



# Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Sunday of the Fathers of the First Council

May 31, 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 solemn feast of the Ascension of our Lord. The customary greeting is "Christ Is Among Us!" to which we respond, "He Is And Shall Be!"

+++ 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.

+++ This Saturday is the final All Souls' Saturday. The Divine Liturgy and Memorial Service is celebrated at 9: 00 AM. Please join us in prayer for the repose of the souls of our beloved departed.

+++ Today, the special offering for flowers to beautify our parish church for the feast of Pentecost will be taken. Please give generously that the birthday of the Church be solemnly celebrated.

+++ 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.

+++ The Pirohi Sale for the coming month will be on June 13. Please begin to secure orders from friends and neighbors. This is the last sale until September.

+++ Next Sunday is the solemn feast of Pentecost, the birthday of our blessed Church. A special offering is taken following the gospel. Please be generous with your offering. It ought be sacrificial in appreciation for the Body of Christ left to our loving care.

+++ 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, ~~\$44.00~~; Candles, ~~\$~~; Food Coupons, ~~\$~~; Christian Fellowship, ~~\$~~; Camp; Nazareth Raffle, ~~\$~~, for a total of ~~\$~~. 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: Debra Szmajda, Mary Jaakobs, HelenKarpiak, Father Lucas, Pani Lucas, Kent Pasquino, Pani Buletza and +Paul Szmajda.

+++ 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 ~~\$~~ 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 ~~\$~~. 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 ~~\$~~. 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. Those who overlooked the opportunity to participate in Resurrection Victory still may express their gratitude.

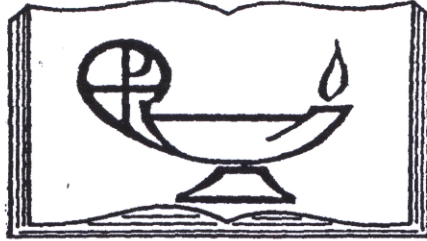
**+++ We note with great regret at this time of preparation for building some weak links in our parish. Some souls, who see others increasing their offering, are decreasing their donation themselves and thus depriving the faith community of generous support. Others who miss attendance on a Sunday, are not bringing in their offering for that Sunday when they return to worship, thus again neglecting their responsibility to the faith community and not recognizing whether present or not, the expenses of the parish continue and must be paid. They thus leave to conscientious souls the support of the work of God in our midst. We are a saddened some are saving money by not attending to worship responsibilities.**

**+++ 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 \$~~7500.00~~ on this project to date!**

**+++ As soon a 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!**

LORD



TEACH  
US

## Eternal Life

*We would have you be clear about those who sleep in death., brothers, otherwise you might yield to grief, like those who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose, God will bring forth with him from the dead those also who have fallen asleep believing in him. We say to you, as if the Lord himself had said it, that we who live, who survive, until his coming will in no way have an advantage over those who have fallen asleep. No, the Lord himself will come down from heaven at the word of command, at the sound of the archangel's voice and God's trumpet; and those who have died in Christ will rise first. Then we, the living, the survivors, will be caught up with the in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Thenceforth we shall be with the Lord unceasingly. Console one another with this message 1 Thessalonians 4: 13 – 18.*

*And so I would say to you who are suffering, God will give you rest along with us when the Lord Jesus appears suddenly from heaven in flaming fire with his mighty angels bringing judgment on those who do not wish to know God and who refuse to accept his plan to save them through our Lord Jesus Christ. They will be punished in everlasting hell forever separated from the Lord, never to see the glory of his power 2 Thessalonians 1: 7 – 9.*

*May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting comfort and hope which we don't deserve 2 Thessalonians 2: 16.*

*But God had mercy on me so that Christ Jesus could use me as an example to show everyone how patient he is with even the worst sinners, so others will realize that they, too, can have everlasting life 1 Timothy 1: 6.*

## One Body

St. John Chrysostom, who was Patriarch of Constantinople, was Syrian born in 344 A.D. Hear what this most famous theologian has to say about the responsibility of lay believers: "...the laity should become responsible and understand that all of us are one body, each differing from the other only to the extent of function; and they should not throw all responsibility on to the priests. But the people themselves, because they are one body, must be just as concerned for the whole Church as priests are. For this builds up for us greater security and increased dedication to virtue." Every faithful communicant of our parish should practice self-examination: "Am I, in the sight of God, bearing my fair share of the responsibilities in our parish?"

## True Humor

The devoted priest of Christ knocked on the door again and again, figuring that perhaps the people he needed to visit must be home because he could hear their television set blaring inside. Finally, he stuck his calling card in the door after writing Revelation 3: 20 on the back. The verse says, "Behold I stand at the door and knock; if anyone will open, I will come in." The next Sunday after the Divine Liturgy, the woman in the family he intended to visit, handed him her own card with a note that said, "I heard your voice and was naked, so I hid myself" Genesis 3: 10.



"Let us be buried with Christ by baptism to rise with Him; let us go down with him to be raised with Him; and let us rise with Him to be glorified with Him."

St. Gregory Nazianzus, *Oration on Holy Baptism* #40. 9.

Through baptism the Christian "puts on Christ." At our Lord's baptism in the Jordan He anticipates His own death and resurrection. Christians must similarly empty themselves and go down into the water to be reborn of water and the Spirit.

The baptism of Jesus illustrates Jesus' ministry as the Suffering Servant of Yahweh. The Servant is a theme found in the prophet Isaiah. While many expected the Messiah to be great and powerful, Isaiah foretold of a Messiah who would come in humility ("a bruised reed he shall not break") and suffer and die to save the people.

The theme of suffering and self-emptying has been dominant in the Church of Kievan Rus'. As Father Panchak, who presented the retreat to the members of the 1996 Lviv Sobor said, "We do not have a Pantocrator in royal robes. We have a pantocrator in tattered clothing." Christ emptied Himself to become one of us in order to raise us up. While it is the Eastern tradition to depict Christ in royal robes in iconography, the theology of the Kievan Church has been to emphasize kenosis (self-emptying.)

## Troubles and Turns

*May the God of all grace...perfect, establish, strengthen and settle you*  
1 Peter 5: 10.

Where we turn when we are in trouble most certainly reveals the content of our character. Think about it. What does it tell us about young children, whose trouble turns them toward gangs or guns or drugs or seduction to sexual experience? What do we learn about adults whose difficulties direct and push them toward alcohol or illicit relationships, or the bizarre teachings of a cult? What can we deduce when we see ordinary difficulties in life pushing people into areas which are opposed to our Creator God? What are we to think when catastrophes enter a person's life and they run a way from the God who made them?

What does it tell us about ourselves? Where do we turn when we have trouble in a relationship? When we are not able to cope, to whom do we go? Does it occur to us to turn to God's revelation in Scripture? Do we know we can consult with our parish priest to determine the teaching and response of the Church, the Bride of Christ, in our problems? Do we seek the prayer of believers for conviction and guidance? Do we ourselves pray for direction? And where do we look for help when we are struggling with sin? Do we literally run to our Lord Jesus Christ, the Master of all, for forgiveness? Do we uncover the teaching of the Church and the revelation of God for foolproof help? Or do we approach the dark recesses of life for self-preservation that always leads to destruction?

In his inspired writing, St. Peter does not want us to wonder where we can turn when trouble and adverse circumstance visits us. We need to look *up* to the God of all grace, look *back* and remember He initially invited and called us, and look *ahead* to recognize the coming glory as well as look *within* to see how our heavenly Father is equipping us through our difficulties as well as *strengthening* us to achieve our rightful destiny in his sight.

Is there trouble on your horizon? Turn to the only solution, to the God who loves you unconditionally, for help. When we embark on trouble, trials and temptations, we should never be discouraged, but be eager to take ourselves to the Lord in prayer. Life's challenges are designed not to break us, but to advance us forward and upward toward God!

# A Jesus Nut

*All things were made through him, and without him nothing was made that was made*  
John 1: 3.

One day, years ago, an experienced Navy pilot was describing his complex helicopter to visitors at the base which include his parents. He told them that a small hexagonal nut held the main rotor to the mast of the helicopter.

“Guess what we call that nut?” he asked his interested guests. They could only shrug their shoulders, not having a clue. With a smile, the pilot answered his own question: “It’s called a Jesus nut.”

That may sound irreverent on first hearing, but here is the explanation. If that small piece of metal ever came off, the helicopter would not be able to stay in the air but would come crashing to the ground. So it is understandable why pilots in the Vietnam War gave that little, almost miniscule part the name “Jesus nut.”

The writer to the Hebrews also said that Jesus, who made the world, upholds “...all things by the word of his power” Hebrews 1: 3. Because of him, we inhabit a created cosmos, not a chaotic accident. He who made all reality keeps it from collapsing. Except for man’s attempts and interference, what is created by God operates by his grace.

Thus, we too, who are created in his image, also need Jesus Christ as our Saviour from sin and Lord of our every day lives. He is the one who can lift us above the degrading forces of evil in our world and keep us aloft in our pilgrimage toward heavenly salvation. Without Jesus in our lives, in the very center of them, in the rightful place where He can make a difference, we come crashing down to the reality of our separation and isolated alienation from our heavenly Father.

When you feel as if your life is crashing down around you, remember it is Jesus who alone holds all things together in your life. Devoted followers beneath his watchful eye securely dwell because that hand which bears all nature up, guards devoted children as well. For time and eternity, Jesus is all we need.



## Fathers of the first Council

If you are like most people, you no doubt value your independence. You have heard a great deal of talk about "liberation" and you see people around, doing their own thing. You no doubt admire the man who gets ahead because of his own determination. And initiative is a characteristic you have learned to value greatly.

And as we read the gospels, in the tenth chapter of St. John's message to us, we come upon a description our Lord makes of himself. He describes and characterizes himself as the Good Shepherd and refers to all of us as his sheep. No wonder, then, that many are not enamored of this description of the baptized Christian vocation by the Saviour.

Being a soldier of Christ sounds exciting, a living sacrifice seems so noble and to become a bride of Christ seems so spiritual and mystical, we all conclude. "But a sheep," you begin to say, as you curl up your nose, a sheep follows without thinking and often runs away just as easily. Sheep are skittish, scared and often senseless," you conclude.

You then begin to react rather angrily. "But I don't think I want to think of myself as a sheep." But if that is the way you think it is time to forget yourself and your delusions.

Think instead of your relationship with Christ our Saviour. He calls himself a shepherd in Scripture. And if we study the bible, we come to a quick realization why we can be his faithful sheep, gathered together in this parish-flock and then realize we have many reasons to rejoice with Christ.

It is always time to think about what our relationship with Christ should be, what our relationship as priest and parishioners, shepherd and gathered flock should include.

First, sheep and shepherd share a special knowledge. Our Lord tells us that sheep recognize the shepherd's voice and respond positively to it. They follow only him. Imposters don't stand a chance to lead the sheep astray and away.

Maybe the truth is that some of us do not even have the dignity of sheep! That is why we become offended when we think of ourselves as sheep. The shepherd offers

the sheep special protection. Christ insists the Good Shepherd "lays down his life for the sheep." And then He continues, "No one can snatch them out of the shepherd's hands."

Scripture paints a picture which helps us set goals for our spiritual lives. We must come to rely on Christ like sheep rely on and trust the Good Shepherd. There is a deep closeness in the relationship between sheep and their shepherd. The Fathers who met at the first Council in Nicea in the year 325 laid down a foundation which later generations of believers continued.

Together we must be willing to follow where Christ leads us, trusting He knows what is best for us, be it a clear path or a prickly one, rock strewn, overgrown or thorny road, the sheep care not. They are interested in only one thing; to follow the Master wherever He leads. Christ is the Good Shepherd sent by our heavenly Father to lead all mankind to salvation. He describes his mission in these words: "I am come that they might have life and have it abundantly" John 10: 10.

The Good Shepherd also teaches us He comes among us as one who serves. That is the vocation and the role of each parish priest and it is mine as well. On this first Sunday of the month of June, when we pray for vocations, remember all priests, deacons and monastics in your prayers because we all follow the eternal Good Shepherd: "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me" John 10: 27.



"I have loved you with an everlasting love."  
(Jeremiah 31:3)

"Praise the Lord!

For it is good to sing praises to our God;  
for he is gracious, and a song of praise  
is seemly.

The Lord builds up Jerusalem;  
he gathers the outcasts of Israel.

He heals the brokenhearted and  
binds up all their wounds.

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good,  
For his steadfast love endures for ever!"

Psalms 147 & 136

# WISDOM! BE ATTENTIVE

*Angelic powers descended to your grave, and the guards fell down and appeared dead. Mary came to the grave seeking your most pure body. You conquered and despoiled the Abyss without being touched by it. You, the Giver of Life, met the Virgin, O Lord, risen from the dead; glory to You! Troparion, Sunday of the Fathers of the First Council.*

*You ascended in glory, O Christ, our God, and delighted the disciples with the promise of the Holy Spirit. Through this blessing, they were assured that you are the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world Troparion, Feast of the Ascension of our Lord.*

*O Christ, God, You are above all praise, for you established our fathers O Christ our God. You delighted the disciples as lights to all on earth. You led us all to true faith through them. O most bountiful Lord, glory to you! Troparion, Sunday of the Fathers of the First Council.*

*The preaching of the apostles and the decisions of the fathers have established the true faith of the Church which she wears as the garment of truth fashioned from the theology from on high; she justly governs and glorifies the great mystery of worship Kontakion, Sunday of the Fathers of the First Council.*

*When you fulfilled the plan of salvation for us and united all things on earth to those in heaven, Christ our God, you ascended in glory, never leaving us, but remaining ever-present. For you proclaimed to those who love you: 'I am with you, and no one else has power over you' Kontakion, Feast of the Ascension of our Lord.*

*Blessed are you, and praiseworthy, O Lord, God of our fathers; glorious forever is your name! Prokimenon, Sunday of the Fathers of the First Council.*

*Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise him in the highest. Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia! Communion Hymn, Sunday of the Fathers of the First Council.*

This Year of St. Paul, a special time dedicated to our heavenly patron, St. Paul the Apostle through June 29, 2009 marks the approximately 2000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of St. Paul. Among the many seminars conducted, lectures arranged and sermons preached with books and articles published, the most authentic information about St. Paul is what he wrote about himself in his letter to the Romans.

Paul never walked with Jesus of Nazareth, yet he traveled the Roman Empire proclaiming him the Risen Christ and Saviour of the world. He never heard Jesus teach, yet he became Christianity's most influential expositor of doctrine. He spoke little about the life of Jesus, yet he attached cosmic significance to his death and triumphant Resurrection.

Romans 1: 1 – 6

“Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, the gospel concerning his son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ, our Lord through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for the sake of his name, including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.”

# YEAR OF ST. PAUL

Pauline Year • June 29 • 2008-2009



2000<sup>th</sup> Anniversary • Birth of St. Paul

My brothers,  
remember that you have  
been called to live in  
freedom, but not a  
freedom that gives  
free rein to the flesh.

Out of love,  
place yourselves  
at one another's service.

The whole law has bound  
its fulfillment in this one  
saying: “You shall love  
your neighbor  
as yourself.”

If you go on biting and  
tearing one another  
to pieces, take care!  
You will end up  
in mutual destruction.

*Galatians 5: 13-15*



St. Paul introduces himself at the beginning of his letter without any mention of coworkers.

### Servant of Jesus Christ

St. Paul is a “slave,” *doulos*, of Jesus Christ. The favorite title of Paul for Jesus is *Lord*. It means *master* in the most absolute sense, as the opposite of Lord is slave. St. Paul thought of himself as the slave of Jesus Christ, his master and his Lord and his Saviour. Jesus loved him and gave himself for him and therefore Paul was sure that he could no longer belong to himself, but entirely to Jesus.

On the one side, the word “slave,” describes the utter obligation of love; on the other side, the great men of the Old Covenant, like Moses, Joshua, and the prophets were described as slaves of God. Following the ancient and long-standing scriptural tradition, Paul realistically and willingly calls himself the slave of Jesus Christ.

### Called

The apostolate is not primarily a task taken up on one’s own initiative but primarily is a mandate received. St. Paul never thought of himself as a man who on his own assumed the initiative for the apostolate of Christ, to which he was called, but was chosen by God. Jesus said to his men: “You did not choose me, but I chose you” John 15:16.

### Apostle

Paul insists on his title and job-description of apostle. It is his principle title, the one he cites in all his letters and defends his right to this title passionately and at length.

Acknowledging he is not one of the Twelve, and that he has no contact with the earthly Jesus of Nazareth, but he makes little of the importance of this physical contact with Jesus (2 Corinthians 16). He insists on the essential value of his own encounter with the risen Christ. “I handed on to you first of all what I myself received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures; that he was buried and in accordance with the Scripture, rose on the third day; that he was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that he was seen by five hundred brothers at once, most of whom are still alive, although some have fallen asleep. Next he was seen by James; then by all the apostles. Last of all he was seen by me, as one born out of the normal course. I am the last of the apostles...1 Corinthians 15: 3 – 9. He lays claim to the legitimacy and continuity with Christ that this encounter guarantees him. Paul is Christ’s authentic ambassador.

## Set Apart To Proclaim The Gospel Of God

The apostolate is defined as the proclamation of the gospel and its authority is none other than that of the Gospel of Jesus Christ:

For everyone God has a plan because no life purposeless. God sent everyone into the world to do some definite thing, to accomplish a particular purpose. Paul is depicted as being very aware of having received heavenly grace. He had received a task. He was set apart to be the apostle to the Gentiles. He knew that our heavenly Father chose him, and set him apart, not for glory, but for toil. He was given a special vocation. Just as contemporary priests, and all priests down the corridor of history, He knew and recognized himself to be separated, in such a way, that he must invest all his effort and spend all his life to bring the good news of God's love to everyone.

St. Paul sets out the most essential doctrine of his preaching; it was salutary gospel centered on Jesus. Paul emphasizes he does not have a gospel message of his own, but that he announces the message of Jesus Christ. He insists, in particular that it is a message or good news of two things: It is the gospel of Incarnation, assuming human flesh. He preached the essential truth that Jesus is really God and truly man. Fathers of the Church summed it up when they said of Jesus, "He became what we are to make us what He is."

It is also the gospel of the Resurrection. If Jesus lived an honorable life and died a heroic death, and if that had been the end of him, He might be numbered with the great and called inspirational, but He would still simply have been only one among many. His uniqueness is guaranteed forever by the fact of the Resurrection. Many have sacrificed their lives for noble and worthy purposes. They are all dead and gone and have left us an inspiring memory.

But Jesus alone rose from the dead of his own divine power and inspires us with a hope that extends to and includes us. His Resurrection guarantees our personal resurrection as well. His victory includes and incorporates us into its number. His triumph introduces us to heavenly citizenship. It is He alone who gives us a presence in the eternal kingdom at the right hand of the Father.

St. Paul wants all to know and understand the unique riches of salvation we all have in Jesus Christ. May his name be an inspiration to all who follow Christ.

## Sufferings of St. Paul

“And I will show him how much he must suffer for me...After a while the Jewish leaders determined to kill him. But Paul was told about their plans that they were watching the gates of the city day and night prepared to murder him. So during the night some of his converts let him down in a basket through an opening in the city wall. But then some Greek-speaking Jews with whom he had argued plotted to murder him” Acts of the Apostles 9: 16, 23 – 29.

And now I am going to Jerusalem, drawn there irresistibly by the Holy Spirit, not knowing what awaits me, except that jail and suffering lie ahead. But life is worth nothing unless I use it for doing the work assigned to me by the Lord Jesus – the work of telling others the Good News about God’s mighty kindness and love Acts of the Apostles 20: 22 - 24.

But he said, Why all this weeping? You are breaking my heart! For I am ready not only to be jailed at Jerusalem, but to also die for the sake of the Lord Jesus. The seven days were almost ended when some Jews from Turkey saw him in the temple and roused a mob against him. They grabbed him, yelling, Men of Israel, Help! Help! This is the man who preaches against our people and tells everybody to disobey the Jewish laws. He even talks against the temple and defiles it by bringing Gentiles in! Acts of the Apostles 21: 13, 27.

The crowd listened until Paul came to that word, then with one voice they shouted, ‘Away with him, Away with such a fellow! Kill him! Kill him! He is not fit to live!’ They yelled and threw their coats in the air and tossed up handfuls of dust. So the commander brought him inside and ordered him lashed with whips to make him confess his crime. He wanted to find out why the crowd had become so furious! Acts of the Apostles 22: 22 – 24.

Sometimes I think God has put apostles at the very end of the line, like prisoners soon to be killed, put on display at the end of a victor’s parade, to be stared at by men and angels alike. To this very hour we have gone hungry and thirsty, without even enough clothes to keep us warm. We have been kicked around without homes of our own. We have worked wearily with our hands to earn our living. We have blessed those who curse us. We have replied quietly when evil things have been said about us. Yet right up to the present time we are like dirt under foot, like garbage. 1 Corinthians 4: 9 – 13.



## “LEAVING” WITHOUT “LEAVING US ALONE”

**F**orty days after His glorious Resurrection, Christ ascended from the Mount of Olives, returning to His heavenly home. One can only imagine how the Apostles felt when He vanished before their very eyes. For 3 years, they spent nearly every moment with Jesus. They heard His teachings . . . they witnessed His miracles . . . they shared in intimate discussions with Him. Now, their Master was gone.

Soon, however, the Apostles realized that this, too, was part of God’s plan. Christ’s work on earth was completed. He had come to “seek and save the lost.” That being accomplished, it was necessary that He return to heaven to “prepare a place for us.” But while our Lord physically left this world, He did not leave us alone! At the Mystical Supper, He explained to His Apostles:

“It is to your advantage that I go away. If I do not, the Comforter will not come to you, but if I go, I will send Him to you.” (John 16:7) Even in His Resurrected Body, Christ could only be at one place at a time. The Holy Spirit, however, is “in all places and fills all things!” Christ continues to be with us through the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. Moreover, He told His followers: “Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.” (Matthew 28:20) How can we ever think that our Lord has really left us, when we constantly greet one another with these words: “Christ is among us – he is and always shall be”?

As we celebrate the FEAST OF THE ASCENSION, may we rejoice at the Lord’s “home-going!” May God allow us to, one day, be united with Him in His kingdom.