



St. Peter and St. Paul

Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Sunday of All Regional Saints

June 29, 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

+++ The annual Summer Bible Camp of our parish will be held the week of August 18 to 22. Non-parishioner children are welcome. Subject matter will be The Parables of our Lord.

+++ Today we have festal anointing on the occasion of this past week's simple feast of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist and today's holyday of SS. Peter & Paul, our parish patronal feast. The customary greeting is "Christ Is Among Us!" to which we reply, "He Is And Shall Be!"

+++ A special offering is taken after the gospel reading and homily on the occasion of the parish patronal feast we celebrate today. We pray all are generous and grateful for the gift of salvation opportunity we have in our parish.

+++ We are most grateful to one of our good and loyal and devoted parishioners who already made a pledge of \$5000.00 and redeemed it and now makes another in similar amount. This is a great example for our faithful and an opportunity to offer prayers of thanksgiving for a generous heart among us. Our heavenly Father inspires us to respond with earthly treasure to the support of our parish. What gratitude we have an inspired soul whose love of heart responded to the overture of our God. It is also incentive to those who promised to pledge when building commences to begin redeeming their promises now. Any souls who have already pledged and would like to increase the amount are welcome to speak with Father as soon as possible. God grant to those souls who love the beauty of God's earthly house good health and a happy, fulfilling life for Many & Blessed Years!

+++ 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, \$368.00; Candles, \$19.00; Food Coupons, \$425.00; Utilities, \$113.00; Christian Fellowship, \$1.00; Building Fund \$1050.00; Kitchen, \$268.00, Holyday, \$10.00; Pennies From heaven, \$4.00, for a total of \$2258.00. 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, Father Lucas, Paul Szmaida, Anna Zacharyczuk, and Pani Buletza.

+++ We make a PENNIES FROM HEAVEN Canister available for our faithful to bring in pennies for our altar and its appointments. We are already in receipt of \$1329.00 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 \$94, 660. 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.

+++ We express our sincerest condolences and sympathies to Subdeacon Daniel J. and Marilyn Korba family on the recent death of her beloved mother, Margaret Alleruzzo. We pray the merciful Lord comforts them in their loss and grants the soul of +Margaret a blessed repose and creates for her Eternal Memory! We are very

pleased to acknowledge donations totaling \$255.00 to our parish Building Fund in her blessed memory from Father & Pani Lucas, Deacon and Diaconisa Kenneth Ellis Family, as well as Joseph & Kyra Choti family, Betty Samaris, Robin & Louis Pasquino Family and Eleanor Kroba.

+++ 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 \$4300.00 on this project to date!

+++ Today is the patronal feast of our parish, that of the Prime Apostles, SS. Peter & Paul. A Special commemorative offering is taken after the gospel reading. We graciously pray all are generous.

+++ **Please see Marilyn Korba to sign up for the Alaskan Cruise next August, 2009.**

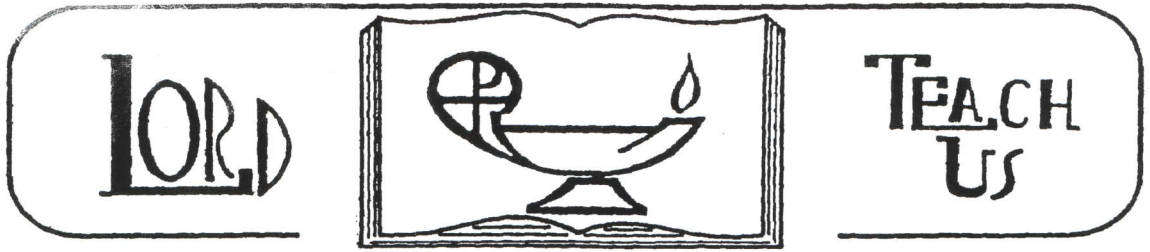
+++ **We have some remaining rolls and pirohi available from the recent sales. Please see the woman in the kitchen to secure yours if you had no order.**

+++ **Accompanied by a parish bank draft amounting to \$7050.00, application was made for Site Plan approval to the Planning Board of the Township of Freehold this past week. Prayers are needed as in the past.**

+++ 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!

Come, Holy Spirit,

in our souls do rest!



Reward

This too is a grievous evil, that he goes just as he came. What then does it reward him to labor for the wind Ecclesiastes 5: 15?

For he will hardly dwell on the shortness of his life because God rewards him with the joy of his heart Ecclesiastes 5: 19.

They carry their rewards on the backs of donkeys and their treasure on the humps of camels to a people good for nothing Isaiah 30: 6.

I will give you rewards out of the darkness and riches that have been hidden away that you may know I am the Lord, the God of Israel, who calls you by name Isaiah 45: 3.

You yourselves shall be named priests of the Lord, ministers of God you shall be called. You shall receive the reward of nations and boast riches from them Isaiah 61: 6.

Let not the rich man glory in his reward; but rather let him who glories, glory in this, that in his prudence he knows me Jeremiah 9: 23.

What was sown among thorns is the man who hears the message, but when worldly rewards and the lure of money choke it off, such a one produces no yield Matthew 13: 22.

He shall reward every man according to his works Matthew 16: 27.

...reward him according to his works 2 Timothy 4: 14.

It is in Christ and through his blood that we have been rewarded and our sins forgiven, so immeasurably generous is God's favor to us Ephesians 1: 7.

Nourishment

Mustard seeds were used in cooking and in medicine. Our Lord explained faith with the parable of the mustard seed (Matthew 13: 31; 17: 20; Mark 4: 31; Luke 13: 19; 17: 6).

Lentil beans contain a great deal of protein and were an important food source. Esau sold his birthright for a stew made from lentils (Genesis 25: 34; 2 Samuel 17: 28; Ezekiel 4: 9).

The pomegranate fruit was a popular theme in building decoration (1 Kings 7: 18, 20, 42) on ornaments on the vestments of the priests in the temple (Exodus 28: 33, 34).

Vines produced tremendous clusters of grapes (Numbers 13: 23). The vine stood for a happy home and peace (1 Kings 4: 25; Psalms 128: 3; Micah 4: 4). But the headstrong and rebellious people of Israel are compared to wild, spreading vines (Isaiah 5: 2, 4; Jeremiah 2: 21; Hosea 10: 1). Jesus compares Himself with the vine to show the spiritual bond between Him and believers (John 15: 1 - 6).

The grape vine is the first cultivated plant in Scripture (Genesis 9: 20). This symbol of fruitfulness was gathered joyfully (Judges 9: 27).

The first crop of ripe fruits was to be offered to God as "first fruits" (Exodus 22: 29; 23: 19; 34: 27). Besides fruit, new flour had to be offered (Exodus 34:22; Leviticus 23: 15; Numbers 28: 26). New wheat had to be offered in the temple as well (Leviticus 2: 12; 28: 5, 6, 10, 12). Even the first dough that was baked was offered in thanksgiving (Numbers 15: 19, 21). St. Paul tells us that for those who die confirmed in faith, Jesus is the first fruits (1 Corinthians 15: 20). St. James uses first fruits to describe the gospel good news about Jesus, saying that believers are a kind of first fruit of all that God has created (James 1: 18).

In addition to being used as food, honey was also used as a medicine (Proverbs 16: 24). Canaan was called the land flowing "with milk and honey" (Exodus 3: 8; Ezekiel 20: 15).

Vinegar was a form of cheap spoiled wine which turned sour. Nazarites weren't allowed to drink it (Numbers 6: 3). It was offered to Jesus when He was on the Cross (Mark 15: 36).

Winnowing used the wind to get rid of unwanted straw or chaff. Farmers would throw all their threshed grain into the air. The chaff was blown away and the heavier grains saved for nourishment (Jeremiah 15: 6; Matthew 3: 12; Luke 3: 17). Evening was the favorite time for

this, when there was a breeze (Ruth 3: 2). David says the wicked are the chaff that the wind blows away (Psalms 1).

Bitter herbs were eaten as a salad of the Passover meal to recall the deliverance from the bitter bondage of the Egyptians (Exodus 12:8; Leviticus 14; Deuteronomy 29: 18; Hebrews 9: 19). They included chicory, lettuce, and bitter cresses.

Manna was a mystery food, so mysterious that the Israelites plainly asked, "man hu?" or "what is it?" which is how it got its name. During the Exodus, manna appeared with the dew every day except for the Sabbath (Numbers 11: 9). It was white in appearance and was delicious to the taste. It tasted like honey mixed with oil. Everyone liked it and lived on it for the forty years of wandering in the desert, but as soon as other food was available, manna stopped coming (Joshua 5: 12).

Bread was usually made from wheat, but other grains like barley were also used (John 6: 9, 13; Isaiah 28: 25). While leavened bread was usually eaten, unleavened bread was used during the Passover celebration. This was the time that the Israelites, in leaving Egypt, could not wait for the bread to rise (Exodus 12).

After recalling that Jesus fed five thousand people by multiplying barley loaves and fishes, St. John gives us a great lesson in which Jesus teaches He is "the bread of life" (John 6: 33, 35).

The most important nourishment the Lord offers believers was made known at the Mystical Supper. "It is my Father who gives you real heavenly bread and gives life to the world... I myself am the bread of life, no one who comes to me shall ever be hungry, no one who believes in me shall ever thirst" (John 6: 32, 35). "I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate manna in the desert but they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven for a man to eat and never die. I myself am the living bread come down from heaven. If anyone eats this bread he shall live forever; the bread that I give is my flesh for the life of the world" (John 6: 48 - 52). "He who feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has life eternal and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood real drink. The man who feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him. Just as the Father who has life sent me, and I have life because of the Father, so the man who feeds on me will have life because of me. This is the bread that comes down from heaven. Unlike your ancestors who ate and died nonetheless, the man who feeds on this bread shall live forever" (John 6: 54 - 58). "Take this and eat it," he said, "this is my body." Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, "drink of this all of you," he said, "for this is my blood, the blood of the covenant, to be poured out in behalf of many for the forgiveness of sin" (Matthew 26: 26 - 28).

Food For Our Journey

The charity, unity and fraternity to which Orthodox believers are called by Christ are ultimately rooted in our union with Him effected by the Eucharist. If we understand the importance of the Eucharist, we would be eager for worship each Sunday and holyday because nothing in life should stop us from receiving Communion, from approaching the Eucharistic altar table because we eagerly eliminate any obstacle with His grace.

We sometimes have a tendency to forget that only Jesus can satisfy our deepest longings and that we are not the only ones who are hungry for Him. Our world is similarly hungry, even though it does not always know or understand it. The connection between the Eucharist and our daily living has a real bearing on how we are challenged by the spirit of Christ each day of our lives. We must never forget the Eucharist makes the Church and the Church makes the Eucharist. They are so intimately interrelated, they each affirm and confirm one another; they draw us into the mystery of Christ so that we can become Christ-like by a faithful and genuine Eucharistic life. This means we take advantage of every opportunity the Church offers for receiving and being nourished on the Body and Blood of the Saviour. The Eucharist is expressive of the Body of Christ here and now and it builds up the pilgrim Church because we are on a journey in this life, which we pray ends with us encountering our God face to face.

Many like to presume what it would be like in paradise now. For the present we belong to the Church of Jesus Christ, present in time, which strives to transport us between earth and eternity. Even though the Church is limited in the sense it is made up of human beings who are deeply rooted in time, in earthly life, we are very aware of our citizenship in the eternal kingdom.

St. Nicholas Cabasilas, a lay mystic and an all-around learned man who lived in the 14th century is known as the father of interior monasticism because he lived like a monk while remaining in the world. He is an example of the important role that lay people played in the life of the Church for century upon century and consequently, in the promotion of the Eucharist which is the heart of the pilgrim Church. He reflected

deeply on the Eucharist and advanced the Church's Eucharistic vision by leaving us such rich insights as: "He is the One Who feeds and is Himself the food; it is He Who provides the Bread of life and is Himself what He provides...They have joy, not because He shares His benefits with them, but because He is their benefit."

If we wish to be seen as people of our times, serious people of the pilgrim Church and good examples for the next generation, we ought to seriously take our privilege of Eucharistic access and live it every Sunday and holyday without fail or exception.

The Eucharist has its foundation in the Apostles because it was they who were entrusted by Jesus with this heavenly treasure and handed it down to us and their successors. With the help of the Holy Spirit the Church keeps and hands on the teaching she received through the Apostles. Finally, the Church is Apostolic in that she continues to be taught, sanctified and guided by the Apostles until Christ's return, through their successors in pastoral office. Believers join with the priesthood of Christ in the Eucharistic offering by virtue of their royal priesthood, even though it is the sacramentally ordained priest who alone brings about the Eucharistic sacrifice and offers it to God together with and in the name of all the people.

In a profound sense it is because of the Apostles that we continue in the tradition of the Eucharist. It is how they remembered and honored the Lord in their gatherings and assemblies; it is the faith of the New Covenant that teaches us to celebrate the Eucharist. Not all churches share this claim or can enjoy this heritage.

The Eucharist, then, properly understood and believed, commands fidelity to the Church, to our bishops and priests because without the priesthood, there would be no Eucharist. Like the Eucharist, the priesthood is also a gift from God to the Church. As Orthodox believers, we slowly but surely come to realize how important is our responsibility to the Eucharist and to our solidarity with priests. If we are recognized and seen as men, women and children of prayer and adoration, fed and nourished on the Eucharist as our heavenly manna, people will not wonder who we really are. We will be seen as citizens of the eternal kingdom who together with our parish priests promote the values of Christ in our time and place.

The close connection between Eucharist and priest witnesses to the interior life of the Church. If it is important for believers to be united with Christ in the sacramental Mystery of the Eucharist, it is also vital to be supportive and united with the priest who confects the heavenly banquet with us.

Priests today are in need of loyal collaborators who will not denounce the values of Christ for petty things or simple worldly considerations, but seek instead, ways to enhance the word of Christ in our midst. In the believer living up to the challenge of Christ by being faithfully Eucharistic, the faith community is built up and remains in communion with Christ.

For the believer, the Eucharist is essential and necessary food for this faith journey we call earthly life. Each believer should be willing to make whatever sacrifice is necessary to be a regular Eucharistic recipient. The extraordinary power of the Body and Blood of the Lord to heal, to nurture, to nourish and feed is overwhelming. No prayer service, no ecumenical gathering, no common Bible study can ever replace the Eucharist.

An immigrant family coming to this country spent almost all of its saved money for boat tickets to the United States. To save the little money they had left, they remained in their isolated small cabin and ate hard dry bread and water, rather than go to the ship's dining room with its more expensive food. When they finally docked in New York, they learned that the price of their tickets included meals.

How many voyage through life in a similar way? They starve spiritually rather than prepare themselves to worthily receive the Bread of Life, freely imparted at every Lord's Supper!

Thank God

Happy moments, praise God.

Difficult moments, seek God.

Quiet moments, worship God.

Painful moments, trust God.

All moments, thank God.

Our LORD

mentions His predecessor in faith, Abraham, in the gospel narrative. In the event your curiosity has been aroused, you may find out more about him from God's Revelation to us:

Abraham/Abram	(Patriarch)
GEN 11.27-32	Genealogy
12.1-9	God tells Abram to take the people to Canaan; God's promise
12.10-20	Abram goes to Egypt because of famine; Sarai is taken into Pharaoh's house
13.1-18	Abram and Lot leave Egypt and travel through the Negeb to Bethel and Ai before separating
14.13-24	Hears of Lot's capture; pursues the captors as far as Dan and then to Hobah
15.1-21	God's covenant with Abram
16.1-6	Sarai gives her maid, Hagar the Egyptian, to Abram
16.15	Hagar bears Abram a son, Ishmael
17.1-8	God speaks to Abram saying his name shall be Abraham
17.9-14	The covenant of circumcision
17.15-27	God says Sarai's name shall be Sarah and she will bear a son; the males in the household are circumcised
18.1-15	The Lord appears before Abraham and promises him a son
18.16-33	Abraham's plea for Sodom
19.27-28	Looks at the destruction of Sodom
20.1-2	Journeys towards the Negeb; dwells between Kadesh and Shur; sojourns in Gerar
20.9-18	Abimelech speaks to Abraham about Sarah
21.2-7	Sarah bears Abraham a son, Isaac
21.9-14	Casts Hagar and her son out into the wilderness at Beersheba
21.22-24	Swears not to deal falsely with Abimelech and Philistines
21.25-34	Complains to Abimelech about the well; they make a covenant at Beersheba; Abraham sojourns in the land of the Philistines
22.1-14	God tests Abraham by telling him to sacrifice his son, Isaac
23.2-20	Sarah dies at Hebron and is buried in the cave at the field of Machpelah, given to Abraham by Ephron the Hittite
24.1-9	Makes his servant swear that he will find Isaac a wife from his own people
25.1-2	Takes another wife, Keturah and she bears six children
25.7-10	Dies and is buried beside Sarah

WISDOM! BE ATTENTIVE

The stone was sealed by the Jews, soldiers guarded Your most pure body! And You, O Saviour, arose on the third day granting life to the world. The heavenly powers acclaimed You, O Giver of Life: Glory to Your Resurrection, O Christ! Glory to Your majesty. Glory to Your plan of salvation. You alone love mankind Troparion, Resurrection Tone One.

You, being God, arose in glory from the grave, raising the world with You. Mankind praises You as God; Death reigns no more. Adam sings with exultation, O Lord; Eve freed from bondage cries joyfully: O Christ, it is You Who gives Resurrection to all! Kontakion, Resurrection Tone One.

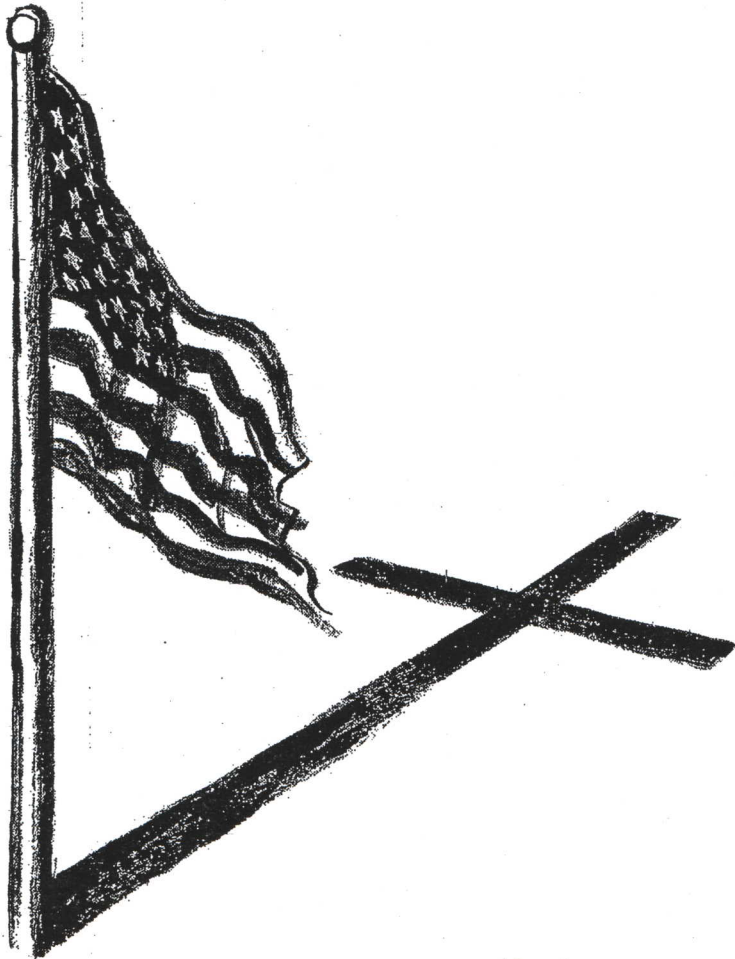
May Your kindness O Lord, be upon us who have put our hope in You! Prokimenon, Resurrection Tone One.

Let us sing a hymn of praise to the Lord; He freely was crucified. He suffered and was buried for us; He arose from the dead. Let us all say: O Christ, confirm Your Church in the Orthodox faith. Give us Your peace. You are gracious and You love mankind Vesper Hymn, Tone One.

The prophecy of Isalah has been fulfilled in you, o Virgin! You have given birth, and after birth you remained the same. The Lord born of you is God; He has renewed all creation. Do not reject the supplications we offer to you, O Mother of God. You have carried the compassionate Lord; have pity on those who come to You. Intercede for the salvation of our souls Vesper Hymn, Tone One.

Let creation rejoice; let the heavens be glad. Let all people cheerfully clap their hands. Christ our Saviour has nailed our sins to His Cross. He has crushed death by His death. He has granted life to us by raising Adam; he alone loves mankind Vesper Hymn, Tone One.

Let us sing a hymn of praise to the Word. He is co-eternal with His Father. He was born of the Virgin in a wondrous way. He freely accepted crucifixion and death for us. He arose in glory. Let us all say: Glory to You, O Lord, Life-giver and Saviour of our souls! Vesper Hymn, Tone One.



**Remember the religious
heritage of the USA**

Without a measure of religious belief, where would the United States be now? This question is often raised by many citizens. There is no doubt our Founding Fathers believed in some kind of a version of God, however distanced it is from fundamental Christianity. Primarily they were deists which means they had a faint notion of some greater and bigger power than man. Associated with that are some Christian beliefs. However, in time, our Pledge of Allegiance says the United States is "...one nation under God."

Recently, however, too many have been overly offended by the nation's religious roots and tradition. If our government officials didn't have any religious beliefs or morals, we dread to think how much worse the nation could have declined.

Although we like to claim God set the rules that govern the nation with the Declaration of Independence and the Articles of Confederation along with the Constitution enactment, they were approved and signed by people of varied religious backgrounds, none of whom, however were Orthodox. By them it was concurred the nation was not meant to adopt one faith because of their experience in Europe with official religions approved, espoused and backed by the state. Both Romanism and Protestantism adversely affected those who influenced the religious policy of this nation in the beginning.

So when the flag is elevated and displayed, it is not wrong to think it does cast a shadow of the Cross of Christ. Many of the measures of freedom and liberty on which it was founded are Judeo-Christian in origin and value.

While the misinformed insist a reverent measure of distance be kept between religion and patriotism, it is an expression of profound spirituality to be loyal and devoted to one's nation, particularly if it advances and espouses the values our heavenly Father made known to the Chosen People in the Old Covenant. And since the secular government of the Chosen People given a twisted interpretation, was often in opposition to its Creator, even though it boasted the advantage of a revealed-from-heaven belief system, how can we expect the citizenry of this nation to think alike all the time, particularly since its religious loyalties are many and varied? The Cross in the shadow of our nation's history should inspire all, regardless of spiritual persuasion to honor the roots of our founders, however abbreviated they were because far worst concepts could have been our inspiration. Today, just about completely secularized, the nation attempts to reflect its profoundly elevated and exalted approach in the world. Religious people are patriotic and recognize our God has indeed continually blessed this nation.

Prayer For Our Nation

Almighty God, dear and eternal Father, Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, adored Holy Spirit, we ask your blessing of comfort descend upon our troubled nation in this time of trouble, for the families whose children shed their blood into the concrete and spring grass of a site they came to revere as a place of learning, life and growth, certainly not death.

Impart a blessed repose and grant Eternal Rest to the departed victims and permit your angels to accompany their souls before your heavenly throne. Allow our prayers to intercede for their salvation that peace descend upon a needy and confused nation.

We pray for the injured and maimed that healing occur speedily in our time, for those whose faith endures as well as for those who have no faith at all.

May all find their way through the assaulting avalanche of grief and woe by strength, imbued with the belief of friends and families.

Comfort and heal us all from the wounds of this terrible day.

We raise prayer for those students and friends and families, who though not wounded physically, have been traumatized by this senseless act of brutality. Help them overcome fear of daily living; strengthen them to face the springtime of their lives, although wounded, with intact hope and faith.

With your almighty protective and restorative right hand, help O Lord every morning of their lives, all the parents and guardians of children sent off to schools in our nation.

May they depart their homes with a hug and a kiss,
not a tug and tear.
While we recognize chances of such a bloodbath are remote,
like lightning or sudden storm,
we also recognize that chances of
complete safety are an illusion in our fallen world.
While some storms cannot be weathered,
we know You alone calm our souls.
Help us live with the terrifying challenge of freedom
which leads us to salvation.

You accompanied our ancestors in faith
out of Egypt on eagle's wings.
This symbolism is lost to many.
Those who watch eagles know they teach their young
to fly by pushing them out of their nests built upon high cliffs
and then fly close to them as their young
fall and, flail and flap
their untested young wings.
When their young fall too far, the eagle parents swoop down,
catch them on their pinion feathers,
and flip them upward into the sky to save them
from the treacherous rocks below
and give them another chance to survive.
Eagle parents do catch most of their eagle fledglings
as there are so many eagles remaining in the sky.
But we also know
they do not, they cannot,
catch them all.
Nor can we.

Dear Lord God and Saviour, heal us from our grief at the
sight of so many fallen eagles. Help us and them find a way to believe
springtime in your creation is still encouraging as the blue sky beckons us
towards heavenly salvation.

PROOF THAT SINNERS CAN BECOME SAINTS

Our Church honors Saints Peter and Paul for their unmatched missionary zeal among the Apostles. Let us review how these sinners became saints.

The Gospels paint a picture of Peter as a man who is proud, boastful - and weak! He wants to "walk on water," but loses his courage as well as his faith along the way. He would vow to defend Christ to the death, but three times he would deny that he even knew Who Jesus was. Paul, on the other hand, grew up with a deep hatred for Christians. He was a willing bystander at the stoning of the Archdeacon Stephen. He openly persecuted the followers of Christ, hunting them down and having them arrested. One can only guess how many Christians were tortured and martyred because of Paul's misplaced exuberance.

Yet both Peter and Paul underwent dramatic changes in their lives. Peter

became a fearless and fiery preacher of the Good News, refusing to be silenced as he spoke convincingly to the Jews about Jesus being their long-awaited Messiah. After his conversion, Paul became the "Apostle to the Gentiles," taking the message of the Gospel throughout the known world. What caused such a transformation in these two men? They ultimately discovered Who Christ truly was, and they embraced Him with all of their heart, soul and mind.

There is a lesson here for all of us. We, too, are sinners. We, too, have had things occur in our past that we would just as soon forget. But Christ is waiting for us to embrace Him as well! He is waiting to work through us in some way to spread His Kingdom here on earth. May we all take the same steps that Peter and Paul took. Indeed, today's Church can use zealous missionaries as well!

Icon courtesy of Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Ellwood City, PA

Photography: Chapel Studios, Rochester, PA