



**FIRST
SUNDAY
OF
GREAT
LENT**



**March 16,
2008**

SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY

Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Orthodoxy Sunday

March 16, 2008

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

+++ We thank all the good souls who contributed to making the Spring Bake Sale a success, those who prepared for it, those who came and baked, those who solicited orders and those who came and cleaned up afterwards. May the Lord bless you for your gracious efforts in behalf of the parish. We pray God grants good health to all participants and workers along with their loved ones for Many & Blessed Years!

+++ **Wednesday evening at 7: 30 PM, we will celebrate the Divine Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts. Confessions are heard prior to the services. Father is preaching a series of homilies on the miracles of forgiveness for our benefit. Come and praise our God and grow in faith response to God's first shown love.**

+++ **The second All Souls' Saturday will be celebrated this week at 9:00 AM with Divine Liturgy and Memorial Service. Please submit the names of your beloved departed if you have not yet done so. Please come and join us in prayer for our departed souls.**

+++ **On the third Sunday of the Great Fast, known to us as the Sunday of the Veneration of the Life-Giving Cross, we will have a Communion Breakfast after the Divine Liturgy. On Saturday, March 29 Father John and Father Robert will hear confessions following a Penitential Service at 3:00 PM ALL our faithful should come this day to have their sins forgiven so we can all celebrate in joy the following day at the Communion Breakfast.**

+++ **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, \$443.00; Candles, \$35.00; Raffle, \$70.00; Food Coupons, \$520.00; Kitchen, \$69.00; Pennies From Heaven, \$40.00; EnergyDonatin, \$100.00; Great Fast Sacrificial Offering \$11.00, for a total of \$1293.00. 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 38 adults and 14 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: Pani Lucas, Paul Szmaida, Debra Szmaida Robert Gorbich, Maria Garcia, 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 \$1299.00 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 \$92, 405. 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 \$4000.00 on this project to date!**

+++ Gertrude Hawkes Candy Orders are available in the vestibule of the Church. Please make your returns as soon as possible.

+++ We thank our good parishioner, Paul Pallas, who, having won the 50/50 drawing last Sunday, returned it as a gift to the church. May the Lord continue to bless him and his loved ones with good health for Many & Blessed Years!

+++ We encourage our faithful during this Great Fast to offer up the grace of their fasting and penitence for the speedy success and completion of our building program.

+++ 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.

+++ We have some remaining rolls and cookies and pirohi available from the recent sales. Please see the woman in the kitchen to secure yours if you had no order.

+++ May all glory, adoration, 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!

Having endured the passion for us, O Lord, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us!

Web Site Address

Parish:

Father's address:



God Is Our Avenger

Do not repay evil for evil. Wait for the Lord to handle the matter Proverbs 20: 22.

For we have had experience of him who says, Punishment is mine. I will give reward. And again, the Lord will be judge of his people. We may well go in fear of falling into the hands of the living God Hebrews 10: 30, 31.

Whoever shuts his ears to the cry of the poor will also cry himself and not be heard Proverbs 21: 13.

Do not rejoice when your enemy fails and do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles; lest the Lord see it and it displease him and he turn away his wrath from him Proverbs 24: 17, 18.

Do not take away the property of the poor man because he is poor or be cruel to the crushed one when they come before the judge. For the Lord will give support to their cause and take the life of those who take their goods Proverbs 22: 22, 23.

O Lord to whom vengeance belongs, O God, to whom vengeance belongs, show yourself. Lift up yourself, judge of the earth; render a reward to the proud. Lord, how long shall the wicked how long shall the wicked triumph Psalms 94: 1 – 3?

The sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain 1 Corinthians 15: 56 – 58.



O JESUS, Savior, all the ancient prophecies concerning You are feeble. They convey as little as the burbling of fish, for they fail to explain how You remained God and became a perfect man. We likewise, amazed, sing to You with faith :

O Jesus, eternally God!
O Jesus, King of kings!
O Jesus, Judge of the living and the dead!
O Jesus, Hope of the hopeless!
O Jesus, Comforter of those who weep!
O Jesus, Glory of the lowly!
O Jesus, do not judge me according to my deeds!
O Jesus, let me not despair!
O Jesus, enlighten my spiritual powers!
O Jesus, keep before me the idea of death!
O Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me!

The Source of Light came to those groping in darkness, and being incarnate, submitted even to death because He wished to save the world. For this reason, your Name is hymned above all others, and from all heavenly and earthly creation is heard : Alleluia.

Overcome The Evil Of Life

Walk with me at this time down the hall of a great hospital into a room where a mother and her newborn baby are placed. Standing with them is the husband and father. Here is a fine couple who have lived good upright lives. They rejoiced over their coming baby. Now it is finally here, but was born blind. The parents are heartbroken. “Why did God let this happen?” is the continually repetitive question which rises from the depth of their hearts.

In another room is a young man almost bent double over with pain. He has cancer in such a stage nothing can be done for him. We visit a young lady in her teens stricken with polio. She will be crippled the rest of her life. Here is a dear woman suffering from excruciating pain of arthritis. Why does our God permit disease in the world He created?

Sit with me in my study. In walks a young woman, the mother of two children. She was so happy until one night the phone rang to tell the news that her husband had been killed in an auto accident. Why did our heavenly Father let that happen? Another comes with the blight of a great disappointment, another in a situation which is destroying all chance of happiness. Why doesn't our all-powerful God prevent such things?

We have all read how the damage of the hurricane in the gulf coast killed so many people and did incalculable damage in homes and property. Earthquakes shake a city to pieces. A drought hangs on so long that farmers lose everything and people go hungry. Surely our God knows about the injustices of nature. Why does He permit them to continue?

More specifically there is the fact of sin, of evil desires, of temptations on every hand. Lives are blighted, the conscience is burdened; both the innocent and the guilty are made to suffer. Why? Surely God is stronger than evil. If He loves us and is concerned about us, why doesn't he take out of our lives all temptations and set us free? Why does He tolerate evil?

“Be of good cheer,” Christ said, Never forget, there is always room for cheer as long as we have faith in and maintain friendship with him who has overcome the world. It offers us the possibility of doing the same by his grace.

Evil Is Creative

We recall the story of a woman who encountered a profound sorrow in her life which caused her so much emotional pain she truthfully and bitterly exclaimed, “I wish I have never been born!” The parish priest to whom she vented such misery responded by telling her the Maker was not yet finished with her, that she was in the process of being made; that her creation was continuing, that it was on-going and she apparently took more time than others. Every great painting has its shadows as well as light and so does every great life.

As you look back over your own life, ask yourself what experiences have blessed and taught you the most. What would you name first? Some picnic you attended with friends? Some delightful, carefree hour? No, you would list some sorrow or disappointment, some difficulty or frustrated hope, some dream that flickered and died or some hurt that has left a permanent mark on your heart. The most creative force in the world is evil.

It is our response to evil that built our hospitals, our schools, our churches. The pain of sickness, the blight of ignorance and the burden of sin have been creative forces. Because of the pain of walking, we created a way to ride. Because of the suffering that a bitter cold winter can bring, we created a way to heat our homes. Nearly every good we have has come as the result of impending and threatening evil. Look at the man who never noticed the suffering of others, but when he encounters a promising young man with pain of loss and pain of illness, is aroused in heart and soul to respond and alleviate at least some of the needs caused by evil in our world. Our God has come to us, has offered us the truth of salvation and we rejected it and placed ourselves in an environment in which we must struggle, in which we must suffer by our own poorly thought out choices, towards perfection. Because of our sinfulness, we must struggle with our home work, we must struggle to keep our homes clean, to endure the opposition of the devil to achieve our own salvation. Yes, parents can easily do the homework for their child, but if they do, they also destroy his life. The child must learn what it amounts to struggle, to achieve on one’s own, to become a success by the grace of God.

His revelation to us in Scripture particularly teaches and affirms it is He who created this universe, that nothing exists apart from his creation. Scripture also teaches that God is good and is kind and is unchangingly loving. We are also taught that God has infinite knowledge and infinite power. But how can we reconcile blind babies, cancer, the resurgence of polio, accidents, hurricanes, sunamies, the existence of sin and all the other evils of the world with a loving, all-powerful Creator God?

Sometimes the evil of the world causes people to doubt that God cares about the individual. Sometimes evil causes one to doubt about the goodness of God. Sometimes, evil causes one to doubt the existence of God. Years ago a man wrote a series of verse, a poem, in fact, entitled, "The Listeners," in which he wonders if really there is "Anybody there." Even when we hear and listen to a little crippled child singing, "I am so grateful that Jesus loves me..." we sometimes cannot help but wonder.

We are not surprised that around us people exclaim that God sits in heaven and does nothing. Or that the psalmist would plead, "Do not keep your silence, O God, do not hold your peace and do not be still, O God, for your enemies are noisy" Psalms 83: 1, 2.

Concentrate on the Wheat

In facing the problem of evil in the world, Jesus gave us a parable. A man had a field in which he had sown good seed. While he slept an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat. After the wheat and the weeds had grown enough for their difference to be recognized, the servants wanted to go immediately and pull out the weeds. But the owner said no because in so-doing, they would also uproot the beneficial wheat. Instead, he said, let them grow together until the harvest, when they would more easily be separated.

When we face the evil of the world, we wonder why God does not root it out. If evil is not God's will, then let him remove it, we insist. We heard it said again and again, "Why doesn't God strike evil men dead?" Some people even pray for that to happen, but they really do not want their prayer answered. Hitler, Napoleon, Stalin in our minds represented evil and what they are saying is that God should destroy evil. Now

we have added Saddam to the list and as a nation we are making the mumbled prayers of the government and individuals become reality.

But we must remember that our God is impartial and fair in his dealings with man. So many world leaders have been evil, but so are we. Abraham Lincoln taught from his insightful experience that "There is so much good in the worst of us and so much bad in the best of us that it ill-behooves all of us to complain about the rest of us." Each of us, as we think about it, is a bewildering mixture of good and evil. Even in the first disciples, the twelve Christ chose for his intimate friends, we see the weeds growing with the wheat, in cowardice, selfishness, harsh-judgments and unkind criticism and self advancement, even envy and pride. How much more true is it for you and me that along with that good we possess also that much evil.

Our God rejects the method of the servants in the parable. They wanted to focus their attention just on the evil and root it out. But since the good and the evil in the world and in human life are so bound together, the rooting of it out would destroy us. Sickness and death, sorrow and joy, sin and righteousness, hate and love, life and death all grow from the same roots. Destroy the possibility of one and you also destroy the possibility of the other.

Instead of pulling out the weeds, a purely negative method, Jesus concentrated on the wheat. He would encourage and sustain the best in us and our world until we fulfill the remedy of St. Paul. "Be not overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good" Romans 12: 21. Jesus himself said, "In the world you will have troubles; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" John 16: 33. Instead of simply removing evil, God is doing something better. He helps us overcome it because it is we who introduced it into the world.

We must remember the difference in what God allows and what God intends. He allows sin. He did not intend sin. It has been well stated that "the capacity for sin and the capacity for communion with God are the same capacity." The freedom to choose evil and the freedom to choose good is the same freedom. For God to take all the evil out of the world would leave us spineless, jellyfish creatures. But to give us the power to overcome the evil through cultivation of good makes us like him who is our God.

We have all made mistakes. We get ourselves into situations which seem hopeless, some weakness in our lives seems as though it will ruin us, some wrong in our lives weighs heavily on our conscience, some pain or physical handicap destroys the joy of our living. We feel defeated and beaten down. Then we are reminded to turn to our precious faith which assures us there is a loving and protective and enabling affirmative God. Through our faith we begin to conquer the evil in our lives; the through faith we become what we are destined to be.

But what about those sorrows that no amount of faith can eliminate? Our Lord taught us, "In the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather together first the weeds and bind them in bundles and burn them; but gather and bring the wheat into my barn" Mathew 13: 30. Our God is telling us He is not finished with us yet. We have a part to play and to contribute to our own creation.

If any of us had to judge all the experiences of this life just on the basis of this world, I would be completely at loss to believe in the final triumph of God. But we do not believe as citizens simply of this temporal world; we believe as followers and disciples of Christ, as communicants of His Body, the Church which leads us to final victory and triumph in Christ. We believe there is more to follow beyond this life; and upon this fact we base our faith and we refuse to surrender to evil. Death did not defeat God in Jesus Christ our Saviour and his divine Son, death became the means to his final victory. In a world like ours, we will, we must link our lives to Christ so that through our difficulties we can overcome them and reign with him for all eternity.



Is your soul being prepared to properly celebrate
the coming victory of the
Glorious Resurrection?

Did You Know That ...

...death may yet become for us the greatest of all human blessings?

...death is not as fearful as to be we know not what or not where?

...for some done with the task of breathing, the golden goal attained will be found only in a hole?

...man is the only one who can contemplate death, but also the only one to doubt its finality?

...saints die peacefully in certitude that death is not for them a calamity?

...the living are the dead on temporary holiday?

...death is nothing more than transition?

...as long as we live, death has not come, and when it does come, we do not?

...for the soul that is faithful to Christ, it matters much when we miss the Divine Liturgy?

...death rides on every passing breeze; it lurks in every flower?

...virtue is not the child of good actions, but the good intention behind these actions?

...both the sick and those who care for them receive an equal reward?

...during the Divine Liturgy we hear truths we should think about all week?

...our work is not what life is all about, it is our worship of God?

...the believer if filled with meaning input each time he worships?

...worship does not consist in getting emotionally revved up?

...in our parish we are interested in each souls' personal faith journey?

...worship is not being made to feel good, but to glorify and exalt our Creator God?

PERFECTING A VIRTUE AND FILLING A NEED . . .

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BLESSED ARE THE MEEK, FOR THEY SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH.

B In today's world, meekness is often viewed as being a negative trait. We think of a meek person as being timid or weak - someone who can be manipulated. For a Christian, however, meekness is something totally opposite in meaning. In reality, a meek person is a strong person who understands that God is in control of our lives. It is an imitation of Christ, Who said: "Learn from Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." (Matthew 11:29) Those who are truly meek readily submit to the will of God and reject the temptation to follow their own path. In viewing this Beatitude, we must be careful not to misinterpret what our Lord is promising the meek. It is not any worldly glory that He is offering them, but rather the ". . . new earth in which righteousness dwells" (2 Peter 3:13) - the Kingdom of Heaven.

**BLESSED ARE THEY THAT HUNGER AND THIRST AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS,
FOR THEY SHALL BE FILLED.**

B We have all experienced severe hunger and thirst in a physical sense, haven't we? It is a very strong sensation that does not cease until our appetite has been satisfied. In like manner, Christians must cultivate a burning desire to embrace a life of righteousness, constantly seeking Godly things. This yearning is beautifully expressed in Psalm 42:1-2: "As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God. My soul thirsts for the living God." Christ promises that those who "hunger and thirst after righteousness" will be filled. He will give them inner peace and satisfaction, delighting them with the knowledge of His divine truths. Psalm 17:15 echoes this joyful thought: "I shall be filled when Your glory is made manifest in me."