them since we do not want to be over exposed to the presence and holiness of our God, like we sometimes avoid over exposure to the sun, while thinking "it is enough to celebrate his birthday without getting carried away with it!"

What was known as the calendar of the Lord can now more appropriately and honestly be described as the calendar of the devil because this is what neglect of Christians has made it. We did not keep it ourselves and so did not notice or care when non-believers transformed it into their own diabolical misuse.

The next significant event in the life of Christ is January 1 when the Law of Moses dictated that every male child should be circumcised and named on the eighth day after birth. In St. Luke's gospel we learn that the parents of Jesus dutifully and faithfully saw this expectation was fulfilled.

But who observes this holyday today? On that day does not everyone sleep in after getting home from New Year's Eve parties and then getting up with a headache from overindulgence in beverage and food; to celebrate New Year's Day by partying even more, watching football and discussing futile New Year's resolutions? A noted day in the life of the Lord is replaced with a secular celebration because it suits better our purposes.

Following is the feast of the Entrance of our Lord in the temple, forty days after the Nativity of our Lord when devoted Jewish parents were required to bring their son as an offering to the Lord in the Temple of Jerusalem and to redeem him. (Exodus 13). At this time, too, the mother received her ritual cleansing after giving birth (Leviticus 12). Thus Mary and Joseph bring the infant to fulfill the command of the Lord. While theoretically the Church still recognizes the need of believers to present themselves as an offering to God, a living sacrifice, in keeping with the definition of true discipleship, the significance of the day is passed over. Popularly referred to as "Candle Day" by our European forbears because candles are blessed in remembrance of Christ being the Light of man, today, instead emphasis and thought is placed on the announcement with great fanfare of the great ground hog and how he emerges from his lair. This quaint weather news overlooks and overshadows the salutary commemoration of our Lord's Entrance into the House of God!

While the Great Fast is a wonderful opportunity for believers to assess themselves spiritually and apply themselves to repentance, prayer and fasting in the footsteps of the Lord who himself spent forty days in the wilderness being tempted by the devil. Since the fourth century the Church has seriously observed the beneficent practice of identifying with the Saviour during these days in attempting to recognize and realize at the celebration of the glorious Resurrection, the astounding worth of repentant humanity in God's sight.

Both in Orthodox lands and those of the West we have advanced the cause of secularism and hedonism just prior to beginning the sacred season best manifested in Mardi Gras and all its excesses. How many actually believe the Great Fast will not be a success unless we have started it with over indulgence? Has our attention to a solemn holy prolonged celebration been so thoroughly diverted to a debauchery so contrary to it in theme and purpose?

Even the public school system which had a break in the spring called "Easter break" is now in political correctness identifying it as "Spring Break." And while it often coincides with the Western Holy Week, the solemn days are used to skip town and head to warm climates for festive activities in a recess from daily and academic grinds, perhaps forgetting that their celebration of Great and Holy Friday on the sandy beach is not one of the Stations of the Cross.

And, of course, what they call Easter of all the Christian feasts, has been thoroughly commercialized so that the bunny and jelly beans seem to receive more attention than the risen Saviour while attempting to attribute to these pagan and secular manifestations some sort of religious or spiritual flair.

The later spring celebrations of the Lord's Ascension which often occur around the time of school graduations and Memorial Day week-end celebrations leave the Church hard-pressed to redirect the attentions of worshippers back to these most significant events in the life of Christ for his followers.

The feast of the Transfiguration commemorates the dramatic and miraculous manifestation of Christ as the Son of God before the apostles Peter, James and John. This astounding event where we are sustained in the faith of Christ's divinity was affirmed in marvelous light and his union with the Father is attested to by a resounding voice from heaven. It rewards believers with the real and credible hope of our transformation from human sinfulness to the actual image of God in which we are born anew in Christ and provides encouragement for the truth of deification. It shows the connection of the Lord as the fulfillment of all that occurred in the Old Covenant as He appears with Moses and Elias.

Instead, too many think of the conclusion of World War 2 with the bombing of Hiroshima on that day. One kind of transformation is thus overshadowed by another.

We also undervalue the celebration of the Dormition of the Birthgiver of God and dismiss the fasting period which prepares for its importance in salvation history. We forget easily the final conclusion of a life of devoted service is blessed with heavenly relief and take no inspiration from the Mother of the Lord.

And of course, finally, we can look at how the Romans permitted their All Saints Day celebration on November 1 to be denigrated and turned into a sham. It was the principal day on which that Church celebrates the special individuals through whom Christ made significant marks in history. By looking at them and seeing their lives, it was shown what God can do when He takes ordinary sinners and converts them into holy saints. There is a benefit and example in their lives and their communicants should be inspired to follow their example.

The evening before was known as All Souls on which the departed were remembered and prayed for. But what has it degenerated into? It is become a day when silly and absurd costumes are encouraged and children go door-to-door collecting candy while adults absorb themselves in equally freakish costuming and festooning their homes with decorative absurdities, if

they can be given that dignity and macabre decorations abound. Ghoulish and demonic dress is plentiful and the saints are nowhere to be seen and the departed souls are easily forgotten, even dismissed!

Because of our neglect, because the Church has not taught deeply and compellingly enough, nearly every major feast day has been preempted to one degree or another by secular events which now absorb the attention of the general public. Particularly in the Church of Christ, when each feast always associated itself in a family way with believers, zealous celebration is not manifested. We have thus lost many signs and markers of a religious culture, of a Christian environment and civilization that consistently points us back to our Maker and Creator as well as Saviour. What a good influence the recurrence of a truly *holy day* could be to orient us to the light and love of our God, has been lost. With most believers hardly noticing, such days and salutary events and dates have literally faded from our lives. And we are all the poorer for it!

It is not mere coincidence that so many secular events are chosen over the holiness which the Church always hoped holy days would keep alive. Such perfect timing and thorough undermining of the truth of Christ leads us to believe that behind all this lies a dark intelligence, that of the devil himself by which Israel of old was led astray and now we are facing this reality in our Church life as well. Only believers can turn the tide and invest time, prayer and example as well as effort to return the Church to its rightful position so that through grace of Christ, souls will once again be drawn to glory in Christ's radiant love.

This Is My Beloved Son

In Whom I Am Well Pleased

THE HOLY MARTYR TATIANA

In the early years of the Christian Church, it is apparent that Jesus appealed to many different types of people. His followers included the wealthy as well as the poor, and the young as well as the elderly. There was one "common thread" that bound together all of the believers in the Resurrected Saviour: they were willing to give up their very life for their Master.

The Martyr Tatiana was born during the reign of the ruthless Emperor Alexander Severus. Her father, a man of means, was secretly a deacon, ministering to the needs of the Christian community in Rome. Tatiana also was a Christian, and she assisted her father in caring for the poor and needy of their region. Sacred tradition tells us that Tatiana was a deaconess herself during these trying times.

Although he had a Christian mother, the pagan Emperor Alexander unleashed a wave of persecution against all followers of Christ. Tatiana's father was arrested and executed, and soon after this, Tatiana was seized and brought before the Roman ruler. When she refused to bow in worship to the pagan gods, Tatiana was sentenced to death. Her initial response was to pray for her enemies, and eight of the soldiers assigned to carry out her execution miraculously converted to Christianity!

Furious over what had transpired, the Emperor devised a long, tortuous martyrdom for the young maiden. Ultimately, Tatiana was beheaded in the year 225 A.D. at the tender age of nineteen.

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