



THE SON OF MAN HAS COME TO SEEK
AND TO SAVE THAT WHICH WAS LOST.

(Luke 19:10)

Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Fourth Sunday of the Great Fast

March 14, 2010

**Father Robert E Lucas, Pastor; 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

+++ Please join us Friday evening at 7: 30 PM for the Presanctified Liturgy. Confessions are heard prior to and after the celebration.

+++ This coming Friday and Saturday we will have our annual Spring Bake Sale for the coming feast of the Resurrection. Poppy Seed, Walnut, Apricot and Lekvar rolls are available at \$12.00 each while delightfully packaged home-made cookies sell for \$15.00 and Special Orders of Nut, Apricot Or Poppy

Seed Kifli or Roski sell for \$25. 00 a pound. Please secure orders from friends and neighbors to make this event a success. As always, we are in need of helping hands on both days. Please advise interested friends we also have some Pirohi available.

+++ 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 offering for flowers to beatify our parish church for Palm Sunday, all of Passion Week and for the glorious Resurrection will be taken next Sunday. Please use appropriate envelope and be generous in your offering.

+++ 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, \$464.00; Candles, \$39.00; Food Coupons, \$220.00; Special Gifts, \$300.00; Kitchen, \$2404.00; Great Fast Self Denial, \$60.00; Diocesan Dues, \$60.00; Bulletin, \$25.00; Refund, \$129.00; Christian Fellowship, \$4.00; Pennies From Heaven, \$2.00, for a total of \$3707.00. 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 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, Kyle Pasquino, Robert Gorbich, 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 \$1569.00 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 \$102,715.00. 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.

+++ 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 **\$5050.00** on this project to date!

+++ **We gratefully thank the generous souls who secured orders, came to prepare and make the pirohi and distributed the orders this past week. We continue to pray the good Lord blesses our devoted faithful and their loved ones for their devotion to the parish for Many & Blessed Years!**

+++ We acknowledge the yeomen service rendered to the parish by Robert Gorbich and Miguel Garcia in assembling the newly bought storage cabinets and work tables in our parish hall kitchen, along with painting and assisting at the Pirohi Sale as well. May the bountiful Lord continue to infuse his grace in the lives of these devoted souls and their loved ones for Many & Blessed Years!

+++ **Catalogues and order blanks are available for Spring Candy orders for the coming feast of the Resurrection. Please secure orders from friends and relatives to assist our parish. *Deadline is next Sunday!***

+++ 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."

+++ 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!



Birthday
Wishes!

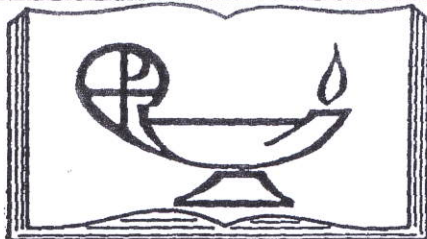
We are pleased to greet those of our faithful communicants who celebrate their birthday this month. Our Lord has offered these souls yet another year of blessed life. The most obvious way He blesses us and participates in our life is by sharing His divine life with us in the Eucharist at the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. Thus we can gather together and offer thanks to Him for yet another year of life blessed by His most gracious hands. Today, we prayerfully remember in the Divine Liturgy the following souls who celebrate their birthday during the month

March 1 Kevin J. Henry
March 5 Nina Marya Harrison
March 5 Christopher M. Simon
March 10 Anna Zacharyczuk
March 14 Robert Gorbich
March 18 Damian Velez

With a prayerful heart and grateful soul, our parish faith community asks the Lord to continue to bless these birthday celebrants with good spiritual and physical health for the coming year. We invite all to add their intercessory prayers so that with one voice and one heart we may also participate in the grace and joy of their celebration. As we wish them a happy and blessed celebration of their birthday, our ardent prayer is that the Lord will continue to bless them for

Many and Blessed Years

LORD



TEACH
US

Perfection

If anyone can control his tongue, it proves that he has perfect control over himself in every other way James 3: 2.

After you have suffered a little while, our God, who is full of kindness through Christ, will give you his eternal glory. He will personally come and pick you up and set you firmly in place and make you stronger than ever 1 Peter 5: 10.

But those who do what Christ tells them to will learn to love God more and more. That is the way to know whether or not you are a Christian 1 John 2: 5.

For though we have never yet seen God, when we love each other God lives in us and his love within us grows even stronger 1 John 4: 12.

No one who has become part of God's family makes a practice of sinning, for Christ, God's Son, holds him securely and the devil cannot get his hands on him 1 John 5: 18.

And now, all glory to God. He is able to keep you from slipping and falling away, and to bring you, sinless and perfect, into his glorious presence Jude 1: 24, 25.

The person who has been born into God's family does not make a practice of sinning because God's life is in him, so he cannot keep on sinning, for this new life has been born in him and directs him, he has been born again. So now we can tell who is a child of God and who belongs to satan. Whoever is living a life of sin and does not love his brother shows that he is not in God's family John 3: 9, 10.

What Would You Trade For Jesus?

Centuries ago, ancient merchants originated a phrase which came to serve as the universal rule for trade and commerce: "The value of anything is determined by how much it can be traded for." Ironical as this may seem, one of the greatest illustrations of this principle comes from the tragic story of Christ's betrayal by one of his own disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was the treasurer of the twelve, traded his loyalty, his devotional love for Jesus along with salvation of his soul, for some thirty pieces of silver.

Judas simply traded Christ for something which he felt was of higher value to him. After being with Christ daily, witnessing the miracles and wonders, that Judas only considered the Saviour of the universe worth but a mere trifling thirty pieces of silver! The infamous downfall of Judas is really a story of warped values. He simply failed to recognize the true worth, the vast preciousness of his relationship with Jesus Christ. "Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the value of him who was priced, whom they of the children of Israel priced" Matthew 27: 9.

Twisted values are not at all uncommon in other biblical accounts, such as the story of the twin brothers, Jacob and Esau (Genesis 25). A special blessing and inheritance from their father Isaac belonged to the first-born son. Esau. But Esau lacked a full appreciation for his inherited birthright dignity.

In contrast, Jacob realized its astronomical value and coveted the birthright. He eventually found a scheme to transfer its rights to himself. At a time that Esau was famished, Jacob offered him a bowl of lentils in exchange for the birthright. Although this offer was in no way equitable, amazingly, Esau agreed to trade his birthright for a single, simple bowl of beans because he was famished!

What distorted values Esau had! Sold his soul to fill his belly! But is it any different than the petty inferior things that many people trade for spiritual treasures?

What if the Lord addressed a letter to each of us and promised to personally meet with us on a Sunday morning? Sunday comes but we begin to feel differently, or perhaps, more realistically we feel indifferently! There are so many other things which we prefer to do. Church can be omitted, the worship and presence of Christ can be forgotten this one day, we rationalize to ourselves.

Nobody will miss us, certainly with so many others there, even God will overlook our absence we think in the imagination of our empty heads. Maybe we just don't want to contend with the weather, so we remain in the warm and embracing bed all Sunday morning, thinking we'll go next Sunday, so it does not matter!

Would you not say that whatever else you selected to do, instead of meeting and encountering Christ, would say something about the significance of your relationship with him? If He is not the most important person in all the world to you, what then is your relationship with him? Would it not mean that, just like Judas, you have established your value of Christ and it is not realistic? Would it not mean that whatever else you chose to do is far more important than spending some time with the Lord of the universe?

If you are the one responsible for your family worshipping, for them also being present here each Sunday and holyday, and you neglect to see they are in fact in the company of the Lord, are you making his value to them as well, far less than reality requires? Are you eager to assume responsibility for their absent sinfulness because you wish to indulge your own fantasies and neglect to think about their validity?

How can we ever forget the Lord taught us that whenever believers gather in his name, He will always honor that gathering with his presence? Don't our families, our loved ones, our children, don't we along with them, need the company and constant presence of the Lord? Or do we need him only when we decide? "For when two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there in the midst of them" Matthew 18: 20.

In other words, He gave his word to be present whenever two or more believers come together in his name. So, if He keeps his promise, why don't we? What do we offer as a trade in for the presence of Christ? So do we really believe his word? Do we accept its value? Many figure our Lord is not speaking the truth because so many snub him rather easily and glibly on His day by simply not showing up where He promised to be.

Either they do not believe the Lord or they have established a very low estimate of his worth. The commandments teach us to keep holy the Sabbath day and worship him. Is his insight more valuable to our own feeble understanding or do we dismiss it cavalierly? What gods have we created to take his place because whatever is more important to us than God becomes our god!

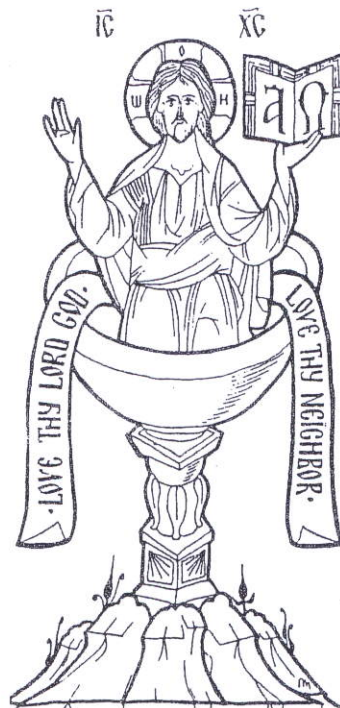
The things that keep us away from Christ are the things that we judge are far more important than He is in our lives. The things that keep us away from Christ reflect the value that is placed on the Lord. Why is it that God's revelation to us associates and connects the neglect of church attendance to behavior worst than sin? Mere absence from church is not in itself a sin, but a pattern of absence always leads to, or has a relationship to sin and is not pleasing in the sight of our Creator who teaches us in the words of St. Paul about "...not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and much the more as you see the Day approaching. For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins" Hebrews 10: 25, 26.

Judas was unfaithful. And unfaithfulness to the Body of Christ is just as offensive in the sight of our heavenly Father as is unfaithfulness to Christ himself. Scripture teaches us: "...it keeps us in spiritual influence that would encourage us and keep us from falling away from the Lord" Hebrews 3: 12, 13. Absence from church keeps us away from encouragement toward repentance and reconciliation should we fall into sin 1 John 1: 9; Galatians 6: 1. It prevents our faith from being built up by hearing the word of God preached and explained to us Romans 10: 17. It keeps us from obeying the Lord's command to demonstrate love for the brethren which keeps us from falling into sin 1 John 2: 10; John 15: 12. It prevents us from receiving correction and submitting ourselves to spiritual authority and makes us independent of the Lord Hebrews 13: 17. It expresses unbelief and disobedience to God's Word which teaches us to fellowship with each other and to assemble together and provide a good example and encouragement to each other 1 John 1 :7; Hebrews 10: 25. It shows disregard toward the call to worship the Lord collectively as his Body Psalms 22: 22; 35: 28; 107: 32. It shows our lack of discernment of the Lord's Body of which we are supposed to be communicants Matthew 25: 14; 1 Corinthians 11: 29. It demonstrates a lack of self-sacrifice and discipline Luke 18: 20. It is a sign of omission in that we know it is good to be faithful to the Church James 4; 17, but we decide to absent ourselves on our own authority which we feel is more important than that of Christ.

As for Esau the value he placed on the things of God was only worth a bowl of beans which he traded in exchange for his birthright to his brother Jacob. He never dreamed God would not accept his judgment or interpretation. For Judas the things of God were worth only a slightly higher price, some thirty pieces of silver which he exchanged for the betrayal of Jesus.

What about us? What is our value placed on the things of God? What price will it take to keep us away from our church and its spiritual values and treasures? If we ever think being a follower of Christ is something that we can do out of convenience, we are sadly mistaken. But by the time we come to that truthful reality, it will be entirely too late. We will be in the place we ardently desired, but did not want to end up in. Our God is not interested in our leftovers, our crumbs because He must be highest priority in life or he becomes worthless. In order to serve Christ, it requires sacrifice on our part, it must be an investment of our time, our treasure, and our talents, our entire lives "nor will I offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God with that which costs me nothing" 2 Samuel 24: 24.

If we wish to know how much God values us, we simply look at the Cross and to the sepulcher. "No greater love has anyone than he who would lay down his life for his friends" On Great and Holy Friday, the emphasis is made on how greatly He values our friendship. Simply gaze at the cross and know how much you are worth in his eyes. Then think about how much value He ought have in your judgment. Then live up to that conviction and conclusion!



Many Believed

Many believed in his name when they saw the signs which he did
John 2: 21.

Nature groans and suffers as a result of the fall of humanity, as St. Paul observes, “Yes, we know that all creation groans and is in agony even until now. Not only that, but we ourselves, although we have the spirit as first fruits, groan inwardly while we await the redemption of our bodies” Romans 8: 22, 23. Nature nevertheless remains obedient to the Master’s voice. Creation may be marred by sin, but it is not deaf to the Creator. Nature’s awesome power instantly yields to the instruction of Jesus. People give mixed reaction to the words of the Lord, but winds and waves and water obey. People cling to old wineskins while water gleefully becomes wine. Dried fish and crusty loaves multiply in a small cascade of food enough to fill a multitude. Fish find their way to the other side of a boat and waiting nets.

The power of our Lord over nature carries a quiet, sure demeanor. His acts are deft. It is not his command or prayer that got the attention of people, it is what happens after He speaks. As we meditate briefly on the ongoing role of Jesus as Creator, visualize in your mind, in your heart and of course, in your soul, the effects of his heavenly authority in your life. Listen carefully for his voice and how He speaks to you.

“The spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free...” Luke 4: 18. The signs and miracles confirmed what Jesus taught earlier in the synagogue in Nazareth, when He claimed to fulfill the prophecy of the One, who as the Lord’s anointed, would bring “good news to the poor,” would bring God’s salvation, would bring the answer to the judgment that was facing those who rebelled against God. The evidence of this would be the mighty miracles they would witness performed. So the miracles were not only intended to accomplish wonderful things, although they did that; they were also intended to establish the identity of Jesus and ultimately give credibility to the good news He came to proclaim.

So believers, then, come to understand the role of miracles with Jesus. They were more than ample proof of the existence in his Person or the force beyond nature that could and would act within it. This is good news! This is powerful news! This is hopeful news for all who follow the Saviour. His signs reveal uniquely him as the Power who could reverse the very forces of

death and destruction that plague the world. What astoundingly good news our Lord delivers with each sign and miracle, even if it does not directly involve us!

The enemy which Jesus confronted and challenged in his public life among us was not the Roman oppressor, but the spiritual power of darkness, the dominion of satan. "If I by the finger of God cast out demons," he said, "then the kingdom of God has come upon you" Luke 11: 20. The proclamation of the advent of the divine kingdom stirred up especially hostile activity in the realm of evil, which felt its dominion threatened. The superior power of the kingdom of God is seen in the release of those whose minds and bodies are held in spiritual bondage: Jesus not only proclaimed but effected liberty to the captive and release to the enchained" Isaiah 61: 1. In doing so He knew himself to be the agent of the Father in our midst who desired the well-being, not the suffering of his created children.

At that time the air in the synagogue was hot and tight and heavy. Hearing the words, "...to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor..." Luke 4: 19, formally announced by the town's citizen was somewhat astounding, but somewhat less enchanting. The attendant handed Jesus the scroll of Isaiah. He quietly unrolled it, found the verses He was looking for, and began to speak with the voice of uncommon authority. He stops in the middle of the verse. Just like that, Jesus left it unfinished and sat down. The eyes of everyone were fastened on him. Little wonder, they had never heard the prophecy of Isaiah read in exactly such a way, like the words were his own. Finally, Jesus breaks the silence, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

So from the very beginning, our Lord makes it clear his agenda, his purpose, his vocation is not to execute the wrath of God, but to bear in his own body the same wrath, to bear within himself our sinfulness, our transgressions, our guilt. He makes his own the fury of the Father over our separation and unbelief.

All of the justified anger of the Father, all the white hot anger against our sinfulness is poured out on the cross. Because of Jesus, the Eternal Father has no anger left for each of us if we but repent, remain penitential and respond to his love genuinely.

Jesus says to us:

WISDOM! BE ATTENTIVE

O John our father, God-bearer, hermit of the desert and angel in the flesh; you received heavenly gifts by your fasting, vigils, and prayers. You healed the sick and those coming to you with faith. Glory be to the One Who gives you strength; glory be to Him Who crowned you; glory be to the Lord Who heals all through your intercession Troparion, Fourth Sunday of the Great Fast.

O John, our leader and father; the Lord has placed you on high as a true guiding star lighting the ends of the earth with the truth of your virtue Kontakion, Fourth Sunday of the Great Fast.

Let the faithful exult in glory; let them sing for joy and take their rest Prokimenon, Fourth Sunday of the Great Fast.

Having heard the Gospel of the Lord, O venerable Father John, you left this world, counting as nothing the riches and glory that it offered. Then you cried out to everyone: Love the Lord and you shall find eternal favor, for nothing is preferable to His love. And when He shall come in glory, you will find repose with all the saints. Through their prayers, O Christ, grant great mercy to our souls Vesper Hymn, Fourth Sunday of the Great Fast.

We now behold a new mother, greater than the wonders of old. For who has ever known a mother to bear a child without the help of man? Who has known a mother to hold within her arms the Source of all creation? It was God's own will to be born in this manner, and you, O most pure Virgin, carried Him as an infant in your arms. Because of this, you can approach God with the boldness of a mother. Therefore, we venerate you and ask you to always beseech Him to have mercy on us and save our souls Vesper Hymn, Fourth Sunday of the Great Fast.

Traversing the path of this life, I have been sorely wounded by the thievery of passions; lift me up, O Christ, I beseech You. My soul has been stripped by thieves; they have left me half dead along the path, wounded by the blows of my sins; now deign to heal me, O Lord. By my passions, O Christ our Saviour, I have been stripped of Your commandments; sensual pleasures have struck me down; pour out the oil of Your love upon me Matins Hymn, Fourth Sunday of the Great Fast.

“THIS MAN RECEIVES SINNERS”

When we read the Gospels, it is evident that while our Lord had many followers, He also had His share of critics. Whenever Jesus made any reference to His Divinity and to His Heavenly Father, an uproar would ensue. His miracles and healings were also a cause for criticism from those who felt threatened by His unexplainable powers. But perhaps the most negative reactions received by Christ came from a seemingly innocent aspect of His ministry: His association with sinners. The Pharisees -- the religious "elite" of their time -- would look on with horror as our Lord included people that they deemed sinful among His acquaintances. When our Savior called Zacchaeus down from his perch in a sycamore tree and invited Himself to be a guest at his house, they were aghast! "How can this Man go to the house of someone who is a great sinner?" they would ask. Luke's Gospel speaks of an occasion when tax collectors and sinners gathered around to listen to our Lord speak. Naturally, the scribes complained: "This Man receives sinners and eats with them!" Yes, the Gospels are filled with similar examples of Christ's enemies repeatedly expressing this sentiment.

But our Lord never wavered -- He always had the perfect answer for His critics. He would remind them that those who ill are in need of a physician, not those who are healthy. And it makes it very clear: "There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance." (Luke 15:7)

During the Lenten season, we are reminded that Christ still reaches out to those who are sinners. During this sacred time of year, we are implored to take a "spiritual inventory" of our lives and recognize the many ways we fall short of God's expectations for us. We are urged to confess our sins and repent as we promise to better our lives. As we do this, we are gently reminded that our souls are of great concern to our Master. After all, He died on the Cross for OUR sins also.

Icon by Austin Kachek - Manville, NJ

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