

Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

July 25, 2010

Father Robert E Lucas, Pastor; Subdeacon Daniel

J. Korba and Nikitas Tsokris, Cantors

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

We Are A Stewardship Parish Of Time, Talent and Treasure

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

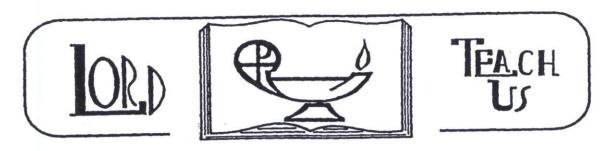
GLAD TIDINGS

+++ This Tuesday is the simple feast of St. Pantelemon the Healer. In anticipation, the vesperal Divine Liturgy will be celebrated Monday evening at 7:30 PM for the intention of our parish faithful and their healing. Anointing with oil from a Jerusalem monastery will conclude the celebration. Please join us in prayer and praise.

- +++ Today the annual blessing of vehicles of travel takes place following the Divine Liturgy. Prayers are offered for operators of the vehicles of travel as well. Our parishioners may ask friends and neighbors who wish to participate in the grace of our prayers as we bless their vehicles as well.
- +++ Today we have festal anointing on the occasion of this past week's simple feast of St. Elias the Prophet. The customary greeting is "Christ Is Among Us!" to which we reply, "He Is And Shall Be!"
- +++ We have received a donation for our parish in blessed memory of +Mary Gorbich, mother of our good parishioner, Bob Gorbich. Anyone wishing to make a similar offering may see Father.
- +++ We remind our faithful that at the last Diocesan Council this past summer, the Diocesan Dues were raised, due to inflation and need, from the past \$50.00 per adult individual, eighteen years and older, to \$60.00 per year. Our envelope offering system still has the old amount on it, so please disregard that figure and make your offering according to the new mandated amount. If this offering was made in the old amount, please correct it by submitting the additional amount with a notation on the envelope because the parish must send the entire amount to the diocesan chancery.
- ++ 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 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, Candles, \$20.00, Food Coupons, \$320.00; Holyday, \$17.00, Special Offering, 20.00, for a total of \$872.00. We express our profound gratitude to the parishioner communicants who offered their Godgiven 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 41 adults and 13 children last Sunday.
- +++ As faithful believers, we intercede and associate ourselves in prayer with the following who have prayed and offered seven day lights for their intentions: Father Lucas, Pani Lucas, Louis Pasquino, +Paul Szmaida, George Idromenos, Kent Pasquino, Kyle Pasquino, 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 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.
- +++ There is currently a Ukrainian Icon Exhibit from the Caves Monastery in Kiev at the museum of Biblical Art in New York City until September. The museum is opened from Wednesday to Sunday each week from noon onward. Admission is most

reasonable with discounts for senior citizens. Nina Harrison has additional information. Please see her if you are interested in Bus Rates for Saturday, August 14. We would like to have a thanksgiving prayer service at Holy Trinity Cathedral in Manhattan, then proceed to the museum or to a restaurant for lunch before returning home.

- +++ Next Sunday, August 1 is the beginning of the Saviour's Fast which prepares us for the Feast of the Dormition of the Birthgiver of God. Please plan on sacrificing in fast during the two week period and plan on coming to church for devotions in praise of the Lord and the second week in honor of the Birthgiver.
- +++ Please continue to bring used clothing and other items described in the flyers distributed a few weeks ago. Encourage your friends and neighbors to assist as this will be an ongoing fund-raiser. These items are currently being stored in the rectory and when we receive an appreciable amount, they will be turned in. It will help our parish.
- 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 \$5100.00 on this project to date!
- +++ We acknowledge with deep gratitude the gifted artistic efforts of our good parishioner, Maria Idromenos in creating an attractive icon of St. Demetrios the Martyr for our parish. It has been blessed and anointed and rested on the altar table for forty days and will be used for the first time on October 26 on his feast day. We pray the gracious Lord continues to bless Maria and her loved ones with good health for Many & Blessed Years!
- +++ We remind our faithful only those who are present for the entire Divine Liturgy should come forward to receive Communion. The entire Liturgy means "Amen" to "Amen."
- +++ 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!



Charity

Blessed is he who has regard for the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth and will not deliver him to the will of his enemies Psalms 41: 1, 2.

He who pities the poor lends to the Lord and that which he gives God will pay him again Proverbs 19: 17.

When you make a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. And you shall be blessed for they cannot repay you, for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just Luke 14: 13, 14.

Sell all you have and give alms. Get purses for yourselves that do not wear out, a never-failing treasure with Lord which no thief comes near nor any moth destroys. Wherever your treasure lies, there your heart will be Luke 12: 33, 34.

He who hates his neighbor sins; but he who has mercy on the poor is happy Proverbs 14: 21.

Cast your bread upon the water and after many days you may find it again Ecclesiastes 11: 1.

Give and it shall be given to you; good measure, pressed down and shaken together, and running over; will they pour into the fold of your garment. For the measure you measure with will be measured back to you Luke 6: 38.

He who gives to the poor shall not lack anything, but he who hides his eyes from seeing their need, shall have many a curse Proverbs 28: 27.

Thinking Of You

How precious are your thoughts to me, O God! Psalms 139: 17.

A man working alone one evening in his company office received a fax from his daughter in Colorado. It had a goofy cartoon of a rabbit wearing a cowboy hat and chaps and swinging a lariat. "Well, howdy there, rancher Dave," it began, then related some pertinent information and ended with "I love you."

Is a great feeling, isn't it, when an unexpected phone call or letter arrives from someone just to say, "I was thinking of you." It quickly banishes our sense of being alone and enables us to reach out in loving service to others. It can, indeed be empowering.

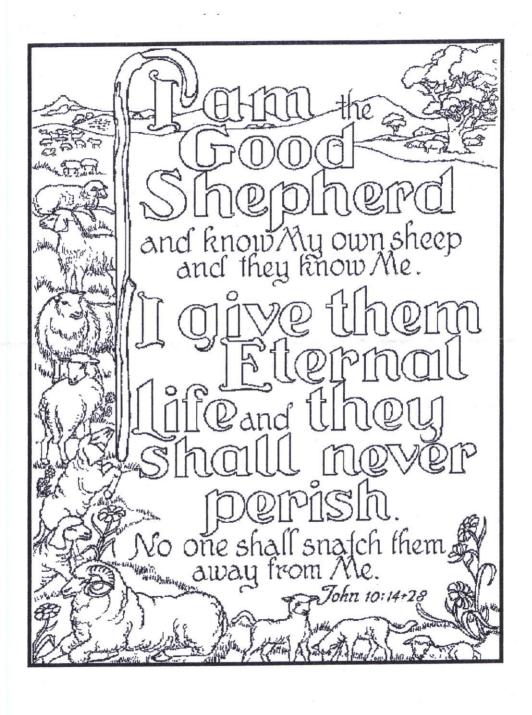
David, the psalmist also had a marvelous sense of the personal care of our heavenly Father when he wrote, "How precious are your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I could count them, they would be more in number than the sand; when I awake, I am still with you" Psalms 139: 17, 18.

We dontokow David's circumstaners when he wrote this pslam, whtehre he was awake or bussy doing thebusinessofthe Father. He may haveendured a night of fitfuldozing, or hemay haave enjoyed a sound, peaceful sleep. Regardless, what we do know is that David is overwhelmed by the knowledge that our God was thinking of him even while he slept with so many thoughts he couldn't even count them all!

The next time you feel alone or isolated, remember our heavenly Father who sent his Son to die for you. He never stops thinking of you and saying, "I love you!"

Under his wings, what precious enjoyment! there to hide til life's trials are over; sheltered protected, no evil can harm me, resting in Jesus, I am safe evermore.

Time spent alone with our heavenly Father eases the pain of loneliness.



NO RETIREMENT

I have followed the Lord my God wholeheartedly Joshua 14:8.

Everyone who reads about him, loves old Caleb. Who wouldn't? He may have been 85 years old, but he was not ready to retire from following and serving the Lord wholeheartedly. If that meant continuing to conquer the land for the Lord, he was prepared to go forward in faith and obedience.

When Caleb was forty years old, he returned from a spying tour of Canaan. And Canaan was a land of giants and fortified cities. But Caleb was a faithful believer in the God of Israel who certainly was bigger than any of the giants Caleb viewed. He saw a great God and little giants. The other spies saw great giants because they had only little gods. So Caleb's God promised him an inheritance in the Promised Land. Caleb was an example to everyone when he was still young and he was an avid example of courageous faith when the people finally entered the Promised Land.

Forty five years after proclaiming his unwavering faith in God, Caleb claimed for himself the hill country with its giants and walled cities. He had followed the Lord all his life without reservation and he was not ready to retire particularly since he enjoyed good health. So God, through Joshua, honored Caleb's claim of faith and sent him out to battle at the astounding age of 85. Even then he was willing to serve the Lord in this extraordinary way. He would never give up the pleasure and privilege of serving the Lord.

It is still true there is no retirement from serving the Lord God. If good health prevails, every priest and deacon should remain at the altar. How sad when people leave their earthly jobs and are freed to spend more time in worship, they fail to do so. If there is devotion in the heart and soul, there ought to be a place for devotion to express itself faithfully. There is no retirement from a life of faith response and obedience and no retirement from fighting against the spiritual host of wickedness "Finally, draw your strength from the Lord and his mighty power...Our battle is not against human forces but against the principalities and powers, the rulers of the world of darkness, the evil spirits in regions above" Ephesians 6: 10, 12.

Jesus Calms The Storm

In his epic novel, *Hawaii*, James Michener tells of a small tribe leaving their island home in search of peace. They sailed northward slowly, leaving behind the stars they knew and by which they navigated. As they sailed ever farther from home under unknown skies, they noticed that one star was always in the same place. They began to chart their way by that star, assured that they were not aimlessly maneuvering about but headed towards a destination. The "somewhere" to which the star led them was their new home, the island kingdom they named Hawaii.

Through all the storms of their life journey, our God safely led these ancient islanders to a ready and safe destiny. A steady, sure Light is a wonderful thing for those of us making our way over the sometimes turbulent and often mysterious seas of our own history. But all too often we are looking for that sometimes elusive star "way out there," when the real guiding Light is right at the helm of our boat. The One who placed the stars, who knows their course, is oh-so-close and ready to lull the storm or stir up the waters a little, as our needs arise and change.

What a wonderful thought that no matter how unknown our surroundings, how uncertain the seas beneath us or the sky above, the Light of the world is right beside us to lead us, close up. There is a symbolic recurring of these miracles in contemporary life. Just as realistically as Jesus calms and stills the waters of the Sea of Galilee, He also calms and stills the storms that rage in human hearts and minds today.

An old retired priest provides example of this assertion truth. Years before his twenty one year old daughter and the lad to whom she would some day have been married were both drowned. God did not stop that accident in a huge lake storm, but He did something more important by stilling and calming the storm in this priest's heart so that somehow he and his wife came through that terrible time still on their own two feet.

What storm rages in you and your circumstances? Take a moment to open your spirit to the miracle of God's concerned presence, not before or after the storm but in the very midst of it.

"One day he got into a boat with his disciples and said to them, 'Let us cross over to the far side of the lake.' So they set out, and as they sailed, he slept. A windstorm descended on the lake and they began to ship water and be in danger. They came to awaken him, saying, 'Master, master, we are lost!' He awoke and rebuked the wind and the tumultuous waves. The waves subsided and it grew calm. Then he asked them, 'Where is your faith?'" Luke 8: 22 – 25.

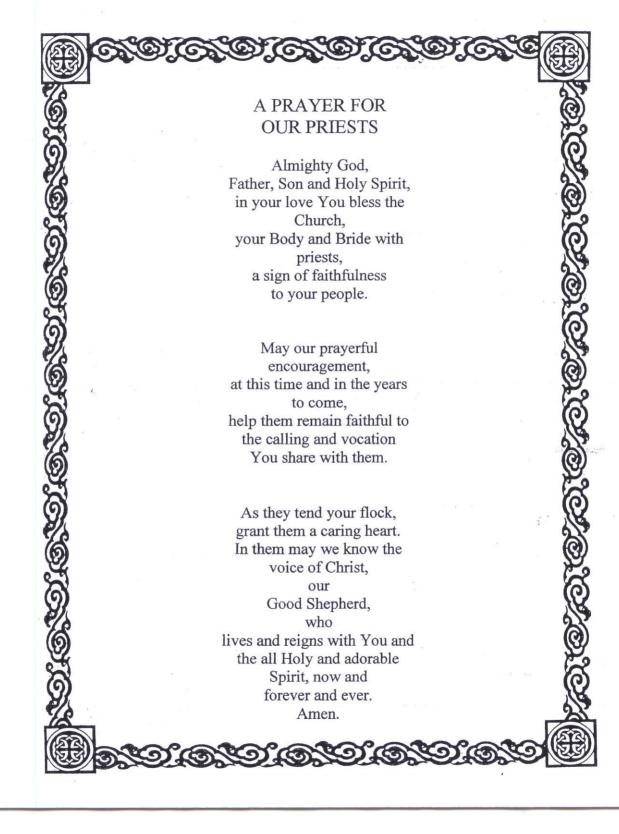
Place yourself mentally and spiritually in the scene. Consider what you would hear, see, feel. Imagine our Lord asking you with the disciples to "...go across to the other side." Where is Jesus calling you to go in your life? Are you being faithful to your vocation? What is the "other side" for you? What invitation is the Lord extending you for his glory and your salvation?

Now put yourself in the boat with the disciples as they are tossed about. What worries you most? What winds and waves toss you, challenge your faith commitment and response, or threaten to sink you? Listen for Christ calling you in the middle of the night, addressing your fears. Ponder the healing, affirming sound of his voice and the promise in his presence. Let Christ still the storm that rages in you. Carry Christ's words of assurance with you through the day.

As you pray and meditate on this entire panorama of consoling events, may the God of Scripture step into the place where you live and work and respond to your needs, guiding, comforting, inspiring, transforming you into a faithful and stalwart disciple, surrounded by others of like mind and soul. Then sing hymns of praise to his name and glory to his honor!

And as we recognize God's hand in our past, the easier it becomes to believe that He will continue to do wonderful things for us in the future. We are inspired and encouraged by the words, "Goodness and mercy shall follow me" Psalms 23: 6. We recognize readily our heavenly Father is with us when we struggle to remain faithful in difficult situations. His mercy and goodness always sustains us. No wonder God's revelation to us encourages us to remember and mediate on what God has done in our lives.

"I will remember the deeds of the Lord, yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago" Psalms 77: 11.



WISDOM! BE ATTENTIVE

You came down from on high, O merciful Lord. You accepted the grave for three days to deliver us from our passions. O Lord, our Resurrection and our life, glory be to You! Troparion, Resurrection Tone Eight.

Rising from the dead, You raised the dead. You lifted up Adam. Eve rejoices in Your Resurrection. The world acclaims Your rising from the dead, O most merciful Lord Kontakion, Resurrection Tone Eight.

Make vows to the Lord Your God, and fulfill them. Prokimenon, Resurrection Tone Eight.

In the fullness of time and by His own free will, the Word born of God the Father before all ages, became incarnate of the Virgin. He endured crucifixion and death. By His Resurrection, He saved man, dead from the beginning Vesper Hymn, Tone Eight.

We glorify You, O Lord; You freely endured the Cross for us. We worship You, Almighty Saviour; do not turn us from You presence; hear and save us because of Your Resurrection; You alone love mankind Vesper Hymn, Tone Eight.

Because of His love for mankind, the King of heaven appeared on earth. He became incarnate of a pure Virgin and lived among men,. He was seen in the body He received from her. He is the One and only Son, having two natures but not two persons. Therefore we profess Christ to be our true God, proclaiming Him to be really perfect God and perfect man. O Virgin Mother: intercede with Him that He may have mercy on our souls Vesper Hymn, Tone Eight.

O Lord of all, Creator of heaven and earth. Suffering on the Cross, You became a fountain of immortality. You endured burial and rose in glory. By Your powerful hand, You raised Adam with You. Glory to Your Resurrection on the third day. Through it, You gave us eternal life and the forgiveness of sins. You alone are the gracious Lord Vesper Hymn, Tone Eight.

Feast of St. Elias the Prophet

The illustrious Old Testament Prophet and Wonderworker is the focused individual whom our blessed Church calls to mind today. He lived some 2800 years ago and certainly must have been a notable and remarkable man of God if he is still honored, remembered and revered for so many succeeding centuries.

In the hymnology of our Church he is called an "earthly angel and a heavenly man," which ought also be our description in the sight our heavenly Father, aided as we all are by baptismal and sacramental grace. He is also known as Elijah, the Jewish form of his given name. He is an honored and extraordinary prophet and teacher called to be a spokesman by God in a needy and dangerous time.

Like all other prophets, of the Old Covenant, he did indeed foretell future events, but within a certain context. He rightly predicted or prophesied doom for a people living in sin as well as blessing for a nation abiding in righteousness. Prophets in reality are men of great authority, inspired authority, in salvation history. They shared the message of salvation and purpose from our Creator. Naturally, if the people did not accept their teaching, horror would follow, for our God is not to be ignored or mocked.

It is a great mistake, certainly not realistic, when thinking of the life, vocation and work of the prophets to see them simply as some sort of worldly fortune-tellers. They are explicitly, inspired teachers of great authority in salvation history. Genuine believers respond to their integrity of purpose and recognize the validity of their message because it integrates honorably and positively with their faith response to God's first shown love. They are sharers of divine wisdom and recognize intimately the absolute necessity of responding with full ability to the message and path heaven chooses for us to travel that we save our souls. Since we cannot save ourselves from ourselves, and since only our Creator God can achieve this purpose for our lives, He sends particular men among us from time to time to lead us back to the path on which heaven alone is our destiny.

Our concerned God communicates to them in inspiration a special message of correction from our deviation to offer to those who fall away from the Lord a means of peaceably returning to his grace. The purpose of the prophet is to illuminate the mind and soul of man to be able to see a situation in all its stark reality and then He fires their will to proclaim God's message about the circumstances or the situation and the danger it holds if pursued. Simply put it is God's means to avoid catastrophe for man.

Obviously, the circumstances in which Elias found himself and his contemporaries was seriously dangerous. And of course, depending on the times, many prophets were reluctant, even afraid to assume the vocation shared with them by our God. And so, seeing he could not abdicate his responsibility, Elias took seriously the task given him, even at the risk of his life.

There were scores of fearless prophets who appeared on the scene at critical times in the life of God's chosen people who were commanded in the beginning to uphold the Commandments and remain faithful to their Creator and Saviour who had specially chosen them as witnesses of his love in the world. These men did not fear others, be they king or pauper. They denounced moral rottenness and decay wherever they saw or smelled it. Since they were faithful themselves, staunch believers in God's promises, they mourned the sins of God's people. They literally cried for the shortcomings of those called to an eternal destiny because on the road, they became satisfied with temporary distractions of sin and the imagined pleasure of immorality.

They spoke wherever possible, preached in God's name for repentance and added in words to the power of their own example. It is said with considerable truth that the prophets came to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable, the lackadaisical and apathetic and indifferent. Surely the individual called by God as were he Jew, would not resist correction when God's mercy offered it.

They were, because of the holiness of their own lives, because of the perfection they sought after, the conscience of the nation. And of course, one of the greatest and outstanding of these prophets is Elias who lived some 900 years before Christ. Israel had a wicked king named Ahab. His wife Jezebel was even worse and she influenced for degeneracy the life of her ruling husband who thereupon was very eager to share his affliction with the nation.

They did not worship God, but chose stone idols, the principal of which was called Baal. What is more, the entire nation began to follow their degenerate example, for after all what is good for the king and his consort is just as good for the common folks. The wisdom of the ages understands it well: "The fish stinks from the head." They built a beautiful temple to these pagan gods for false worship and even brought forth human sacrifices as did non-believers surrounding them. They did not make an effort to resist evil, but joined enthusiastically in its pursuit.

Things went from bad to worst among the Israelite nation. Sin was rampant and virtue virtually non-existent. We complain about corruption in the world today, and in our nation in

particular, but unfortunately, the same thinking preoccupied pious believers in the time of Elias as well.

One day a stranger appears at the door of Ahab the miserable king. It was the meek but persistent Elias. He looks the ruler straight in the eye and tells him because he has done such wicked things, had encouraged such deviation from the commandments of God, abandoning truth himself, the abominations had finally caught up with him. His message is staggeringly stinging, "there shall be no dew or rain for years until I give the word."

In other words Ahab permitted vibrant faith to dry up. He instigated the literal demise of vibrant faith. He listened to the dried up wisdom of his pagan consort rather than the living waters so necessary for belief to grow and persist. And this he could do because the blessings of heaven still were rained down upon the deviate nation.

Powerful words and powerful indeed were they from a powerful man of God. Of course, abject sinners never want to hear the truth, because as God's revelation to us in Scripture teaches, "The fool always thinks in his mind that he is right."

Ahab and Jezebel have a literal seizure of anger and Elias escapes with his life, but the ruler hunts him down day after day, seeking to kill him because he brought them bad news. They want to punish the messenger and never consider God is patently right. But through an exciting series of events, God protects, guides and affirms Elias. Initially he hides near a brook and ravens come and bring him necessary food each morning and evening. Still later he is drawn to live with a poor widow in Zarepath. All she had was a handful of flour and a bottle of oil, but God wonderfully multiplies this small bit so that as they are used each day for sustenance, the supply is replenished.

And of course, the prophecy of Elias to close the heavens came true. Not a drop of rain fell on the land. Rivers and lakes dried up; crops failed, famine stalked the land of Israel and beyond And the statue gods could do nothing about it.

Finally, Elias challenges the fake priests of Baal to a spiritual contest. They are to build an altar to their gods and He will also construct one to the eternal living God. They are to pray for relief. Nothing happens when hundreds of the pagans gather with their pseudo priests. Elias even wets down and literally soaks the wood for his sacrifice and then after a devoted prayer, fire and flame from heaven descends and ignites the sodden sacrifice. How could this be? What has happened? He is alone and is surrounded by hundreds of pagan priests. The prayer

of one devout man is heard by God. The people turn on and physically put to death all those who were already spiritually dead, but did not have the integrity to fall over.

Faith is restored in this dramatic way. Elias is vindicated and his message believed. His faith is rewarded by being carried off into eternity on a fiery chariot He appears on the mount of Transfiguration centuries later with Moses, surrounding the Saviour as a prelude of enduring and eternal life.

Today, much worse has happed to our land, not physical famine, but spiritual famine has overrun us because we have failed to witness for our God and have forgotten him, while others have outright abandoned him!



VESPER VERSES ACCORDING TO THE EIGHT TONES

TONE 8

- We offer to You an evening hymn and spiritual worship, O Christ,
 For by your resurrection,
 You have deigned to have mercy on us.
- Lord, O Lord,
 Do not turn us away from your presence,
 But because of your resurrection,
 Deign to have mercy on us.
- 3. Rejoice O Holy Sion!

 Mother of all the Churches, dwelling of God:
 You were the first to receive the forgiveness of sins
 Through the resurrection.
- 4. In the fulness of time and by his own free will,
 The Word, born of God the Father before all ages,
 Became incarnate of the Virgin.
 He endured crucifixion and death.
 By, his resurrection,
 He saved man dead from the beginning.
- 5. Let us glorify your resurrection, O Christ!
 Through this, you delivered the race of Adam
 From the suffering of the Abyss.
 As God, you granted eternal life to the world
 And great mercy.

- 6. Glory be to You, O Christ our Savior!
 Only-begotten Son of God,
 You were crucified on the cross.
 You arose from the grave on the third day.
- 7. We glorify You, O Lord:
 You freely endured the cross for us.
 We worship You, Almighty Savior:
 Do not turn us from your presence.
 Hear and save us
 Because of your resurrection:
 You alone love mankind.
- 8. Glory be to the Father +, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and forever. Amen.

Because of his love for mankind,
The King of heaven appeared on earth.
He became incarnate of a pure Virgin and lived among men.

He was seen in the body he received from her. He is the One and only Son, Having two natures but not two persons. Therefore we profess Christ to be our true God, Proclaiming Him to be really perfect God and perfect man.

O Virgin Mother: intercede with Him That He may have mercy on our souls.

At the Apostichon

1. You descended from heaven, O Christ! You ascended the cross;

You accepted death, O Life Immortal! To all in darkness, You are the true light; To all the fallen, You are resurrection, Enlightenment and Savior, Glory be to you!

- 2. Let us glorify Christ risen from the dead.
 He assumed a body and soul.
 Separated in his passion,
 His pure soul entered the Abyss, despoiling it.
 Even in the tomb,
 He remained untouched by corruption.
 He is the Savior of our souls.
- O Christ, we glorify your resurrection in psalms and hymns.
 You freed us from the suffering of the abyss.
 As God, you granted us eternal life
 And great mercy.
- 4. O Lord of all, Creator of heaven and earth:
 Suffering on the cross, You became a fountain of immortality;
 You endured burial and rose in glory.
 By your powerful hand, you raised Adam with you.
 Glory to your resurrection on the third day.
 Through it, you gave us eternal life
 And the forgiveness of sins.
 You alone are the gracious Lord.

5. Glory be to the Father +, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and forever. Amen.

O unwedded Virgin,

You conceived God in the flesh.

O Mother of Almighty God,

Receive the prayers of your servants.

O Virgin ever pure, obtain the forgiveness of our sins.

Hear our supplication and pray For the salvation of our souls.

WHAT'S A WEDDING WITHOUT WINE?

wedding without wine? Unheard of! During Christ's time, wine flowed quite freely at such events, and when our Lord attends a nuptial celebration in Cana of Galilee, the unthinkable happens:



the host runs out of wine! John's Gospel relates how the Blessed Mother - also in attendance - brings this "disastrous matter" to her Divine Son's attention. Jars are filled with water . . . our Lord offers a prayer and, amazingly, the guests now have wine in abundance! And not just any wine - it was apparently much better than the vintage originally served at the beginning of the festivities, eliciting the comment of the host to the bridegroom near the end of the reception: "You have kept the good wine until now."

What is the significance of this Gospel story? We are told that this was Christ's first miracle. It was a means of "manifesting His glory" and an opportunity to inspire belief within the hearts and minds of His Apostles. But there is much more to this story. Its setting is significant, for in the Old Testament, marriage feasts symbolize the union of God with Israel, His symbolic "bride." Our Lord, in effect, begins His ministry here in Cana of Galilee in an area that was predominantly Gentile territory, symbolizing the spreading of the Gospel to the entire world.

A comment made by the Virgin Mary to the servants at the wedding also merits some attention. As the servants were waiting for further instructions concerning the wine, the Theotokos tells them: "Whatever He says to you, do it!" These words are for our ears as well, for the key to a happy Orthodox Christian life is to be blindly obedient to our Lord!

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