



**"NOW IS THE TIME FOR ACTION!
JUDGEMENT IS AT OUR DOOR!"**

Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Thirty First Sunday after Pentecost

January 18, 2009

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

+++ Any of our faithful who would like their homes blessed are asked to make an appointment with Father Father as soon as possible.

+++ 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.

+++ The weekly Scripture Study meets on Sundays following the Divine Liturgy while children attend their own classes. Everyone now has an opportunity to participate in adult religious education at which Scripture is discussed and explained along with other interests.

+++ 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: Tithing Offering, ~~\$271.00~~; Candles, \$151.00; Food Coupons, ~~\$220.00~~; Christian Fellowship, ~~\$3.00~~; Candy Sales, ~~\$212.00~~; Parish Dues, ~~\$20.00~~; Building Fund, ~~\$200.00~~; Holy Day, ~~\$200.00~~; Energy, ~~\$100.00~~; Kitchen, ~~\$126.00~~, for a total of ~~\$2007.00~~. 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 39 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, Pani Buletza, Robert Gorbich, Paul Szmaida, and Debra Szmaida.

+++ 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 ~~\$200.00~~ 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 ~~\$100,000.00~~. 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.

+++ 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 ~~\$200.00~~ on this project to date!

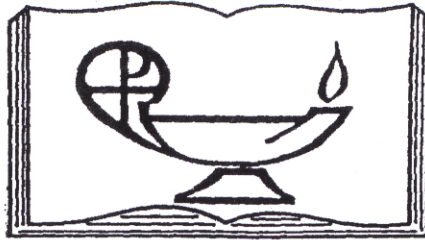
+++ As soon as possible, please see Marilyn Korba to sign up for the Alaskan Cruise next August, 2009. We are in need of your support.

+++ 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!

Think different.
Really different.

**Think like a
Believer in
Christ!**

LORD



TEACH
US

PRAYER

I turned to the Lord God, pleading in earnest prayer with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. I prayed to the Lord my God and confessed, "Ah, Lord, great and awesome God, you who keep your merciful covenant toward those who love you and observe your commandments! We have sinned, been wicked and done evil; we have rebelled and departed from your commandments and your laws. We have not obeyed your servants the prophets who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes, our fathers and all the people of Israel Justice, Lord, is on your side; we are shamefaced even to this day....But yours, O Lord, our God, are compassion and forgiveness! Yet we rebelled against you and paid no heed to your command Daniel 9: 3 - 7, 9, 10.

"Lord, teach us to pray..." Luke 11: 1.

Then David blessed the Lord in the presence of the whole assembly, praying in these words: "Blessed may you be, O Lord, God of Israel our father, from eternity to eternity. Yours O Lord are grandeur and power, majesty, splendor and glory..." 1 Chronicles 29: 10, 11.

Then Mary said, "My being proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has looked upon his servant in her lowliness; all ages to come shall call me blessed. God who is mighty has done great things for me, holy is his name; his mercy is from age to age on those who fear him. He has shown might with his arm; he has confused the proud in their inmost thoughts. He has deposed the mighty from their thrones and raised the lowly to high places. The hungry he has given every good thing, while the rich he has sent away empty. He has upheld Israel his servant ever mindful of his mercy; even as he promised our fathers, promised Abraham, and his descendants forever" . . Luke 1: 46 - 55.

Beyond our Walls

*There is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian,
slave and free; but Christ is all in all*
Colossians 3: 11.

One of the memories of early teen years is about cliques. At just about any junior high school eighth graders rarely associate with seventh graders who oftentimes bear the belittling nickname, “sevies.” Young teenagers often group within invisible lines of friendships where some people are in and others are out. Any student who dares to cross such a barrier is bound for unheard-of embarrassment.

In many ways this scene could be a backdrop to the earthly life of our Lord. In his time, Jewish society had similar lines where some people were in and others were out. The tax collectors’ extortion and their employment by the Roman oppressors excluded them from Jewish community life. Yet Jesus chose to share fellowship with these people who were considered outcasts.

Where have we drawn invisible lines that exclude others in our schools, workplaces, churches or communities? No too long ago, in a particular Orthodox parish which was predominantly of one ethnic group, when visiting Orthodox came to worship one Sunday, they were questioned, “What do you want here? Who are you? You are not ours; you have your own kind of church on the other side of town so why did you choose our church?” What is the difference between this kind of thinking and immature teen-agers? How can any one who thinks and acts like this call himself a believer in Jesus Christ? This kind of thinking reveals an absence of spirituality and religious faith conviction. It reduces the parish church to a social club and sectarian adventure. It does not see a common faith in varied Orthodox people. Scripture denounces such thinking and separates it from Christ as a deadly enemy. Orthodox people must reach beyond self-imposed barriers so they share the good news with everyone including fellow Orthodox who are of different ethnic background. That is the danger of identifying ourselves by various ethnic names; it causes separation instead, from Christ and from each other. We cannot isolate ourselves in our perversity by identifying our parish in ethnic terms. All that is important with Christ is his name as our identity. Those outside our usual circle need to be embraced and welcomed so that we imitate the example of Christ who crossed barriers to bring us good news and new life. There are people outside our ethnic community with whom we need to connect because the story of Christ is great good news for all people.

Couch Potatoes and Mustard Seeds

The apostles said to the Lord, 'Increase our faith'

Luke 17: 5.

The disciples asked the Lord for an increase in faith. Jesus told them to start using the faith they already had.

When we think about it, their request was akin to my asking God to give me a healthy body with strong toned muscles as I sit on the couch watching television and imbibe a few. Strong and energetic, zealous faith, is like a muscle; it grows stronger as it is used and exercised.

Having small or weak faith is absolutely no excuse for not acting on our faith. The boy who offered his lunch to Jesus was exercising his faith more fully than the disciples who were worrying about the impossibility of feeding the crowd. The widow who gave her “two cents” worth showed more faith than those who gave large amounts out of their abundance. The widow could have honestly and truthfully said, “I have nothing worth offering. What can I do?” And it would have been true. But she did not let her lack of funds get in the way of what she could do. She acted from a generous heart which made up what she lacked in riches. Her spirit was rich; her heart was large and her vision far beyond what is expected.

Our heavenly Father loves these small acts of kindness and people who think they have little to offer. What better way to strengthen our faith than to give the little we have and watch to see what our generous and magnanimous God will do with our little gift, how He will stretch it out and really add heavenly meaning to it!

How often so many are creative in making excuses for doing nothing to help or in making themselves a blessing for others. Instead, they should use their thinking caps and allow themselves to be used by our God. How astounded we might be if we free ourselves for our heavenly Father to work through us, in us and with us. Let us put our faith into holy action!

If you had faith the size of a mustard seed you could say to this sycamore, 'Be uprooted and transplanted into the sea,' and it would obey you Luke 17: 6.

Talking Through Trials

The Spirit too helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit himself makes intercession for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in speech

Romans 8: 26

A beautiful young woman relates to her parish priest how she felt some years ago when she was at what she thought to be her lowest point in life. She had just turned 30 years old and was still single and childless. Because her future plans had always included a husband and children, she felt like a failure and nonsensically began to think how the God who loves her could treat her so unfairly. She was getting angrier by the day!

Insidiously, the anger continued to creep into her prayer life. Oftentimes her prayers were more tears than words, so sorry did she feel for herself. All she could do was sit in silence because she felt empty inside. How often she concluded this was the last day she could ever talk with God again!

But one day as she sat forlorn, praying, she picked up the family Bible, looking for a solution to her communication problem. As she leafed through its richly laden pages, she came upon St. Paul's insights concerning prayer and felt a comforting sense of peace. Her own interpretations had led her astray; her lack of understanding left her short-changed; she had cheated herself of God's loving care!

All along, the Holy Spirit had been interpreting her tears and had been translating them into *groanings that cannot be expressed by speech*. Her painful language, her anguish of heart and soul had been heard and made acceptable to our heavenly Father so that a transforming effect was possible. God's grace does work, she thought!

What an uplifting thought that the Holy Spirit prays in us and with us and for us in times when we cannot form words of prayer. The pious believer should never forget and always remember that our heavenly Father always hears; even the unspoken cries of our heart. What a comfort that the Holy Spirit prays for us when we cannot pray for ourselves!

A constant focus of our prayer ought to be someone who is angry with God.

What I Could

Oh, that today you would hear his voice; harden not your hearts

Psalms 95: 7, 8.

Our heavenly Father speaks to us in many ways. How often we recognize his voice in something we read, in an idea that pops instantly in our mind, or in the words of those around us. How much more frequently do we hear him speaking to us while at worship at the Divine Liturgy, or in our personal prayers at home. Sometimes his voice is shattering as we relate to our children and loved ones, even when sound thinking is difficult to maintain.

A pious believer shared a story after watching an animated movie about dinosaurs. One of the creatures lamented the death of another and felt he had not done enough in the last moments of the other creature's life. But another character mildly intervened and set him straight: "You did what you could."

Her eyes filled with tears as the scene of her mother's death came to mind at the same time. She always felt that she had not done enough for her mother in the last moments of her life, and the daunting memory always haunted her. Finally relief swept over her when she heard in the seemingly inconsequential, but impartial observation of an animated figure God's word to her, "You did what you could."

We do not understand the mysterious ways of our God, yet He is always concerned about us and uses whatever means necessary to alleviate our aches and pains. Those words calmed that woman of many years of imagined regret and started her on the path toward recovery and forgiveness as her mother obviously would have wanted. Our heavenly Father realistically used a children's movie to help her hear words that would heal any wounded and suffering heart.

We do have a God of surprises who leads us along the path of salvation. No doubt she heard many sermons and homilies, read many articles, but had not been in the frame of spiritual mind and soul to properly receive and accept them. Our God, who understands us better than we understand ourselves, approached her in a way and at a time she would easily grasp his message. Since our God is patient with us and understands our limitations, He remains faithful to us if we but listen attentively as He speaks to a wounded heart. In what ways have you found our heavenly Father speaking to you?

From The Rock

*The Lord said to Moses, 'Strike the rock and water will come out of it,
so that the people may drink'*

Exodus 17: 6.

In the wilderness, the Chosen People complained to Moses that they were thirsty. The Lord told Moses to go to a rock in Horeb, strike the rock with his rod, "...and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink." What they needed more than water was reassurance they were not alone. For us and for them, in the face of adversity, an experience of the presence of God can quench our spiritual thirst like a cool drink of water.

Correspondingly, when the Lord addresses Peter and the disciples, He speaks of the rock of faith which is embodied by the profession of faith, "...you are rock and upon this rock I will build my church..." Matthew 16:18. By example, Peter reflects the spiritual strength of Christ.

The description and name of rock is ascribed to Almighty God by way of metaphor because God is the strength, the refuge and the asylum of his people, as rocks were in those places of the Holy Land, where the people retired in case of an unforeseen attack, or insurrection of the enemy. Thus even the psalmist sees the value of comparison, when he exclaims, "The Lord is my rock and my fortress; who is a rock, save for the Lord our God" Psalms 18: 2, 31? Unfortunately, after this initial recognition and conviction, David himself forsakes the values of God, the very God who created him and lightly esteems the rock of his salvation. "They spurned God who made them and scorned their saving Rock" Deuteronomy 32: 15.

God was with the Chosen People. God was among the disciples as they followed the Lord. Each time man finds himself in the wilderness of his own choosing, the rock of faith is always present if he would but look to stabilize his life by it. Today, the Church of Christ is our Rock of stable faith. If we do not remain faithful to it, the only alternative is the fruition of Christ's words, "What a fickle race they are, sons with no loyalty in them! Since they provoked me with their 'no god' and angered me with their vain idols, I will provoke them with a 'no people' with a foolish nation I will anger them....I will send upon them woe upon woe and exhaust all my arrows against them" Deuteronomy 32: 20, 21, 23.

It is our God alone who offers us water in the dried out wilderness of our lives. Let us look to the Rock of the Church to be nourished by the Lord and have our thirst quenched.

*"Well-timed silence
is the most
commanding
expression."*

—MARK HELPRIN



IN WHAT "TENSE" SHOULD WE BE LIVING?

Time is divided into 3 distinct categories: the past, the present and the future. Each has its importance in developing a proper Orthodox Christian perspective on life.

YESTERDAY . . . While we can certainly *learn* from the past, we cannot *live* there! We all have pleasant memories of days gone by, and from time to time, we all yearn to be able to return to a time or place that we nostalgically remember as being good. Likewise, who among us hasn't wished that we could go back and right a wrong, or avoid a tragic mistake we may have made? But alas, the door to the past is closed to us.

TOMORROW . . . The pace of life today almost forces us to peer far into the future and plan ahead. We long for the days of financial security and ease. We also tend to put off things that should be dealt with in a timely manner, thinking that it can wait until tomorrow. Of

course, the man in the Parable of the Rich Fool thought this way as well, and we know God's words to him: "*Fool, this night your soul will be required of you.*" (Luke 12:20) Indeed it is a wise person who understands that none of us has the key that opens the door to the future.

"Yesterday is dead and gone, and tomorrow's out of sight." Yes, these lyrics from an old Country song clearly define where we should be living: right here in the PRESENT! What we may have done in the past cannot be changed. What lies ahead for us cannot be predicted. *Now* is the time for us to follow our Lord and practice His Gospel to the best of our ability. Christ fully expects us to make good use of every precious second that we are given. We cannot afford to waste any opportunity to show ourselves worthy of His love. Remember: the door to the present will close for all of us one day as well!