



Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Sunday of the Prodigal Son

February 15, 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

+++ On Monday evening at 7:30 PM we have healing services through the intercession of St. Nectarios the Wonderworker. Please join us in prayer and praise.

+++ On Saturday morning at 9:00AM, the first All Souls' Saturday will be celebrated with Divine Liturgy and Memorial Service. Please turn in the names of your beloved departed souls and join us in prayer for their repose.

+++ The Luncheon prior to the Great Fast will take place on Sunday, March 1 following the Divine Liturgy. Everyone is invited to participate and join us in Christian Fellowship. All fast food are to be prepared. Please sign up in the kitchen so we can properly prepare with the food sheet. Forgiveness Vespers will be celebrated after the Covered Dish so that all can attend.

+++ 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: Tithe Offering, \$440.00; Candles, \$[REDACTED]; Food Coupons, \$[REDACTED]; Christian Fellowship, [REDACTED]; Parish Dues, [REDACTED]; Holy Day, [REDACTED]; Kitchen, \$[REDACTED]; Diocesan Dues, [REDACTED]; Pennies From Heaven, [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 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, Robert Gorbich, Pani Buletza, 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 \$147100 from this apostolate. Even your pennies can help and are a blessing to our parish.

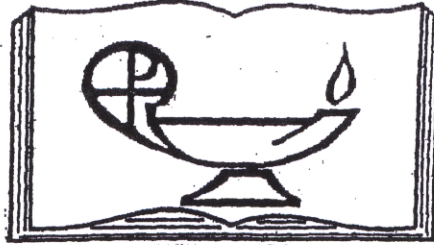
+++ For the expansion of our much needed parochial facilities, our parish pledge support to date totals \$[REDACTED]. As we thank the Lord for inspiring generosity in the hearts of our faithful, we also thank the donors for accepting the challenge of the Lord in building up His Body. We cordially invite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

+++ 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!

+++ 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.

LORD



TEACH
US

Fatherhood of God

I have no right to say who will sit on the thrones next to mine. Those places are reserved for the person my Father selects Matthew 20: 23.

Mark my words, I will not drink this wine again until the day I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom. My Father! If it is possible, let this cup be taken away from me, but let your will be done, not mine Matthew 26: 29, 42.

Then Jesus said, Father I commend my spirit to you Luke 23: 46.

And even if sinful persons like yourselves give children what they need, do you not realize, that your heavenly Father will do at least as much and give the Holy Spirit to those who ask for him Luke 11: 13?

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we have seen his glory; the glory of an only Son coming from the Father, filled with everlasting love John 1: 14.

Do not turn my Father's house into a place of business John 2: 16.

But why did you have to look and search? Did you not know that I would be here in my Father's house Luke 2: 49?

But when you pray, first forgive anyone you are holding a grudge against, so that your Father in heaven will forgive you your sins too Mark 11: 25.

PRAYING FOR YOUR PRODIGAL

I have seen his ways but I will heal him; I will guide him and restore comfort to him, creating praise on the lips of mourners Isaiah 57: 18, 19.

Dear Heavenly Father, the very thought of being able to welcome back home my prodigal thrills me. Strengthen my faith to that I will be steadfast in prayer until it happens according to your will. Help me to have a heart like that of the prodigal's father always watching over and lovingly concerned for his son's return, always ready to welcome, embrace, forgive and forget what has happened. Lord, give me the ability to communicate your love to my prodigal, no matter what the circumstances may be. Fill the heart of my prodigal with repentance and contrition for their sins, so that in approaching your mercy in the sacramental Mystery of Reconciliation, they will happily receive your forgiveness and heal the rift that has grown between us because of the separation from your mercy and enduring love.

Prayer of this kind is good, and God our Saviour is pleased with it, for he wants all men to be saved and come to know the truth. And the truth is this: 'God is one. One also is the mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus 1 Timothy 2: 3 – 5.

Intercession

Eternal Father, I thank you for having received the power in my baptism and sacramental life through Christ our Lord to take authority over the works of the evil one. By that authority we bind all lying, unclean, rebellious, God-hating anti-Christ spirits that are operating in...(Name)...s life right now. We declare their assignment against him/her are rendered null and void through the blood of Jesus Christ, our Saviour, who won the victory through his death on the Cross and by rising triumphantly from the dead. We release...(Name)...from the influence of these evils spirits. By our upright life, we will provide a good example in Christ-like life to...(Name)...We ask the Holy Spirit to reveal truth and we call...(Name)...to repentance and life in God's truth.

Our Heavenly Father will grant them repentance if they cooperate with his freely bestowed grace *...patiently and gently correcting those who contradict him, in the hope always that God will enable them to repent and know the truth. Thus, taken captive by God to do his will, they shall escape the devil's trap* 2 Timothy 2: 25, 26.

Lord God, grant me a teachable spirit, one that is gentle to all, patient and humble, being able to correct those who are in opposition to your heavenly revelation for our good. Grant...(Name)...repentance that leads to the knowledge of truth, that he/she may come to his /her senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive to by him to do his will. Grant him/her then, the grace to live a life pleasing in your sight.

Satan, the Word of God in the life of his Body, our blessed Church teaches me that you have my prodigal held captive to do your will. In the name and by the authority of Jesus Christ, whom I serve as Lord, God and Saviour in his Body, the Church established for our salvation, I command you, I tell you, to loosen and abandon from your influence...(Name)...so he/she will be free to choose and follow Christ. I repeat the very words of the Lord in the desert, *Away with you satan! You shall do homage to the Lord your God; him alone shall you adore* Matthew 4: 10. With the very same fervor of Christ I renounce you, *Get out of my sight, you satan! You are trying to make me trip and fall. You are not judging by God's standards but by man's* Matthew 16: 23.

Thanksgiving

Dear Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ, your revelation to us teaches you will sprinkle *...clean water on ...(Name)...and he/she will be cleansed and the devil's filth, foolishly embraced by my prodigal ...(Name)...will be washed away and he/she will no longer worship idols and you will give a new heart, with new and right desires and you will put a new spirit within him/her. You will take out of...(Name)...s stony heart of sin and impart a new obedient heart. And you will place your spirit in him/her so that he/she will obey you and do whatever you command. He/she will be called your people and you will be his/her God. You will cleanse...(Name)...of his/her dirty behavior; you will impart greater harvests. Sovereign Lord, when you cleanse him/her of his/ her sins you will bring him/her to live in your city and the ruins of their life will be rebuilt. The spiritual field of their soul, ever so overwhelmed by sin and decadence, empty and despoiled of goodness, will again be cultivated. And as you bring...(Name)...back to yourself, people will say, "This Godforsaken land is now like Eden's garden! I the Lord have promised this and I will do it"* Ezekiel 36: 25 – 36.

We have not stopped praying for your intention, ...(Name)...and asking God to fill you with knowledge of his will through spiritual wisdom and understanding. We pray in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord as created in his image and may please him in every way; bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has by your baptism qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light Colossians 1: 9 – 12.

For the Son of Man has come to save that which is lost. What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that strayed? And if he should find it, assuredly I say to you, he rejoices more over that one sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not stray. Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish Matthew 18: 11 – 14.

Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord...He will turn the hearts of fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to their fathers...Malachi 4: 5, 6.





WHY people do not come to the Lord

The devil holds them captive so they do his will. "...and gently correcting those who contradict him, in the hope always that God will enable them to repent and know the truth. Thus, taken captive by God to do his will, they shall escape the devil's trap" 2 Timothy 2: 25, 26.

The devil has blinded them. "If our gospel can be called "veiled" in any sense, it is such only for those who are headed toward destruction. Their unbelieving minds have been blinded by the god of the present age so that they do not see the splendor of the gospel showing forth the glory of Christ, the image of God 2 Corinthians 4: 3, 4.

The worries of this world, the deceitfulness of riches and the desire for other things choke out the Word of God. "They have listened to the word, but anxieties over life's demands, and the desire for wealth and cravings of other sorts come to choke it off; it bears no yield" Mark 4: 18, 19.

They harbor unforgiveness. St. Paul instead teaches us, "I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that the devil might not outwit us, for we are not unaware of his schemes" 2 Corinthians 2: 10, 11.

There are not enough harvesters in the field. "The harvest is great but laborers are scarce. Pray the harvest master to send out laborers to gather his harvest" Matthew 9: 37, 38.

Two Wayward Brothers

It is right that we should celebrate and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again

Luke 15: 32.

The story of the prodigal son is actually the story of two wayward brothers and their magnanimously loving father. It is a universal story that represents every member of the human race.

While riotous living may be foreign to many, the older brother's self-righteous attitude surely resonates with everyone's spiritual struggle. His sin was perhaps more serious than an out-in-the-open immoral lifestyle. That is because it was hidden, but easy to recognize only when it surfaced.

Here are its characteristics: He chose anger instead of acceptance. "The son grew angry at this and would not go it..." Luke 15: 28. Thus he separated himself from his own flesh and bone and blood. He abruptly said to his father, "...this son of yours" Luke 15: 30, instead of calling him my "...brother" Luke 15: 32. Clearly he had not experienced the astounding wonder of healing grace.

Yet it is obvious the father loved both sons unconditionally. With the prodigal, he ran out and welcomed him. And with the older son, he "...came out and began to plead with him" Luke 15: 28. There was no harsh scolding, just simple joy for the younger son and a longing heart for the older young man. What a gloriously inspiring picture of how graciously our heavenly Father relates to us and pursues us!

Which son represents you? Have you responded to your heavenly Father's immeasurable love? Nothing have we received except that which the Eternal Father offers us in the richness of his grace. Once we recognize we are but sinners saved by grace, our outlook and destiny will radically change.

Hiding My Face

You are of purer eyes than to behold evil

Habakkuk 1: 13.

Many of us are like news junkies. We like to know what is going on in the world, but sometimes the atrocities of life make us feel as if we are innocent children watching a scary movie and we don't really want to see how some news events are concluded.

Our heavenly Father reacts in a similar way. Years ago, He warned the Chosen People, the Israelites that He would turn away from them if they turned toward and chose evil. "Yet I will be hiding my face from them at that time only because of all the evil they have done in turning to other gods" Deuteronomy 31: 18. They did and He did. "According to their uncleanness and their transgressions I dealt with them, hiding my face from them" Ezekiel 39: 24.

The prophet Habakkuk had not forsaken God, but he suffered along with those who had. "Why do you show me iniquity," he asked the Lord, "and cause me to see trouble" Habakkuk 1: 3?

The response of our heavenly Father to his confused prophet indicates that even when evil obscures the face of our God, our inability to see him does not mean He is uninvolved. Our Creator says, "Look among the nations and watch, be utterly astounded! For I will work a work in your days which you would not believe, though it were told you" Habakkuk 1: 5. Our God would judge Judah, but He would also judge the invading Babylonians for their evil. "Because you despoiled many peoples all the rest of the nations shall despoil you" Habakkuk 2: 8. But through it all, "The just shall live by faith" Habakkuk 2: 4.

When world events cause us to despair, turn off the news and turn to God's revelation to us in Scripture and in the life of his Body, the Church. Be encouraged by God's message to us because the end of the story is being written by our God. Evil will not prevail. Man may start trouble, but God finishes it to his glory. Believers do not despair because of evil because God always has the last word.

WISDOM! BE ATTENTIVE

When I foolishly separated myself from Your fatherly glory, I squandered in wickedness the riches You had given me. So now I cry out to You with the voice of the Prodigal Son saying: "I have sinned before You, O merciful Father, receive me repentant and make me as one of your hired servants." Kontakion, Sunday of the Prodigal Son.

I have sown sin in a land of innocence and life and have harvested the ears of thoughtlessness. I have gathered my actions into bundles of sheaves, but I have not placed them on the threshing floor of repentance. And now I pray to You, O my God, for You are the pre-eternal tiller of our fields: With the breath of Your loving kindness, winnow the grain of my actions, feed my soul with Your grace and forgiveness. Vesper Hymn, Sunday of the Prodigal Son.

O faithful, let us discover the power of the divine mystery. The Prodigal came back from his sin and returned to his father's house; in his loving kindness his father came out to meet him and kissed him. He restored him to the glory of His house and prepared a mystical banquet on high. He killed the fatted calf so that we may share in his joy; the joy of the Father Who offers with love, and the joy of the Lamb Who gives Himself for us; for He is Christ the Saviour of our souls. Vesper Hymn, Sunday of the Prodigal Son.

I have wasted the treasure that my Father gave to me; I have lived among senseless animals; I have longed to eat the food of the swine, and because no one offered it to me I remained hungry. But now I return to my Father Who is so good, and with tears I cry out: Treat me as one of Your servants, for I no longer deserve Your love, and in Your mercy, save me. Vesper Hymn, Sunday of the Prodigal Son.

When I think upon the multitude of my evil deeds; I tremble for the terrible Day of Judgment. But trusting in the compassion of Your mercy, O Lord, I cry out to You like David: Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your great mercy. Matins Hymn, Sunday of the Prodigal Son.

O Jesus, now receive my repentance, for I have sinned as the Prodigal Son; I have spent my life in carelessness, thus provoking the anger of my God. I have foolishly wasted the divine treasure of the heritage You once gave me. By my senseless life I have separated myself from You. Accept me, O Father, in Your goodness, as I now return to You. Receive me now, Lord, as You once received the Prodigal. Open to me Your fatherly arms, and in thanksgiving I will sing of Your glory and goodness. Matins Hymn, Sunday of the Prodigal Son.

THE LASTING SPLENDOR OF MOSAICS

The reign of Emperor Justinian (527 to 565) is considered to be the most brilliant period in the history of the Byzantine Empire. This great Christian ruler was responsible for the building and decorating of some of Christianity's most remarkable churches. He was ably assisted in his work for empire and Church by the EMPRESS THEODORA, the subject of the fine mosaic of our bulletin.

The most skilled craftsmen in religious art were assembled at the capital, Constantinople, by the pious emperor. They were responsible for the world's grandest mosaics – those scenes made up of thousands of pieces of tiny colored glass which look like lovely icons that grace the walls of churches in the sixth century. The work and influence of these

artisans has extended far beyond Constantinople even into some of our churches today. A scrutiny of this mosaic of Theodora and her entourage reveals much about life in that age.

The colorful scene depicts the Empress bringing her offerings to the Church. She is accompanied by her court, richly garbed for the occasion. Theodora's elaborate headgear is adorned with bright stones, and she bears on the upper part of her dress the symbols of the gifts of the wise men, indicating the role that she fulfilled to Christ and Church. The heads are portraits, and the garments are faithful to type of clothing and style of the day. This wall-size scene, profuse with color, illustrates the grand range of this art form. Hundreds of years have not dimmed the grandeur of this event.