



Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

24 BURKE ROAD

February 24, 2008

Sunday of the Prodigal Son

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, March 9 we will have our Luncheon before the Great Fast, following the Divine Liturgy. It will be followed by Forgiveness Vespers.

+++ The first all Soul's Day is celebrated this coming week. This Saturday at 9:00 AM we will celebrate the Divine Liturgy followed by a Memorial Service in memory of our beloved departed souls. All are asked to submit the names of their departed souls and come and join us in prayer.

+++ 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]; Christian Fellowship, [REDACTED]; Food Coupons, [REDACTED]; Kitchen, [REDACTED]; Diocesan Dues, [REDACTED]; Utilities, [REDACTED]; Building Fund, [REDACTED], for a total of \$[REDACTED]0. 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 38 adults and 14 children last Sunday.

+++ We have the monthly Pirohi Sale this coming Saturday. The preparations will be made Thursday at 8:00 AM. Everyone is asked to secure orders and come and offer their helping hands to make it a success.

+++ As faithful believers, we intercede and associate ourselves in prayer with the following who have prayed and offered seven day lights for their intentions: Kyle Pasquino Bob Gorbich, Pani Lucas, Paul Szmaida, Angeliki Tsokris, Father Lucas, 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]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 \$[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.

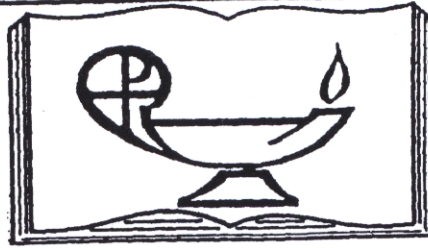
+++ Please check the Sign-Up-Sheet for the weekly Christian Fellowship for the coming weeks. Simple foods without need for preparation are the best. Marilyn Korba coordinates this vital apostolate. Please assist her in making it a success by bringing your donation early so that all are present at the 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]00 on this project to date!

+++ Please remember to take your Gertrude Hawkes Candy Catalogue and order blank NOW because we must submit orders in time for Western Easter which is March 23. The deadline for ordering is next Sunday, MARCH 3

+++ Please see Marilyn Korba to sign up for the New Ten Week Club as well as to receive information about the Alaskan Cruise next August, 2009.

LORD



TEACH
US

When Tempted

I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers. He will strike at your head, while you strike at his feet Genesis 3: 15.

Happy the man who holds out to the end through trial! Once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life the Lord has promised to those who love him. No one who is tempted is free to say, 'I am being tempted by God.' Surely God, who is beyond the grasp of evil, tempts no one. Rather, the tug and lure of his own passion tempt every man James 1: 12 – 14.

"Simon, Simon! Remember that satan has asked for you, to sift you like wheat. But I have prayed for you that your faith may never fail. You in turn must strengthen your brothers" Luke 22: 31, 32.

Everyone begotten of God conquers the world and the power that has conquered the world is this faith of ours. Who, then, is conqueror of the world? The one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God 1 John 5: 4, 5.

Stay sober and alert. Your opponent the devil is prowling like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, solid in your faith, realizing that the brotherhood of believers is undergoing the same sufferings throughout the world 1 Peter 5: 8, 9.

I do not ask you to take them out of the world, but to guard them from the evil one John 17: 15.

May I never boast of anything but the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ! Through it, the world has been crucified to me and I to the world Galatians 6: 14.

Then the God of peace will quickly crush satan under your feet. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you Romans 16: 20.

+++TWO WORLDS+++

How large is the world in which you live? We live in two worlds, our physical world of home, neighborhood and community, and, our spiritual world, to which we refer here as our mental, willful and spiritual world.

We understand in this context the physical world, it is the world in which we live our daily lives. Our spiritual world is also the world in which we live, but its size varies depending on our mental, willful, emotional and spiritual horizons. If our spiritual world is as large as our physical world, we live a balanced life. If, however, our spiritual world is intently focused on ourselves, we live an unbalanced life.

By this we mean we have the ability to concentrate so fully upon ourselves that we are not even a part of any physical world. If the only content of our brain is our very person alone, only our desires, choices and goals, only our feelings, we are living a totally selfish life, a life in which we admit no one else, a life in which we care for on one else. This is a life with out love because love, by its very definition, includes someone else. Love is a strong affection for another rising out of kinship or personal ties. And a life without love is an unChristian life. Our prime exemplar here is God the Father Who "so loved the world that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him may not die but have eternal life" John 3 16. Again, "follow the way of love, even as Christ loved you. He gave himself for us as an offering to God, a gift of pleasing significance" Ephesians 5: 2.

Examples of those who live an unChristian life are these: They are not likely to greet anyone else, neither in the church parking lot nor in the pew. They offer no assistance, neither by word or deed, to anyone, not even in time of obvious need. They resent being greeted for fear they may be petitioned for help. When obliged to communicate with another, they appear disinterested, curt, even rude. They share nothing, not even of their abundance, and jealously guard their possessions.

This kind of philosophy of life leads to other ills. Oddly enough, this non-Christian may feel more closely drawn to God in devotion, viewing God as "a shield to all who take refuge in him" Psalms 18: 31. An apposite, highly pertinent text is this one, "This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you" John 15: 12.

This selfish life can deteriorate into phobia of various kinds: fear of being robbed, fear of being deceived, fear of being followed, fear of accidents while traveling to worship, fear of entrapment, etc. To selfishness, then, there is added suspicion and distrust of everyone.

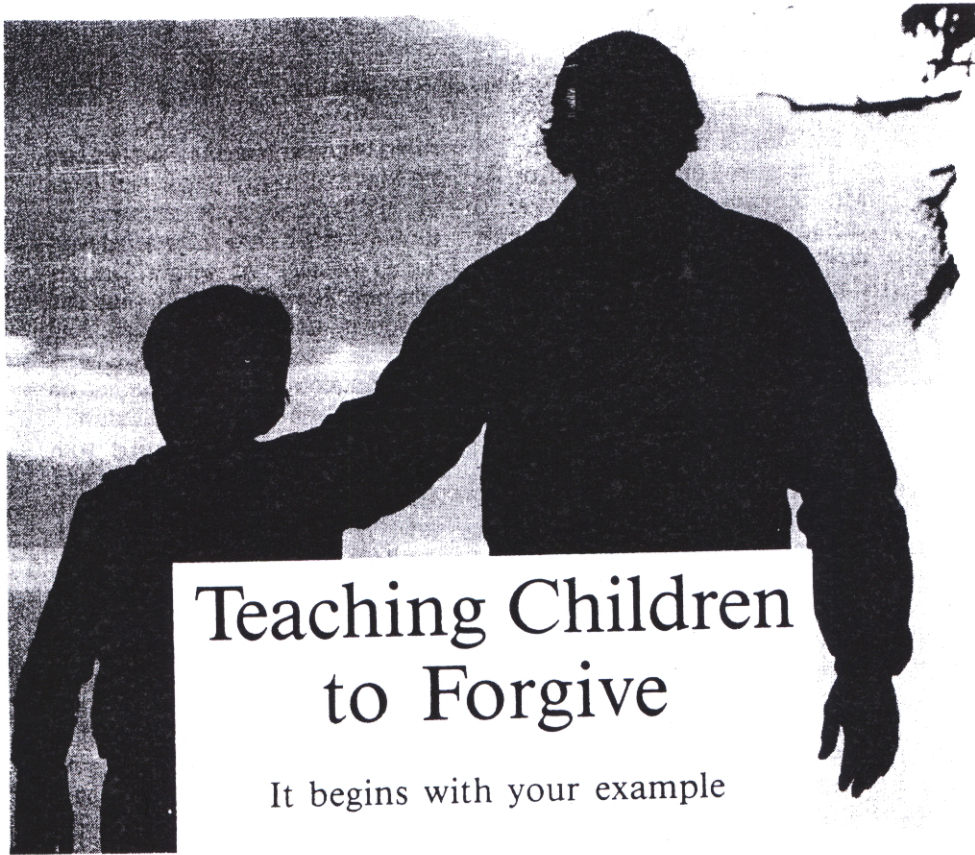
Again such a person can develop tunnel vision, even unconsciously. Tunnel vision is extreme narrowness of viewpoint, a single-minded concentration on one objective, his own. Without concerned friends, without others with whom to share conversation, and ideas, insignificant and trivial details dominate the mind, the will and the heart because such a person's spiritual world does not complement his physical world. He lives within himself and not in any home, neighborhood, or faith community. Personal ideas and opinions and perceptions become more important than reality.

Thusly, during worship services, this person focuses on the sacredness of his parking place, his exclusive use of the sitting space in the pew he generally likes to occupy each Sunday with a cold stare to anyone arriving earlier than he and taking it, the correctness of the gospel text of the celebrant, the proper sequence of the cantor's texts and the usher's routine in taking up the offering. He many times preoccupies himself with how the vestments fit the priestly celebrant and how he can get past the offering basket at Christian Fellowship unnoticed so a free cup of coffee is his due. This is genuine tunnel vision and has nothing to do with the proper disposition of the soul and mind at worship because it is the letter of the law that is lived and considered vital because rationalization of all sorts can than take place.

Selfishness, phobia and tunnel vision can eventually destroy a person's spiritual life, that is, the life of the mind, the will and the heart.

We must always be open to learning, to exchanging ideas and attitudes, to enlarging our spiritual worlds, to cultivating, developing and enriching our love life in Jesus Christ and in one another.

Otherwise we die, not only in body, but in mind, will and heart devoid of common sense to fall over.



Teaching Children to Forgive

It begins with your example

"My first lesson in forgiveness came from my father," a young adult tells his parish priest. As a child he was deeply touched by watching his dad's eager willingness to forgive an employer who refused to hire him when he needed a job desperately during the depression. The denial was simply based on religious discrimination. The depression, however, caught up with the wealthy family and left them bankrupt. Meanwhile the father began making a successful mark in local politics.

One day the former magnate's son appeared in his living room, desperate for a job. The father treated him politely and warmly and got him a job in a shipping company. When the boy asked his father why he did not "get even" the father replied, "What happened in those days was not his fault." The young man thinking about his father said, "That day I acquired a far deeper respect for him as a person of forgiveness. I am convinced that forgiveness is one of the untapped and least understood sources of healing power."

The ability to forgive is the ultimate sign of maturity in faith and social responsibility. Adults who forgive wrongs, large and small, often learned the grace of forgiveness as children. Learning to forgive the small hurts of life, in fact, may be the only way to forgive the larger pains that come in adult years. Here are some particular ways to instill this virtue in a child.

Ask to be forgiven by your child. Every adult makes errors. When that happens, an apology should be made quickly and a child asked for forgiveness. Usually a simple, straight forward sentence is sufficient: "I'm sorry I was so impatient with you this morning." That not only heals family tensions but provides a role model for children. When they hear parents asking forgiveness, children will then make the same request when they have acted inappropriately.

Extend forgiveness to your child. Living together as a family means forgiving minor and major tensions and sins. When children misbehave, there should be both discipline and forgiveness. Consider a woman who found her son growing marijuana in his bedroom. When confronted, he admitted his plan to sell the drug to other students. Though angry, the mother calmly explained her disappointment, as well as the serious moral and legal consequences of dealing in drugs. She insisted he stop immediately. The young man resented her advice, but complied. A few days later, the woman clearly stated her forgiveness and together they planned ways he could earn money honorably since he destroyed all the illegal plants.

Identify important forgivers. Help children see that influential people forgive, too. British scholar, C.S. Lewis, the author of many children's fantasy books, he had been badly hurt by a teacher. And for most of his life, Lewis could not forgive the man for the emotional abuse he suffered. But a few months before Lewis died, he wrote an American friend: "Do you know, only a few weeks ago, I realized I had at last forgiven the cruel schoolmaster who so darkened my childhood. I'd been trying to do it for years....This time I feel it is the real thing."

A parent can scan books and newspapers to identify people who forgive. St. Stephen is a prime example as we read from the *Acts of the Apostles*. He forgave the very people who stoned him to death. Look at the example of our Lord on the cross. It is inspiring to know in the depth of His desolation, He offered forgiveness to those who placed him on the cross! Identifying such individuals and providing a personal example of forgiveness lets children know forgiveness is vital in life. Study the life of Joseph in the Old Covenant and

learn how he overlooked and forgave the sins of his brothers who sold him into slavery and then assisted and helped them when famine brought them to him for help.

Reinforce success with praise. Parents should show strong approval also when a child actually does forgive someone. Every gesture of forgiveness should be congratulated with sentences such as "I know you and Mark had a big disagreement, but I am very proud of you for forgiving him." Or "I know Sarah hurt you, but in forgiving her, you show how mature you are and how seriously you take what Christ taught us." Emphasize to the child it is the teaching of Christ, with which we as parents and believers agree and subscribe, continued in the Church, that we be ready and eager to forgive if we desire forgiveness.

Use the media. Nearly everyone reads newspapers or magazines and watches some television. Here, examples of forgiveness can be found and brought to a child's attention. Dear Abby columns from time to time are affirming in this regard. Reading the letter together, along with offering some personal clarification, can help a child understand the power of forgiveness and bring home its necessity.

Point out the benefits of forgiveness. Children need to know that forgiving often leads to reconciliation and contributes to happier, more peaceful lives. Forgiveness has creative power to move us from a past moment of pain, to unshackle us from an endless chain of reactions, and to create a new situation in which both the wrongdoer and the wronged can begin a new way. Providentially, it places us in the grace and mercy of Christ because it shows us willing to submit to God's will in our lives.

Remember the virtue of forgiveness must be instilled consistently and continuously throughout a child's life. If one approach does not work, try another. If you feel you did not model forgiveness properly, be easy on yourself and try again. Remember, tomorrow will bring ample opportunities to continue teaching and learning together. Emphasize it is not your idea as a parent, but that you respond to the invitation to forgive provided by Christ Himself. In being forgiving, we become God-like.



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.

Did You Know That ...

...a pure heart will let us see God; a humble heart will let us hear God; a heart of love will let us serve God, and a heart of faith will love God?

...the spiritual life does not consist in mere individual betterment or attention to one's soul, but in a free and unconditional response to the invitation and call of the Holy Spirit?

...the spiritual life is simply a life in which all that we do comes from the center where we are anchored in and belong to God?

...the spiritual life is a life soaked through and through by a sense of God's reality and claim?

...while our God embraces us in love, it becomes clearer and clearer to us and when it is fulfilled, our joy will be full?

...we ought to apply our hearts to discipline in Christ and our ears to words that are wise?

...when the TV set becomes too important in family life, it is time to set up some serious rules?

...virtue is possible only in those spheres in which it is possible to be vicious?

...Christ always prays to the Father for those who believe in Him?

...if we are devoted to truth, we will be one with Christ?

...if you are Orthodox only because of what your father or mother taught you, you have missed the greatest adventure in life?

...if you do not recognize yourself in heaven at each Divine Liturgy, how are you going to be eager to be in God's presence for eternity?

...if Christ is our God, we will accept His ambassadors?

...if Eucharistic nourishment is vital in our lives, our participation in the Divine Liturgy on Sundays and holy days will assure our salvation?

Pirohi Volunteers

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Nadya Choti 609-397-7281
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Michael Garcia 732-780-6359
Maria Garcia 732-780-6359

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Maria Pashos 732-833-1342
Frank Pashos 732-833-1342
Anna Zacharyczuk 732-780-0169
Sue Thompson 732-251-6638

January 12, March 1,
May 3.

February 9, April 5, June
14.

Thursday Before

Father Lucas, Pani Lucas, Eleni
Pallas, Joan Henry, Anna Sabo,
Marion Peles, Betty Samaris,
Eleanor Korba, Eudoxia
Fasouletou and Anna
Zacharyczuk

THE BEATITUDES: COMMANDMENTS OF BLESSEDNESS

On a clear spring day on a sloping, flower-covered hillside overlooking the Sea of Galilee, our Lord delivered His most famous sermon to His Apostles and disciples: **THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT**. We find this wonderful homily in the Gospel of St. Matthew, Chapters 5-7. It has been said that in this idyllic setting, Christ gave His followers the New Testament "law of love." The setting in which our Savior chose to do this is in stark contrast to the cloud-covered summit of Mt. Sinai, where God gave Moses the Ten Commandments - the "law of strict righteousness" of the Old Testament. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus spoke on such topics as the power of prayer, not judging others, forgiveness, the necessity of charity, the importance of fasting properly and other vital spiritual disciplines. He also introduced "THE LORD'S PRAYER" to the multitude that had gathered to listen to His words, pointing out to them that the words of this humble supplication must be the basis of their spiritual lives. The Sermon on the Mount also found Christ introducing us to the Beatitudes. These nine "COMMANDMENTS OF BLESSEDNESS" provide us with a great insight into what condition our soul must be in if we expect to inherit eternal life in the Kingdom of Heaven. To do so, we must be merciful and pure in heart. We must be peacemakers, willing to suffer persecution for the sake of what is righteous. We must understand that others may ridicule, and even do us harm because of our beliefs.

For the next several weeks, the message of our Sunday Bulletin will focus individually on each of the Beatitudes. In doing so, it is hoped that this may aid our readers in practicing a blessed way of life. *Iconography written by Miltiadis Afentoulis*