

INVINCIBLE
CHAMPION
OF
ORTHODOXY



ST. MARK OF EPHESUS

Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Sunday of Zaccheus

January 17, 2010

Father Robert E Lucas, Pastor;
Father John Cmur; Deacon Kenneth E. Ellis and
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

+++ On Sunday, February 7, we will have our luncheon prior to the Great Fast. Everyone is invited to participate with prepared fast foods. Details will be in next Sunday's bulletin.

+++ The total to date offering received for the Nativity of our Lord amounts to \$1725.00. If you were away, it is not too late to augment this gift of love to our new-born Saviour.

+++ Monday evening at 7: 30 PM, we will have our monthly healing service. Please come and join us in prayer and praise.

+++ Those of our faithful who would like their homes blessed are asked to inform Father and arrange an appointment when convenient.

+++ Next Sunday at 9: 15 AM, we will have a Memorial Service for the repose of the soul of beloved grandmother, +Theresa Sabol requested by Robin Pasquino on the anniversary of her death. We pray the merciful Lord continues to comfort Robin and her loved ones in their loss and grants a blessed repose and Eternal Memory to the soul of +Theresa.

+++ We are pleased to announce and thank the four additional family units who joined the previous three with increased Sunday offerings, one of which is practicing tithing, that is, offering one tenth of income to our generous God. Having the example and support of these generous souls is important to the glory of our God and the good of our parish. We pray others will pray and follow their example. We pray their generosity be blessed with good health of body and soul for Many & Blessed Years!

+++ We remind our faithful that at the last Diocesan Council this past summer, the Diocesan Dues were raised, due to inflation and need, from the past \$50.00 per adult individual, eighteen years and older, to \$60.00 per year. Our envelope offering system still has the old amount on it, so please disregard that figure and make your offering according to the new mandated amount. If this offering was made in the old amount, please correct it by submitting the additional amount with a notation on the envelope because the parish must send the entire amount to the diocesan chancery.

+++ 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-end: Tithe Offering, \$[REDACTED]; Candles, \$[REDACTED]; Food Coupons, \$[REDACTED]; Pennies From Heaven, \$[REDACTED]; Holyday, \$[REDACTED]; Energy, \$[REDACTED]; Parish Dues, \$[REDACTED]; Diocesan Dues, \$[REDACTED]; Kitchen, \$[REDACTED]; Candy Sale, \$[REDACTED], for a total of \$[REDACTED]. We express our profound gratitude to the parishioner communicants who offered their God-given treasure for the sake of the Lord and the good of our parish. God bless and reward you good and faithful souls! The attendance was 41 adults and 15 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, +Paul Szmaida, Debra Szmaida, Kent Pasquino, Anna Zacharyczuk 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 check the Sign-Up-Sheet for the weekly Christian Fellowship for the coming weeks. Simple foods without need for preparation are the best. Marilyn Korba coordinates this vital apostolate. Please assist her in making it a success by bringing your donation early so that all are present at the worship of our God.

+++ Be certain your child attends the spiritual formation classes held each Sunday following the Divine Liturgy. We make a serious attempt to share the love of our Lord with all.

+++ Please be certain to see **Helen Karpiak** or 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!

+++ We remind our faithful only those who are present for the entire Divine Liturgy should come forward to receive Communion. The entire Liturgy means "Amen" to "Amen."

+++ We invite those who pledged support for the Building Fund when building is about to begin, to consider redeeming their pledges as we are preparing to apply to Millstone Township for the variance and Building Permit.

+++ 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!



Forgiving One Another

And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins Mark 11: 25.

But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your father is merciful. Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven Luke 6: 35 – 37.

So watch yourselves. If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, "I repent." Forgive him Luke 17: 3, 4.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse Romans 12: 14.

Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written, "It is mine to avenge, I will repay," says the Lord Romans 12: 19.

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you Ephesians 4: 32.

Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing 1 Peter 3: 9.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness 1 John 1: 9.



The Old Country Priest says...

Exhilaration is that marvelous feeling you get just after a great idea hits you, and exactly before you realize what is wrong with it.

Winter Humility

Have you ever felt like a winter apple tree, like a rack of empty sticks, shaking in the cold? In the silence of our prayer, it is good to remember the angels our God has sent into the barren season of our life, those times of awesome humility when we feel naked and abandoned. One of the angels speaks of the gift of life, the sweetness of which fills us with peace and joy. The second angel loves color and informs us that we are made for glory, to be together with our God. We fulfill this call by becoming fully alive. The third angel, the harvester, gathers all our deeds for an accounting in humility, we ask mercy for the bad and we give thanks for the good we have experienced. This is a good time to pray about winter feelings in our spiritual life. Always ask for the grace to become even more fully alive in Christ!



"O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory? Christ is risen and the demons are cast down. ... For Christ, being raised from the dead, has become the leader and Reviver of those who had fallen asleep." St. John Chrysostom, *Sermon on the Resurrection*.

Hades refers to *Sheol*, which was the abode of the dead, who were awaiting the opening of the gates of Paradise with the Death and Resurrection of Christ. In that state of being, the persons were deprived of the vision of God (Cf. Acts 2:24; Eph. 4:9). It is for this reason, it has also been called "hell." It is not the Hell in which the devil reigns, but rather the place for

the evil and righteous awaiting the Redeemer. Our Lord referred to this state in the parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man calling it "Abraham's bosom." (Lk 16:22ff.) Jesus went there to preach the news of victory to the dead (1 Pt. 4:6). This shows that our Lord ministered to people of all times and all places illustrating the universality of salvation. Our Lord did not go to Hell to raise the damned.

Since the dead are raised to life by the Author of Life and the power of death has been trampled, there is no reason for people to fear death. As our Lord was raised from the dead, as the first fruits of the resurrection, we too shall be raised up.



Wisdom Of
The



Byzantine
Fathers

You came into the world to save sinners; therefore You came also save me. You came to save and find him who was lost; therefore You came to seek me too, for I am one of the lost. O Lord, O my God and Creator! I should have come to You as a transgressor of Your law. I should have fallen at Your feet, cast myself down before You, humbly begging forgiveness, pleading with You and craving Your mercy. But You yourself have come to me, wretched and good-for-nothing servant that I am. My Lord has come to me, His enemy and apostate by my many sins. My master has come and has bestowed His love of mankind upon me. Listen carefully my soul: God has come to us! - St. Tikhon of Zadonsk.

He is *Revealed*
by many Names...



"...and His name shall be called..." Isaiah 9:6.

The Holy Name of our Lord, God and Saviour was revealed by the angelic visitor. Throughout salvation history, He is referred to in a variety of ways, each of which make known more and more of the enduring love of our Heavenly Father for each of us.

The Servant of God

Here is my servant whom I have chosen... Matthew 12: 18.

The Old Covenant Prophet Isaiah portrays the Son of God as a *servant*! He comes among us as the prophesied *servant*! And yet all of the Father's ways are known to Him from the beginning. While only He alone knows the Father, He delights doing His will. He is the Source of joy to the Eternal Father: *"...my loved one in whom I delight"* Isaiah 42: 1. Our Lord came among us a *servant*. He calls upon us in our baptismal vocation to live His vocation. Just as nothing was far too great for Him to do, for He is Creator, and nothing is too hard for Him, for He has all power, so we are inspired as servants of the Lord to imitate His virtue and holiness. Grace will make up for us what is lacking if our intention is to seriously and sincerely follow after Him. Nothing is too small for Him, for He stooped to even notice a widow's mite and offer us a mighty lesson from it. He yokes us to Himself in serving others. He served and did not count the cost, even to surrendering His life on the Cross for our salvation. Being servants of the Lord is necessary for believers who assume this quality and role of the Lord gladly and willingly. He submits to the Law as He is brought into the temple on the fortieth day because He is our *Servant*, the *Servant* of salvation to those who love and follow Him!



Who Me?

Yes! Exactly, you, indeed! The Lord is not only calling you, but He is looking for you as well! God desires to use you with your unique gifts and talents, just as He searched out Zacchaeus out on the limb of a tree.

Naturally, he gladly responded.

What excuse do you have? Abraham was old, Jacob was insecure, Leah was unattractive, Joseph was abused by his brothers, Moses stuttered, Gideon was poor, Samson was codependent, Rahab was immoral, David had an affair and all kinds of family problems, Elias was suicidal, Jeremiah was depressed, Jonah was reluctant, Naomi was a widow, John the Baptist was eccentric, to say the least; Peter was impulsive and hot-tempered, Martha worried a lot about the wrong things, the Samaritan Woman had a large number of failed marriages, Zacchaeus was wildly unpopular, Thomas had doubts, Paul had poor health, and Timothy was timid.

Quite a variety of misfits, but God still called them, still wanted them and when they submitted to his will, used them for His glory.

What about you?

THE SUNDAYS OF PREPARATION FOR THE GREAT FAST

The paschal season of the Church is preceded by the season of **Great Fast**, which is itself preceded by its own liturgical preparation. The first sign of the approach of Great Fast comes five Sundays before its beginning. On this Sunday the Gospel reading is about **Zacchaeus** the tax-collector. It tells how Christ brought salvation to the sinful man and how his life was greatly changed simply because he "sought to see who Jesus was" (Lk 19:3). The desire and effort to see Jesus begins the entire movement through the Great Fast towards the Resurrection. It is the first movement of salvation.



The following Sunday is that of the **Publican and the Pharisee**. The focus here is on the two men who went to the Temple to pray -- one a Pharisee who was a very decent and righteous man of religion, the other a publican who was a truly sinful tax-collector who was cheating the people. The first, although genuinely righteous, boasted before God and was condemned, according to Christ. The second, although genuinely sinful, begged for mercy, received it, and was justified by God (Lk 18:9). The meditation here is that we have neither the religious piety of the Pharisee nor the repentance of the publican by which alone we can be saved. We are called to see ourselves as we really are in the light of Christ's teaching, and to beg for mercy.

The next Sunday in the preparation for Great Fast is the **Sunday of the Prodigal Son**. Hearing the parable of Christ about God's loving forgiveness, we are called to come to ourselves" as did the prodigal son, to see ourselves as being "in a far country" far from the Father's house, and to make the movement of return to God. We are given every assurance by the

Master that the Father will receive us with joy and gladness. We must only "arise and go," confessing our self-inflicted and sinful separation from that "home" where we truly belong (Lk 15:11-24).

The next Sunday is called **Meatfare** since it is officially the last before the Resurrection for eating meat. It commemorates Christ's parable of the **Last Judgment** (Mt 25:31-46). We are reminded this day that it is not enough for us to see Jesus, to see ourselves as we are, and to come home to God as his prodigal sons. We must also be his sons by following Christ, his only-begotten divine Son, and by seeing Christ in every man and by serving Christ through them. Our salvation and final judgment will depend upon our deeds, not merely on our intentions or even on the mercies of God devoid of our own personal cooperation and obedience.

... for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you took me in, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and in prison and you visited me. For truly I say to you, if you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me (Mt 25).

We are saved not merely by prayer and fasting, not by "religious exercises" alone. We are saved by serving Christ through his people, the goal toward which all piety and prayer is ultimately directed.

Finally, on the eve of Great Fast, the day called **Cheesefare Sunday** and **Forgiveness Sunday**, we sing of Adam's exile from paradise. We identify ourselves with Adam, lamenting our loss of the beauty, dignity and delight of our original creation, mourning our corruption in sin. We also hear on this day the Lord's teaching about fasting and forgiveness, and we enter the season of the fast forgiving one another so that God will forgive us.

If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses (Mt 6:14-18).

Did You Know That ...

...just as you are lessened by lack of a good family, so is the soul deprived without a family of faith commitment to surround and influence it?

...imagine how much easier it would be for us to learn how to genuinely love if we began with a shared definition?

...it is only Christ's teaching about love that endures?

...we should make the most of ourselves because that is all there is of us?

...for the most part, fear is nothing more than an illusion so if you share it with someone else, it tends to disappear?

...because we never know what each day will bring, it is important to be open and ready to receive it?

...there is no greater joy nor greater reward than to make a fundamental difference in someone's life?

...if you want to be happy and make others happy, practice compassion?

...whatever you call it, you need your family, both natural and the faith community?

...as long as we know we are part of a faith filled team, we do not mind pulling even heavy loads?

...we cannot expect others to believe in us if we do not believe in ourselves?

...the opportunity for brotherhood presents itself each time we encounter or meet another human being?

...there are two ways of exerting one's strength; one is pushing down, the other is pulling up?

...a true friend is one who genuinely knows you, but loves you anyway?

...trouble is a sieve through which we sift our acquaintances; those too big to pass through are our friends?

A TRUE DEFENDER OF THE FAITH

While the Church has been engaged in battles throughout time against outside, non-Christian forces, some of her most damaging attacks have come from within. From the time the Church was free to practice openly, heretical movements whose teachings were contrary to the true doctrines of the Church severely divided and damaged the Christian community. Thankfully, even in the darkest times, the Church has always been blessed with individuals who were unafraid of standing up and defending our revered teachings. One such man was St. Mark of Ephesus. He was from a wealthy, prominent family, but Mark had no secular ambitions - his only desire was to serve the Lord. His life of distinguished service eventually led to his elevation to the position of "Archbishop of Ephesus."

The 15th century was a challenging one for the Church on many fronts. The Churches of the East and West had already been divided for nearly 4 centuries. Muslim invaders were conquering territories in Asia Minor; Constantinople itself would soon be under siege. The Byzantine Emperor would turn to the Pope of Rome for military assistance. The aid would be given, but at a great price: union with Rome. In 1438 AD, the Council of Florence was convened between Orthodox and Roman Catholic hierarchs to set down the terms of this "union," which called upon the Orthodox Church to make great theological compromises. Desperate for Rome's help, all of the Orthodox representatives signed the "Tomos of Union" - all except Mark. Arguing that he could never accept it based on theological compromise & political expediency, Mark will long be remembered for saying: "There can never be compromise in matters pertaining to the Orthodox Faith."

Even though documents, indeed, were signed, this union - largely through the efforts of St. Mark - was never fully accepted. Initially banished and condemned, Mark of Ephesus would eventually be acclaimed as a great protector of the Orthodox Faith.