

ST. MARY OF EGYPT



She reflects God's willingness
to receive the repentant

Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Fifth Sunday of the Great Fast

April 1, 2012

Father Robert E Lucas, Pastor; 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

+++ Friday evening the Presanctified Gifts Liturgy; will be celebrated at 7 30 PM. Please join us in prayer and praise. **Conversion** is the theme of homilies Father is preaching during this sacred season. Enrich yourself spiritually during this holy season by being present with us.

+++ This Saturday we celebrate Lazarus Resurrection from the dead. The Divine Liturgy is celebrated at 9: 00 AM after which pussy willows and palms will be prepared for blessing next Sunday.

+++ We ask those who have not yet done so, to please submit their parish and diocesan dues as soon as possible.

+++ Today the Special Offering for flowers for the coming feast of Palm Sunday, Holy Week and the Resurrection is be taken. Please be generous to beautify our church for the holy days.

+++ Decorated candles are available for home use at the coming feast of the Resurrection of our Lord. They are on the table in the vestibule and their cost is \$15.00 each.

+++ A sponsor / donor is need for the candles for the coming Resurrection feast. The offering is \$125.00 and may be made in blessed memory of a departed soul or in honor of the living.

+++ 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 monthly **Pirohi Sale** for April was held yesterday. God bless all the souls who labored to make it a success for the good of the parish. The **Paschal Bake Sale** will be on April 6, 7 with orders being picked up on Saturday. Please secure orders for this salve. Cookies and Paskas are also available.

+++ 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: Tithe Offering, \$100.00; Candles, \$50.00; Food Coupons, \$200.00; Great Fast Sacrifice, \$100.00; Kitchen, \$500.00; Refund, \$50.00; Holyday, \$70.00, for a total of \$1020.00. We express our profound gratitude to the parishioner communicants who offered their God-given treasure and labored for the sake of the Lord and the good of our parish. God bless and reward you good and faithful souls! The attendance was 44 adults and 13 children last Sunday.

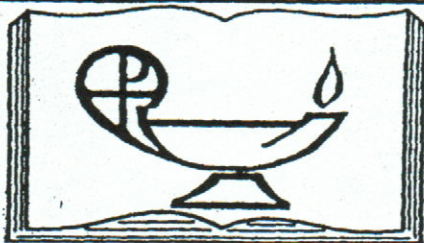
+++ As faithful believers, we intercede and associate ourselves in prayer with the following who have prayed and offered seven day lights for their intentions: Father Lucas, Pani Lucas, Robert Gorbich, Anna Zacharyczuk, Eleni Pallas, Debra Szmaida, Paul Szmaida, and Pani Buletza.

+++ 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 \$100.00 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 \$10,000.00. As we thank the Lord for inspiring generosity in the hearts of our faithful, we also thank the donors for accepting the challenge of the Lord in building up His Body. We cordially invite and look forward to receiving additional and increased pledges from all our devoted parishioners.

+++ Please be certain to see 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 \$100.00 on this project to date!

LORD



TEACH
US

Man To God

You must love him with all your heart, soul and strength Deuteronomy 6: 5.

And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you except to listen carefully to all he says to you and to obey for your own good the commandments I am giving you today, and to love him and to worship him with all your hearts and souls Deuteronomy 10: 12, 13?

You must love the Lord your God and obey every one of his commands Deuteronomy 11 1.

Look, today I have set before you life and death, depending on whether you obey or disobey. I have commanded you today to love the Lord your God and to follow his paths and to keep his laws, so that you will live and become a great nation, and so that the Lord your God will bless you and the land that you are about to possess. But if your hearts turn away and you do not listen, if you are drawn away to worship other gods, then I will declare to you this day that you shall surely perish; you will not have a long, good life in the land you are going to possess. I call heaven and earth to witness against you that today I have set before you life or death, blessing or curse. Oh, that you will choose life, that you and your children might live! Choose to love the Lord your God and to obey him and to cling to him, for he is your life and length of your days. You will then be able to live safely in the land the Lord promised your ancestors, Abraham Isaac and Jacob Deuteronomy 30: 15 - 20.

Be sure to obey all the commandments Moses gave you. Love the Lord and follow his plan for your lives. Cling to him and serve him enthusiastically Joshua 22: 5.



Wisdom Of
The



Byzantine
Fathers

He underwent all the sufferings for us, so that we might be saved, and He truly suffered, just as He truly is risen St. Ignatius of Antioch.

We have declared repeatedly and unceasingly that it was the only-begotten Son of God who was crucified, and that He was condemned to death. He that is eternal by reason of the nature which is his by birth from the eternal Father...underwent the passion not from any natural necessity, but for the sake of the mystery of man's salvation; and that his submitting to the passion was not from being compelled, but of his own free will....God suffered, therefore, because He voluntarily submitted himself to the passion...He offered himself, therefore, to the death of the accursed, so that He might break the curse of the Law. He offered himself as a victim voluntarily to God the Father, so that by means of a voluntary victim the curse which was consequent upon the discontinuance of the required victim might be resolved St. Hilary of Poitiers.

THE HUMAN VIRTUES

The closest that most ancient philosophers ever got to an understanding of God was in their discussions about human virtues. This shouldn't surprise us. The most that philosophy — human reason — can tell us about God is that he exists. Without God speaking to us we have no way of reaching him, let alone coming to know him. Yet in the greatest of God's handiworks — human beings — we see some signs of God's glory. When the philosophers turned their attention to human perfection they came as close as they could to some small glimpse of God.

Much of Plato's writings involve the challenge of virtuous living. His dialogues are replete with inquiry about what constitutes true virtue. When Aristotle addressed the same theme, in a more systematic manner, he faced essentially the same questions.

For the greater part of Western civilization, education was directed to helping the student identify virtue and then develop a life based on its values. Even in the United States at its beginning, education was seen as a way to form the virtuous citizen. How to do something was secondary to the more important knowledge of why we would anything in the first place. No doubt the collapse of so much of the U.S. public school system reflects how far we have moved from this time honored human institution.

In his work on the Eight Beatitudes, St. Gregory of Nyssa wrote that the goal of the virtuous life is "to become like God." How do we do this? How do we bring about deification, how do we espouse a respect for *theosis*, unless we pray, study and learn to appreciate a life of virtue? How is it that we can by the graceful help of the Holy Spirit, become more like God through our actions, dispositions, choices and deeds?

St. Paul, perhaps out of his own athletic inclinations, describes the struggle for a virtuous life in terms of sporting events, particularly foot races that were so much a part of athletic competition then and now. At the core of virtuous living is practice. The old adage, "Perfect practice makes perfect" is applicable not only to one's golf

stroke, tennis swing or 100 meter dash, but also to the acquisition of virtue. "Be imitators of me" Philippians 3: 17, is the exhortation of the Apostle to the Gentiles. Because, as St. Peter notes for us, "Who indeed can harm you if you are committed deeply to doing what is right" 1 Peter 3: 13?

Doing what is right and correct, even praiseworthy for the proper reason and inclination is recommended for the believer. Interviews with victorious athletes captivate us. Without fail they explain how they have set aside everything else in life to concentrate their full energies and purpose, attention and prowess on developing their God-given gifts and honing their expertise in a particular area to a level that makes them the best. Each repeats, as if part of a chorus, "Perfect practice makes perfect."

Life is much like that experience. The virtuous life depends on our developing, honing, sharpening, focusing and orienting our response to God our heavenly Father. Human virtues are firm attitudes, stable dispositions, habitual perfections of intellect and will that govern our actions, order our passions and guide our conduct according to the working of our reason and faith response. While it is true we are born with attitudes and dispositions which lead us to live a virtuous life, these habits of heart must be subjected to the values of the soul and need to be practiced with such regularity that they become our continuous, constant and spontaneous response in life. We define character by the practice of virtue. The strength of our character will reflect the perfection of our virtue.

When addressing virtues, the Church begins with the human virtues and treats the theological virtues. The moral or human virtues are acquired by human effort aided by grace while the theological virtues are a gift from God who is source of all virtue. Both human and moral and theological virtues, however, demand practice and living to reach perfection.

The four human virtues are prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance. They are sometimes called cardinal virtues because from the Latin word *cardo* or hinge, they are those values which support all other manifestations of good human activity.

Prudence is described as the virtue that disposes practical reason to discern our true good in every circumstance and to choose the proper means of achieving it. Prudence helps us to avoid extremes. The ancient and wise saying associated with this virtue tells us it adheres to the middle of the road. The great Church teacher, Tertullian, took literally but foolishly the injunction of Scripture, "If your eye is an occasion of sin to you, pluck it out," mutilating himself. Prudence calls us to the middle of both extremes, left and right.

Because prudence urges us to deal with situations as we find them and avoid extremes, it is sometimes called the pastoral virtue. Pastors apply it when dealing with people or situations that require patience, guidance and wisdom in helping to move them or the situation beyond where they are to one far closer to God. While there may be a temptation to denounce all who sin and the human condition may not always effect the change of heart that a calmer, slower, more patient pastoral approach may achieve.

Justice is the moral virtue that consists in the constant and firm will to give what is due to God and neighbor. Perhaps another way of defining justice is to recognize to each belongs his own. We are obliged to give what is due to God, our neighbor and ourselves. Justice is also described as social virtue because it involves others. All community, whether it is family, or the wider educational, cultural, social or political variety, demands justice from its members if it is to succeed. The practice of virtue creates the peace and harmony that brings people together and allows them to prosper while sharing the efforts of collective communal life.

Civil law and the justice system deal in large part with the virtue of justice because it is clear that a minimum level of justice has to be sustained for any civil society to survive. "Agreements must be kept" is the basis for much of the interchange that permits commerce, business, finance and in general, economic development.

Fortitude is the moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in pursuit of good. The Church has a main focus in recognizing and saluting people who overcome extraordinary difficulties. How many experience difficulties. How many who experience physical, spiritual, emotional or psychological trauma and whose

stick-to-it-iveness on recovery has brought them back from the brink of disaster to a wholesomeness of life that otherwise would not be theirs.

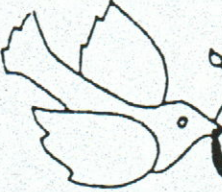
There is no limit to courage, to fortitude. Problems tend to be in proportion to the size, age, and experience of the person grappling with them. All have witnessed very young, not-so-young and even quite elderly courageous people astound us with their responses to confrontations. Fortitude is the virtue that allows us to remain constant in our pursuit of what is good and give us the strength to resist temptation which would pull us in another destructive direction.

The last of the cardinal virtues is temperance which moderates the attraction of pleasures and provides balance in the use of created things. In creating us our heavenly Father endowed human life with many good instinctual gifts and desires. All of these need to be kept in balance and within the limits of what is honorable and God-like. The tempered person directs the sensitive appetites to what is good and maintains again what is described as healthy discretion. A practical description of temperance is "Moderation in all things." Its practice involves the balanced use of the many goods God has provided so that their use remains ordered and at the service of the development of good, wholesome, well-rounded and complete person.

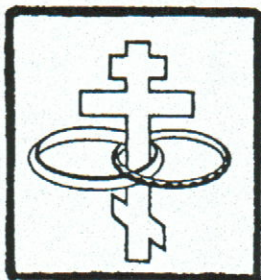
**We are obliged
to give what is
due to God, our
neighbors and
ourselves.**

A Sign of Contradiction

A true Christian is a sign of contradiction - a living symbol of the Cross. He or she is a person who believes the unbelievable, bears the unbearable, forgives the unforgivable, loves the unlovable, is perfectly happy not to be perfect, is willing to give up one's will, becomes weak to be strong, sees some good in every bad and finds love by giving it away. A Christian transcends the natural with the immeasurable power of love and becomes a supernatural person.

 JESUS is pleased to come to us

as the TRUTH to be told
and the LIFE to be lived,
as the LIGHT to be lighted
and the LOVE to be loved,
as the JOY to be given
and the PEACE to be spread.



WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

The Byzantine Fathers of the Church were wont to emphasize how ancient and how venerable marriage is in the sight of our God because it was established yet in paradise before the fall of Adam and Eve and brought to blessed perfection by Christ in Cana of Galilee. Its grace survived the sin of our first parents and it remains a sign of the presence of the Holy Trinity in our midst. It is a living symbol of the deep and abiding love between Christ and His Bride, our blessed Church. It is characterized in the liturgical life of the Church as a happy martyrdom. And it is precisely for this reason the sacramental Mystery of Marriage is such a joyous event. On the third Sunday of this month, we honor those of our good parishioners who observe their marriage anniversaries this month. They are specially remembered in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy and subsequently receive an individual and personal blessing of the Lord at its conclusion. Celebrating this month are:

April 26 Stephen & Mary Demyan

We gratefully give thanks to the Blessed Trinity for having guided and strengthened the marriages of these believers, and their cooperation with sacramental grace to remain faithful to one another over the years. Like all who are faithful to Christ, they recognize the presence and necessity of the Holy Spirit not only in the marriage, but in subsequent family life as well. As we praise our God for their witness in our midst, let us also join them with our prayers and thanksgiving before the throne of the Lord. May they continue to praise His Holy Name by their love and devotion to one another for

Many and Blessed Years



Birthdays
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 gather together and offer thanks 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 this month:

April 9 Maria Garcia
April 16 Sophia Idromenos
April 19 Kyra A. Choti

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 personal 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 resounds that the Lord our God will continue to bless them for

Many and Blessed Years!

WISDOM! BE ATTENTIVE

In you, O Mother Mary, the faithful divine likeness shone forth, for by taking up the cross, you followed Christ. You gave us an example to be not concerned with the flesh, but to be diligent over the eternal things of the spirit. Therefore, O Venerable Mary, you now rejoice with the angels
Troparion, St. Mary of Egypt.

Once filled with all kinds of vices, today, through repentance, she appears as the bride of Christ. Leading an angelic life, she crushes the devil with the help of the cross. Therefore, O venerable Mary, you now rejoice with the angels
Kontakion, St. Mary of Egypt.

O Christ God, You confirmed the resurrection of all before the time of Your passion by raising Lazarus from the dead; therefore we, as the children of Israel, carry the symbols of victory and cry out to You, the Conqueror of death: "Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord"
Troparion, Lazarus Saturday.

Christ, the Joy of all, the Truth, the Light, the Life, and the Resurrection of the world appeared to those on earth. Because of His goodness, He became also the image of Resurrection, granting divine forgiveness to all
Kontakion, Lazarus Saturday.

The Lord is my Light and my Salvation; Whom shall I fear?
Prokimenon, Lazarus Saturday.

Let us gloriously honor the pure Mother of God. She bore the divine Fire and was not consumed. With ceaseless praise, let us extol her
Hymn instead of "It is truly proper...", Lazarus Saturday.

Out of the mouths of babes and infants, You have fashioned praise. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!
Communion hymn, Lazarus Saturday.

All you who have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. Alleluia!
Hymn Instead of "Holy God", Lazarus Saturday.

A ROLE MODEL OF REPENTANCE

On the Fifth Sunday of the Great Fast, our Holy Church annually commemorates the Venerable Mary of Egypt. We can best describe her as being a “loose” woman in her early years. It is said that she was a beautiful young lady with many suitors. Although she lived a promiscuous life, in the true sense of the word she was not a prostitute, for she didn’t accept money in exchange for sexual activity. For Mary, the sensual pleasure she received was payment enough.

Mary was living in Alexandria when she heard of a ship leaving for Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of the Elevation of the Cross. She went along — not for any spiritual reason — but rather hoping to seek out young men to satisfy her needs. Upon arrival, she decided to go to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to see the Life-Giving Cross, out of curiosity. Three times, Mary tried to enter the church, and each time, an invisible force prevented her from doing so. She finally realized that it was her sinfulness keeping her out. Tearfully, Mary repented, and she heard the voice of the Lord giving her these instructions: “If you cross the Jordan, you will find peace.” Obediently, Mary set out for the Judean wilderness, where she spent the next 47 years in prayer and fasting, totally isolated from the rest of the world. When she was next seen by anyone, age and the elements had ravaged her FORMER beauty, but now, her REAL beauty was shining through. The ascetic life that she chose to embrace truly had brought her peace.

While the world is obsessed and impressed with physical appearances, the Lord is much more concerned with our “inner beauty,” which is developed and nurtured by living a Christ-like life. Mary of Egypt shows us that this can be attained through true and complete repentance.