



Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Sunday of St. Thomas

April 26, 2009

Father Robert E Lucas, Pastor;
Father John Cmur; Deacon Kenneth E. Ellis and
Subdeacon Daniel J. Korba and Nikitas Tsokris,
Cantors

Rectory 215-862-9227; Parish Center 732-780-3158

We Are A Stewardship Parish Of Time, Talent and Treasure

The mission of our parish faith community is to teach the Gospel message in the rich tradition of the Orthodox Church; to enable people to reflect the image of Jesus Christ in every day activities of life; to offer spiritual formation through changing times; and to celebrate community among Orthodox believers in our Freehold area.

We of St. Paul the Apostle Parish dedicate ourselves to maintaining the sanctity of worship and spiritual enlightenment in a family environment that reaches and involves all ages and unifies all people.

We believe in the spirit of ecumenism in which we share our faith by word and example and extend our spiritual insights to all people.

We accept the responsibility of Christian Stewardship that through generous giving we may all experience a faith communion with Christ as the Center of our lives.

We dedicate ourselves to insuring the well-being of all people so that we may truly experience the message of Christ's salutary gospel.

We are a beacon on a hill with the eyes of many upon us; that beacon is the inspired Light of Christ which must shine brightly in our lives.

It is not ourselves we preach but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts, that we in turn might make known the glory of God shining on the face of Christ. This treasure we possess in earthen vessels to make it clear that its surpassing power comes from God and not from us. We are afflicted in every way possible, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in us 2 Corinthians 4: 5 – 8.

GLAD TIDINGS

+++ Today we have festal anointing on the occasion of this past week's Resurrection feasts along with that of St. George the Martyr. The customary greeting s "Christ Is Risen!" to which we reply, "Indeed He Is Risen!"

+++ This Saturday we have our Pirohi Sale. Preparations will take place Thursday morning. Please come and offer your helping hands for the success of this sale. All are asked to secure orders. The Order Sheet is available in the kitchen for entries today.

+++ We thank sincerely all our faithful who are represented in the Special Victory Offering taken on the glorious feast of the Resurrection in appreciation for the gift of salvation and overpowering of death. A good number of gifts have not yet been received. We know all will want to be generously represented among those with appreciative thankfulness.

+++ 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 our thanks to Subdeacon Daniel J. Korba for taking time to fill the ruts in our entrance driveway. May the good Lord continue to bless him and his loved ones for Many & Blessed years, Christ Is Risen!

+++ The weekly Scripture Study meets on Sundays following the Divine Liturgy while children attend their own classes. Everyone now has an opportunity to participate in adult religious education at which Scripture is discussed and explained along with other interests.

+++ We thank all who responded to our invitation to light Seven Day Lights for the Resurrection feast along with the good souls who kept vigil at the Sepulcher once again. Our ardent prayer is that the gracious Lord continue to bless with good health all those devoted souls for Many & Blessed Years, Christ Is Risen!

+++ 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, \$100.00; Candles, \$50.00; Food Coupons, \$50.00; Christian Fellowship, \$50.00; Self-Denial, \$50.00; Kitchen, \$50.00; Pennies From Heaven; \$50.00; Holyday, \$50.00; Resurrection of our Lord, \$50.00; Special Gift, \$100.00, for a total of \$500.00. 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 39 adults and 15 children last Sunday.

+++ As faithful believers, we intercede and associate ourselves in prayer with the following who have prayed and offered seven day lights for their intentions: Marilyn Korba, Debra Szmaida, Anna Zacharyczuk, Eleanor Korba, No Name, Father Lucas, Pani Lucas, Kent Pasquino, Pani Buletza, Robert Gorbich and +Paul Szmaida.

+++ We make a PENNIES FROM HEAVEN Canister available for our faithful to bring in pennies for our altar and its appointments. We are already in receipt of \$500.00 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.

+++ The offering for the Resurrection of our Lord received to date amounts to \$[REDACTED]. We thank those who take seriously their conscientious support of the parish and its temporal needs and ask the Lord's blessings on them in rich abundance.

+++ Please be certain to see **Helen Karpiak** or a member of the Parish Council if you would like to help our parish by using **Shop Rite Food Coupons** available in \$20.00 denominations. We invite **ALL** to be caring and supportive and use Grocery Coupons for food shopping as we have gratefully realized \$[REDACTED] on this project to date!

+++ Today we have an Egg Hunt next Sunday for the children of our Jesus School. Prizes will be awarded so please be certain you are here with us.

+++ As soon as possible, please see **Marilyn Korba** to sign up for the **Alaskan Cruise next August, 2009**. **We are in need of your support.**

+++ 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!



He is Risen

...alive forevermore” Revelation 1: 18.

The disciple who had arrived first at the tomb went in. He saw and believed John 20: 8.

Remember as yet they did not understand the Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead John 20: 9.

Death has no power over him Romans 6: 9.

...the power of his resurrection Philippians 3: 10.

Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should rise from the dead Acts of the Apostles 26: 8?

I am the resurrection and the life John 14: 6.

But as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives and that he will at last stand forth upon the dust Whom I myself shall not see...and from my flesh I shall see God, my inmost being is consumed with longing Job 19: 25, 26.

Because you will not abandon my soul to the nether world, nor will you suffer you faithful one to undergo corruption. You will show me the path to life, fullness of joy in your presence, the delights of your right hand forever Psalms 16: 10, 11.



What a precious message of personal hope and joy there is in the true realization of the Resurrection! Death is overcome; the grave is transformed into the gateway to eternal life, and we are assured of a glorious future. There is no other promise in the world that can offer the smallest fraction of the joy and confidence conferred by the Divine Presence in the experience of the Resurrection when we are assured of and promised our own immortality.

We are so devised that we do not naturally linger long on the heights or in the depths of emotion. The memory of the most excruciating pain is gradually forgotten, nor can we recall with the same vividness as before the personalities of departed loved ones, no matter how close they were or how dear. Our joys and triumphs buoy us up for a while, but the pleasure or satisfaction they have brought us is eventually dimmed by time which brings us new experiences and new responsibilities to which we must address ourselves. Every so often we may recall hours of distress or pleasure, but we can never for long avoid the demands of the present in which we must carry on our daily existence.

The same is true of the realization of the Resurrection. By rights it should illuminate every moment of our lives. Every Sunday's Divine Liturgy has the Resurrection as its prevailing, even overwhelming theme and St. Seraphim of Sarov used the greeting "Christ Is Risen!" all through the year. But most of us know that our recollection is not strong enough to allow us to live the Resurrection message fully through every waking hour. We have the duties and responsibilities of our daily lives to engage our attention and distract us. Then too, the concept of the Resurrection overwhelms us by its very immensity, and its significance is connected somehow with the needs of life while life itself demands our full attention as long as we are part of it.

The Resurrection is the doorway to fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ. This we can enjoy and now through prayer and the sacramental Mysteries and self-sacrificing service to humanity. Our Lord expected that His disciples would enter the Kingdom

here on earth by knowing Him in this world where they walked the pathway He revealed by teaching reinforced by personal example. To follow Christ is Resurrection life, redeemed life, Christian life, the life of victory and triumph. Full of confidence and hope, they walk through life close to the risen Master. They know Him on the road to Emmaus and in the breaking of bread, they feel and experience the painful wounds of His sacred Body.

So it is we need the annual renewal of the Resurrection mystery and experience lest we, caught up in the never-ending legitimate pressures of daily life, allow its significance to become hazy in our recollection. If we are trying to live in harmony with the will of our Lord and in keeping with the Resurrection message, we will welcome the opportunity which the Church offers us to relive the Resurrection and to break with Christ the bonds of the place of the dead, to overcome despair, and feel new life flow through the community of the faithful as all stand again by the empty tomb to welcome the dawn of a new day.

For all its personal import, the Resurrection is not a feast for individuals alone. It is experienced in the company of the Church and in the communion that binds us to each other in the Eucharistic Body and Blood. The Risen Lord sweeps away the barriers of self-centeredness and selfishness and unites all the children of our heavenly Father, not merely for a moment or two of sentimental fellowship, not merely as a superficial gesture, but through dedication to the service of others. Freely we have received; freely must we give. The certain, infallible, and positive sign that we share in the Resurrection treasure, that we live in the kingdom, is our willingness to live for others. When our minds are alert to the desperate need of those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, when our hearts respond to the pain of friend or foe, when our hands serve to help and heal the evils of the world, we are showing that we have felt the liberating force of the empty tomb.

May the Resurrection feast be for us, not just a happy annual holiday which is soon passed, nor a short religious digression, but the actual renewal of a firm commitment to our faith which will be evident to others as they observe our way of life. If we walk in the light of the Resurrection, it will renew and refresh us. Even if we have known it only as the retelling of an ancient truth, let us have the courage this year to bow in faith to the Master Who died, Who suffered an ignominious death for us, and by rising from the three-day grave, has imparted to us eternal life. This Resurrection can be the beginning of a new life as well as a new epoch in our personal history. The shining Figure beside the empty tomb beckons to us. For over twenty centuries many thousands have witnessed to His power and His love. May we all be among that immortal fellowship both this year and forever! May the grace of this glorious feast day so permeate our being that we are driven, that we are impelled to live its staggering truth every day of our lives.

St Thomas Sunday: Antipascha

Every day during the week of the Resurrection feast, called Bright Week by the Church, the Passover services are celebrated in all their splendor. The Resurrection baptismal procession is repeated daily. The royal gates of the Icon Screen in the sanctuary remain open signifying Christ's death and triumph over it is sufficient enough to open the doors of paradise for reconciled man. The joy of the Resurrection and the gift of the kingdom of eternal life continue to abound. Then, at the end of the week, on Bright Saturday evening, the second Sunday of the Resurrection is celebrated in remembrance of the appearance of Christ to the Apostle Thomas "after eight days" John 20: 26.

It is important to note that the number eight has symbolical significance in both Jewish and Christian spiritual tradition. It signifies more than completion and fullness; it signifies the kingdom of God and the life of the world to come since seven is the number of earthly time. The Sabbath, the seventh day, is the blessed day of rest in this world, the final day of the week. The "first day of the week," the day after Sabbath," stressed in all the gospels as the day of Christ's Resurrection (Mark 16: 1; Matthew 28: 1; Luke 24: 1; John 20: 1, 19, is therefore also the eighth day. The day beyond the confines of this world, the day which stands for the life of the world to come, the day of eternal rest in the Kingdom of God (see Hebrews 4).

The Sunday following the Resurrection, called the Second Sunday, is thus the eighth day of the paschal celebration, the last day of Bright Week. It therefore is called the *Antipascha*, and it was only on this day in the early Church that the newly baptized removed their robes and entered once again into the life of this world.

In the Church services the stress is on the Apostle Thomas' vision of Christ and the significance of the day comes to us in the words of the gospel narrative:

"Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing.' Thomas answered him, 'My lord and my God!' Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe'" John 20: 27 - 29.

We have not seen Christ with our physical eyes, not touched His risen body with our physical hands, yet in the Holy Spirit, we have seen and touched, even tasted the Word of Life (1 John 1: 1 – 4), and so we believe. At each of the daily services until Ascension Day we sing the Resurrection troparion. At each of the Sunday services beginning with this day, we sing the Resurrection canon and hymns and repeat the celebration of the “first day of the week.” On which Christ rose from the dead. All of the liturgies have the epistle lesson taken from the Book of Acts of the Apostles telling us of the first Christians who lived in communion with the Risen Lord. All of the gospel reflections are taken from the writings of St. John, considered by man to be a gospel written particularly for those who are newly baptized into new life of the kingdom of God through death and new birth in Christ, in the name of the Holy Trinity. The reason for this opinion is that all of the “signs” as the miracles in St. John’s Gospel are called, deal with sacramental themes involving water, wine and bread. Thus, each of the Sundays after Thomas Sunday with the exception of the third, is dedicated to the memory of these unforgettable “signs.”

MEDITATIONS ON SILENCE AND SOLITUDE PRAYER OF THE HEART

In modern thinking, the heart is usually associated with the emotions and the feelings. Thus when we hear of The Prayer of the Heart, we often think about a healthy use of the emotions in our personal love relationship with Jesus Christ. However, in the Christian East, the heart signifies the very center of human being, including the Body, the soul and the Spirit. Thus Prayer of the Heart means prayer from the very core of our human being; it includes the body in asceticism and practice of the virtues. It includes the soul in the incensive, reasonable and intellectual powers as outlined in this book. Likewise, it includes the spirit as well in the power of the intellect, where the inner essences of creation and God are intuited on a spiritual level. When the fathers speak of prayer the descends into the heart, they speak of a prayer which permeates deeper than the superficial levels of the human being, into the very central and spiritual core of human life itself.

Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen!

(in many languages)

Arabic: AL MASEEH QAM!
HAQQAN QAM!
Albanian: Krishti Ungjall! Vertete
Ungjall!
Chaucerean Middle English: Crist
is arisen! Arisen he sothe!
Chinese: Helisituosi fuhuole.
Qeshi fuhuole.
Czech: Kristus vstal zmrty'ch!
Skutec~ne~ vstal!
English: Christ is Risen! Indeed, He
is Risen!
Ethiopian: Christos Tensah Em'
Muhtan! Exai' Ab-her Eokala!
Finnish: Kristus nousi kuolleista!
Totisesti nousi!
Polish: Chrystus zmartwychwstal!
Zmartwychwstal prawdziwie!
Roumanian: Christos a Inviat!
Adeverat a Inviat!
Sahidic Coptic: Christos aftooun.
alethos aftooun.
Sanskrit: Kristo'pastitaha, Satvam
Upastitaha!
Slavonic: Christos Voskrese!
Voistinu Voskrese!
Slovak: Kristus vstal zmr'tvych!
Skutoc~ne vstal!
Syriac: Meshiha qam! Bashrira
qam!

French: Christ est ressuscite ! En
verite il est ressuscite !
Gaelic: Taw Creest Ereen! Taw Shay
Ereen Guhdyne!
German: Christus ist
Auferstanden!!! Wahrhaft
auferstanden!
German: Christ ist Erstanden!
Wahrlicht Erstanden!
Greek: Christos Anesti! Alithos
Anesti!
Hebrew: Ha-Mashiah qom! Be-emet
qom!
Hungarian: Feltamadt Krisztus!
Valoban Feltamadt!
Iyeric Patwa: Krestos a uprisin!
Seen, him a uprisin fe tru!
Japanese: Harisutosu Fukkatsu! Jitsu
Ni Fukkatsu!
Korean: Kristo Gesso! Buhar ha sho
Nay!
Latin: Christus resurrexit! Vere
resurrexit!
Norwegian: Christus er Oppstanden!
Sandelig Han er Oppstanden!
Zulu: Ukristu Uvukile! Uvukile
Kuphela!
Spanish: Cristo esta resucitado! En
verdad, esta resucitado!
Swedish: Kristus ar Upstanden!
Sannerligen Upstanden!

WISDOM! BE ATTENTIVE

Though the grave had been sealed, from the grave You arose, O Christ our God, our Life, and though the door had been locked, You appeared among the disciples, O Resurrection of all, thus You restored for us an upright spirit according to Your great mercy. Troparion, Sunday of St. Thomas.

Thomas placed his own restless hand into Your life-giving side, O Christ God, and since You entered although the doors were locked, he cried out to You with the other apostles: "You are my Lord and my God!" Kontakion, Sunday of St. Thomas.

Great is our Lord and mighty in power; to His wisdom there is no end. Prokimenon, Sunday of St. Thomas.

When the doors were closed and the disciples were gathered together, You suddenly appeared in their midst, O Jesus our Almighty God. You granted them peace and filled them the Holy Spirit; You commanded them to wait and not depart from Jerusalem until they were clothed with power from on high. Therefore, we cry out to You, O Lord: Glory to You, our Light, our Resurrection, and our Peace. Vesper Hymn, Sunday of St. Thomas.

Even though the doors were closed, You came to Your disciples, O Christ, and Thomas, called the Twin, was not with them. Therefore, he did not believe what they told him. You did not deem him unworthy for his lack of faith, but in Your goodness, You confirmed his faith by showing him Your pure side and the wounds in Your hands and feet. He touched them, and when he saw You, he confessed You to be neither an abstract God nor merely human: and he cried out: My Lord and my God, glory to You! Vesper Hymn, Sunday of St. Thomas.

On the eighth day the Saviour came to the doubting disciples. He granted them peace and said to Thomas: O Apostle, come and touch My hands which were pierced by nails. How wonderful is this doubt of Thomas! It brought the hearts of believers to the knowledge of God. Therefore, he cried out with fear: My Lord and my God, glory to You! Vesper Hymn, Sunday of St. Thomas.

MEDITATIONS ON SOLITUDE AND SILENCE
THE RICHES OF THE WORD OF GOD

Lord, who can comprehend even one of your words? We lose more of it than we grasp, like those who drink from a living spring. For God's word offers different facets according to the capacity of the listener, and the Lord has portrayed his message in many colors, so that whoever gazes upon it can see in it what suits him. Within it he has buried manifold treasures, so that each of us might grow rich in seeking them out.

The word of God is a tree of life that offers us blessed fruit from each of its branches. It is like that rock which was struck open in the wilderness, from which all were offered spiritual drink. As the Apostle says, "They ate spiritual food and they drank spiritual drink."

And so whenever anyone discovers some part of the treasure, he should not think that he has exhausted God's word. Instead he should feel that this is all that he was able to find of the wealth contained in it. Nor should he say that the word is weak and sterile or look down on it simply because this portion was all that he happened to find. But precisely because he could not capture it all he should give thanks for its riches.

Be glad that you are overwhelmed, and do not be saddened because he has overcome you. A thirsty man is happy when he is drinking, and he is not depressed because he cannot exhaust the spring. So let this spring quench your thirst, and not your thirst the spring.

—St. Ephrem, from a commentary on the Diatessaron

Emergency Phone Numbers

- When in sorrow, call John 14.
- When men fail you, call Psalm 27.
- If you want to be fruitful, call John 15.
- When you have sinned, call Psalm 51.
- When you worry, call Matthew 6 19-34.
- When God seems far away, call Psalm 139.
- When your faith needs stirring, call Hebrews 11.
- When you are in danger, call Psalm 91.
- When you are lonely and fearful, call Psalm 23.
- For Paul's secret to happiness, call Colossians 3 12-17.
- When you grow bitter and cynical, call 1 Corinthians 13.
- For ideas of Christianity, call 1 Corinthians 5 15-19.
- When you feel down and out, call Romans 8 31-39.
- When you want peace and rest, call Matthew 11 25-30.
- When the world seems bigger than God, call Psalm 91.
- When you want Christian assurance, call Romans 8 1-30.
- When you leave home for labor or travel, call Psalm 121.
- When your prayers grow narrow or selfish, call Psalm 67.
- For a great invention/opportunity, call Isaiah 55.
- When you want courage for a task, call Joshua 1. –
- How to get along with fellow man, call Romans 12.
- When you think investments/returns, call Mark 10.
- If you are depressed, call Psalm 27.
- If your pocketbook is empty, call Psalm 37.
- If you are loosing confidence in people, call 1 Corinthians 13.
- If people seem unkind, call John 15.
- If you discouraged about work, call Psalm 126.
- If you find the world growing small and yourself great, call Psalm 19

Emergency numbers may be dialed direct.

No operator assistance is necessary.

Seeing God

Jesus said to the father of the boy with an evil spirit, "Everything is possible to him who believes." Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my disbelief."

Mark 9: 23, 24.

In spite of his intimate relationship of the past three years with Jesus, Thomas still refused to believe that Jesus, who died on the cross, had been seen alive by the other disciple. Thomas said that only after he actual felt the nail wounds in the hands of Jesus and the spear wound in his side would he believe.

On how many occasions have we also had the experience of struggling to believe? How many times has our faith response to the Lord been trampled under the heavy weight of myriad concerns about family, work, health, friends and the world? What about the overwhelming influence of our own frail flesh? Like Thomas, we find ourselves on the outside looking in for proof that our God is with us, available to restore our weakly founded faith?

Have we too easily overlooked in the First Epistle of St. John the living reality that where there is love, there is God? We read, in fact, that our heavenly Father is love. When we are overwhelmed by the problems and vicissitudes of life's difficulties and then proceed to doubt, do we instead look for fortifying proof of his presence in our life? Do we search earnestly to find his abiding presence? Why do we take the easy way out and give up on the only true anchor each baptized person should be eager to secure himself to?

In every expression of love, in each kind word, each sacrificial gift, in an offer to affirm and help, we readily discern our God is alive and at work everywhere around us. Our heavenly Father interjects himself in our midst if we but make the effort to detect his assistive and loving action surrounding us; we see that our God is alive and at work nudging us towards a happily secured eternity.

When we note our faith begins to falter, even in the smallest measure of questioning, we ought do all we can to strengthen and affirm it, to overcome its doubts. We ought ask our God in earnest prayer, when we falter, to remind us that wherever we see love at work, we easily perceive his presence and actual working in our lives. His presence shines in every loving act regardless how many times we witness his absence, by our choice, in life's circumstances.

>Subject: Dealing with a heart attack

>Please pass this on to your family and friends. I sincerely
>hope no one encounters this situation in their life time but
>just in case.

>This one is serious...

>Let's say it's 4:17 p.m. and you're driving home, (alone of
>course)

>All of a sudden you start experiencing severe pain in your
>chest that starts to radiate out into your arm and up into
>your jaw. You are only about five miles from the hospital
>nearest you home, unfortunately you don't know if you'll
>be able to make it that far. What can you do? You've been
>trained in CPR but the guy that taught the course
>neglected to tell you how to perform it on yourself.

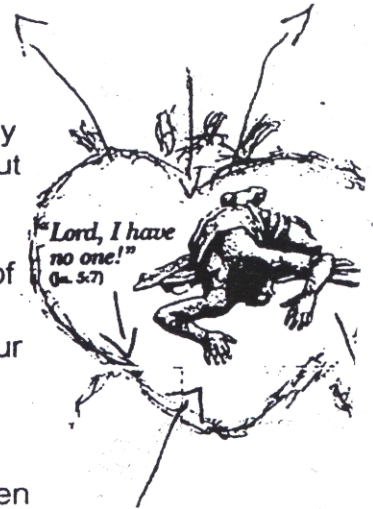
>**HOW TO SURVIVE A HEART ATTACK WHEN ALONE**

>(Since many people are alone when they suffer a heart attack,
>this article seemed in order.) Without help the person whose
>heart stops beating properly and who begins to feel faint,
>has only about 10 seconds left before losing consciousness.
>However, these victims can help themselves by coughing
>repeatedly and very vigorously. A deep breath should be taken
>before each cough, and the cough must be deep and prolonged,
>as when producing sputum from deep inside the chest. A breath
>and a cough must be repeated about every two seconds without
>let up until help arrives, or until the heart is felt to be
>beating normally again.

>Deep breaths get oxygen into the lungs and coughing movements
>squeeze the heart and keep the blood circulating. The
>squeezing pressure on the heart also helps it regain normal
>rhythm. In this way, heart attack victims can get to a phone
>and, between breaths, call for help.

>Tell as many other people as possible about this, it could
>save their lives!

>from Health Cares, Rochester General Hospital via Chapter
>240's newsletter AND THE BEAT GOES ON... (reprint from The
>Mended Hearts, Inc. publication, Heart Response)



Did You Know That ...

...freedom consists not in doing what we like, but in having the right to do what we ought?

...our use of freedom is going to be examined at the Final Judgment?

...when we violate the commandments of God, we sin and lose our freedom because we become slaves to the prompting of satan?

...one of the purposes of the Church is to teach us freedom from sin means salvation in Christ?

...freedom in Christ alone makes us joyful, fulfilled and happy in the Lord?

...when Christ spoke of freedom, He talked about being free from sinning?

...God's revelation to us in Scripture speaks of freedom as living a life of virtue for the sake of Christ?

...Christ was free to choose sin, but He always avoided it, so He is described as the perfect man?

...the freedom of the Christian is to choose virtue instead of the negative, sinful, opposite vice?

...the freedom of exercising our will, which we alone enjoy as human beings, distinguishes us from brute animals?

...freedom is easily forsaken if we do not seriously think about our choices?

...freedom empowers and enables us while sin enslaves and limits us?


...faith in the life of the Church makes us free to become Christ-like?

...the freedom Christ empowers us with offers us the grace to be heaven's citizens?

...loss of freedom in Christ renders us a caricature of humanity?

...we are not truly free until all we do is for the sake of the Lord?

A SPRING OF UNENDING JOY

 n Bright Friday, our Holy Orthodox Church celebrates the Feast of the Life-giving Spring (Fountain) of the Theotokos. There was once a church in Constantinople dedicated to the Mother of God, which was built by Emperor Leo the Great in the 5th century. According to sacred tradition, Leo was walking in a wooded area before becoming Emperor. He encountered a blind man who was thirsty, and he begged Leo to help him find water. After searching unsuccessfully, Leo suddenly heard a "voice" instructing him to "go into the deepest part of the woods, and you will find water there. Take some of the cloudy water and give it to the blind man to drink. Then take the clay and put it on his eyes. Then you shall know who I am." Leo obeyed, and miraculously, the blind man regained his sight! It was then that Leo's eyes were opened as well, and he realized that the Mother of God had been speaking to him.

Upon becoming Emperor, Leo built a church over that spot and dedicated it to the Theotokos, calling it "The Life-giving Spring." For years afterwards, pious faithful would come to this holy place and have their prayers answered and their infirmities healed. After the fall of Constantinople in 1453 AD, the church was torn down by the Moslems. Only a small chapel remained over the holy waters. In 1833, construction of a new church on this site was begun, and was completed a year later. While this edifice would suffer the same fate as the original church some 100 years later, the waters of the Lifegiving Spring continue to work miracles. As the Kontakion for Bright Friday reminds us, the healing grace of this Spring is inexhaustible!

Icon written in Greece by Miltiadis Afentoullis

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