



The Highway of Life

Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

July 27, 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. Please inform Kyra Choti immediately if your child will attend.

+++ We have festal anointing with the oils from the Jerusalem Monastery on the occasion of today's feast of St. Pantelemon the great Martyr and Healer. We ask the intercession of the Great Healer for the healing of body and soul.

+++ 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, [REDACTED]; Candles, \$24.00; Food Coupons, \$320.00; Holyday, [REDACTED]; Building Fund by Nina Harrison in memory of +Margaret Alleruzzo, \$25.00; Christian Fellowship, \$Special Gift, \$100.00; D.D.D \$100.00, for a total of [REDACTED]. 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 Szmajda, Maria Garcia, Bob Gorbich, Nina, Tatyana and Sarah Harrison 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 [REDACTED] from this apostolate. Even your pennies can help and are a blessing to our parish.

+++ For the expansion of our much needed parochial facilities, our parish pledge support to date totals [REDACTED]. As we thank the Lord for inspiring generosity in the hearts of our faithful, we also thank the donors for accepting the challenge of the Lord in building up His Body. We cordially invite and look forward to receiving additional and increased pledges from all our devoted parishioners.

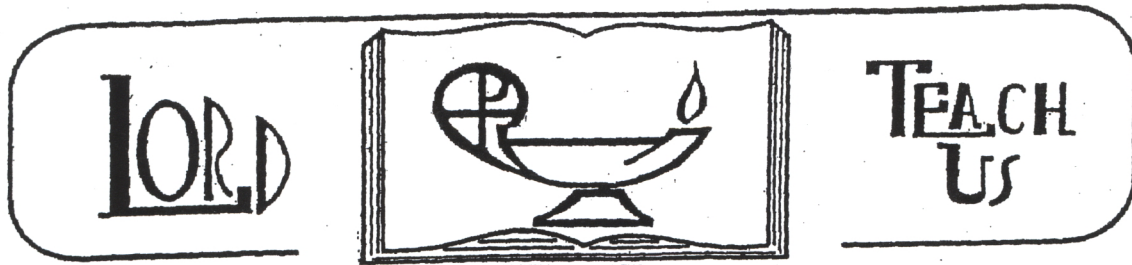
+++ Please check the Sign-Up-Sheet for the weekly Christian Fellowship for the coming weeks. Simple foods without need for preparation are the best. Marilyn Korba coordinates this vital apostolate. Please assist her in making it a success by bringing your donation early so that all are present at the worship of our God.

+++ 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 [REDACTED] denominations. We invite ALL to be caring and supportive and use Grocery Coupons for food shopping as we have gratefully realized [REDACTED] on this project to date!

+++ 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 recently. An additional check for [REDACTED] was also sent to the Zoning Board. The Soil Conservation District is planning a visit to our property. The County Planning Board advises it has no jurisdiction since we are not on a county road. A new well will have to be dug for the building program. Prayers are needed as in the past. We were advised we will be invited to the next meeting of the Planning Board.



Worship

How lovely is your temple, O Lord of the armies of heaven. I long, yes, faint with longing to be able to enter your courtyard and come near the Living God. Even the sparrows and swallows are welcome to come and nest among your altars and there have their young. O Lord of heaven's armies, my King and my God! How happy are those who can live in your temple, singing your praises. A single day spent in your temple is better than a thousand anywhere else. I would rather be a doorman of the temple of my God than live in palaces of wickedness Psalms 84: 1 – 10.

The highest of angelic powers stand in dread and awe of him. Who is as revered as he by those surrounding him Psalms 89: 7?

Your royal decrees cannot be changed. Holiness is forever the keynote of your reign Psalms 93: 5.

Come, kneel before the Lord our Maker Psalms 95:6.

He has announced this victory and revealed it to every nation by fulfilling his promise to be kind to Israel. The whole earth has seen God's salvation of his people Psalms 98: 2, 3.

Shout with joy before the Lord, O earth! Obey him gladly, come before him, singing with joy. Try to realize what this means – the Lord is God! He made us – we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Go through his open gates with great thanksgiving, enter his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and bless his name Psalms 100: 1 - 3.

NO NEUTRAL GROUND

He who is not with me is against me and he who does not gather with me scatters
Matthew 12: 30.

In our relationship with God, we cannot remain neutral. Inspired by heaven minds clearly teach us if we belong to Christ, we are more than God's friends, we are members his family. "Any who accepted him, he empowered to become children of God" John 1: 12. Conversely, those who do not trust in the Saviour are the enemies of God. "For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him by the death of his Son, it is all the more certain that we who have been reconciled will be saved by his life" Romans 5: 10. He who is in opposition to Christ is an enemy of the Almighty.

Without a change of heart from the worldly values that surround us, there is no heaven. Yes, such a person will also die and hear a sonnet, but it is not the praise of God, for he will not be in the company of God, but among the enemies of God. He will no doubt see a throne, but it will be the throne of the chief enemy of God. He will see bodiless powers, but his hosts are the servants of the one he chose to follow, the enemy of God. Thus he finds himself in the house of the enemy of the Lord because he himself is at enmity with God.

He cannot join in the songs of praise because he does not know the tune. It is a hymn he has not sung while on earth. It is a song he has not practiced in the Body of Christ. In eternity he stands silent, motionless, until Christ appears for the time of the dread judgment and says with a voice far louder than ten thousand thunders, "What are you doing here? How can an enemy be at a marriage banquet, celebrating God's victory? There are no devil's minions in heaven! Be gone from here, the place of the chosen holy. Goats, leave the presence of sheep and lambs. Depart, cursed ones, into everlasting separation in hell!"

Yes it is our imagination being used. Nevertheless, we can thus graphically portray the truth that a person who dies and does not belong to Christ is an enemy of Christ. The decisions of baptism must be upheld and adhered to. If there is no room for Christ in your heart and in your life here and now, there will be no room for you in heaven later! If you keep company with the devil now, why expect something different in eternity?

THINK!

...reject Godless ways and worldly desires and live temperately, justly and devoutly in this age
Titus 2: 12.

We frequently read in news service transmissions, reports about astounding behavior at sporting events. One such occurred at a soccer game in Athens, Greece a few years back at which 21 people died and more than 50 were injured. The tragedy occurred when a wildly excited crowd responded to the victory of their team by blindly rushing out of the stadium. What they did not realize was that a gate at the bottom of one of the 20 exiting staircases was locked.

As the shouting, cheering mob reached the gate, many people were knocked down and trampled by the shoving, falling masses behind them. When the gate gave way, the crowd rolled over those who had fallen. Police explained that the fans racing down a narrow concrete stairway and into a curving corridor were cheering and celebrating so loudly that they could not hear the screams of those in front who had fallen down.

This kind of mindless activity does not happen just at soccer games. In a subtle and even tragic way, it goes on around us every day. We may not be shouting or blindly and thoughtlessly running in a crowd, yet we go along, oblivious to the fact that people are dying and entering eternity without Christ, totally on their own. Often we, like millions of others, become so absorbed in our own affairs that we fail to hear thousands of those up ahead who are nearing the end of their lives. In a sense, our lack of love, our lack of seriousness, our lack of concern is contributing to their sad abject plight.

If we have become complacent, let us think carefully about today's Scripture reminder. It calls for good judgment and clear-headed living, without which we will never hear the cries for help above the noise and din of the crowd. How many times has this occurred in many parishes where good ideas, worthwhile causes have been abandoned and trampled upon because of the noise of a majority crowd bent on eliminating the work of Christ in our midst! If we ourselves drift aimlessly in life and live for ourselves alone, the lost who often cross our path many never find the way.

SAVED FOR WHAT???

Why did you ever make us leave Egypt? Was it just to have us die here of thirst with our children and our livestock
Exodus 17: 3?

As the hunter watched the deer step out of a stand of trees and turn its head in his direction, his finger froze on the trigger of his rifle. The large blaze of white on the animal's face was unmistakable. This was the young buck that the man had seen from a helicopter the winter before. Back into his mind rushed the memory of that scene. That day he was carrying bales of hay rather than a gun. As a helicopter pilot for the Conservation Department, he had been on a rescue mission to drop food to a cluster of starving deer. Surrounded by three other whitetails, which had not made it, that lone yearling stood in the snow below, looking helplessly to the copter overhead. It was then that the crew noticed the unusual white markings on the animal's face.

Now that he was facing the deer again, the hunter was confused. How could he kill him? This was not just any other deer. The man had once made a conscious decision, at some personal risk, to save him. Was he now to make a conscious decision to destroy him? No, he could not pull that trigger. Lowering his gun, he stepped into the open. He could not destroy a creature he had once saved.

How much greater is the wisdom, the compassion and mercy of our heavenly Father, whose saving purposes have a specific end in view! The children of Israel failed to grasp this. So many times in our circumstances we also fail to grasp what our God wants from us. We become so preoccupied with our own imagined wants, we literally blur out why God created us. Whenever we are faced with hard times, we wonder whether God will deliver us merely for the purpose of finally letting us die in other circumstances. We need to avoid the mistake of their nonsensical assumed logic. God not only calls us to salvation, but expects us to cooperate with the grace of our vocation and labor in it for our redemption. Believers cannot forget that God always finishes what He starts, "...he who has begun the good work in you will carry it through to completion, right up to the day of Christ Jesus" Philippians 1: 6.

PARENTAL CONCERN

It may be that my sons have sinned and blasphemed God in their hearts Job 1: 5.

A man tells us, "It happened frequently when I was a teenager. Returning home after an evening out, I would hear my father call from the parental bedroom, 'Is that you, John?' No matter how quietly I entered the house or how silently I ascended the stairs, he would ask that question. And I didn't always answer with an assuring yes. Sometimes I resented the fact that he had remained half asleep, awaiting my return home."

Years later when he became a father himself to three daughters, he experienced the same thing. His concerned voice sounded in the still of the night: "Is that you...?"

Even when children move to other cities, devoted parents continue to remain concerned about them and their children. No father or mother can fail to ask, "Is their walk with the Lord in the light of his Word? Are they continuing their devotion to Christ? Are their children being reared in faith commitment to the Lord? Is there a genuinely visible sign of faith response to God's first shown love in their family?"

It is only much later, when teenagers finally become a parent themselves that they begin to understand a father's persistent and devoted question involves far more than simple knowledge about physical presence. It is only then that they finally come to an awareness that the father is reaching out for the total person, the entire being of his child with an encompassing and protective love. Like Job, he is concerned about the possibility of some offense committed by his child.

One of the greatest parental privileges is that of knowing one's children well and, in the light of this knowledge, praying for them intelligently and continually, commending them to the care of their guardian angel and heavenly patronal saint. And a parent's greatest concern for his or her children is that they do not sin against the Lord.

Tender Shepherd of souls, gently lead our children on the path of eternal salvation. May my example as a parent inspire them to remain faithful to your teaching.

ATTENTION PARENTS!

...train up a child in the way he should go and...he will not depart from it Proverbs 22: 6.

Parents, do you find the task of nurturing and disciplining your child to be difficult and frustrating? Are you sometimes exasperated, even discouraged because you cannot seem to get through to your teenagers? At times are they hard to handle, so drastically changed from the little sweethearts they were when just four or five years of age?

If your answer is "yes" you are in a perfectly normal set of circumstances for our present age of disbelief and rampant, even infectious paganism. But remember, before you begin to feel sorry for yourself, all of this is not easy on young people either. They are having an equally difficult time adjusting to the complicated problems of life. So continue to treat them with love, understanding and Christian firmness. Do not nag, but do not hesitate to repeat the truth of our heavenly Father over and again. Our problem and that of our so-called culture is to indulge children and so pervert God's value system. Americans are now rearing their own children with their own worldly values and Orthodox believers are influenced and infected with this sickness. Our fundamental problem is we have been detoured from what our heavenly Father has revealed to us about rearing faithful children. Parents are not as faithful as they should be to their own vocation, so that watered down value has become a part of children's observance. Children reason rightly that if their parents can get away with doing their own thing in regard to children, children ought also to attempt to be on their own as much as they can get away with.

Thus children are terrorized and left to their own devices. They do not have the order, the firmness, the discipline, the security of family life that is based on eternal values. Instead, flimsy, passing guess work is substituted because it is more acceptable and convenient for over-worked and tired parents. Parenting is not only a heavenly vocation, it is an entirely tough job. Prayer life is vital for the entire family unit, led by the father who is representative of our heavenly Father in the home. Children must readily always sense the value of security, instead of being left to their own devices or the influence of peers for guidance. It is only recently that people have begun to accept the ungodly influence of peer pressure in daily life for

adolescents. What has happened is children sense the ineffectiveness of the parenting of their progenitors and seek some other kind of security. The vacuum has been filled by devilish and maniacal values because parents do not want to be parents. The result is the atrocious rise in crime and lawlessness. Parents accept and excuse just about all their children's anti social behavior. Almost no values or norms are expected from them. Parents are too busy being friends to their offspring so that expectant standards are never observed or offered to challenge children. Parents must be parents, not understanding pals simply because it is their vocation in the sight of our heavenly Father. Children are gifted only for a short time to adults to mold, to sculpt, to form into citizens of the eternal kingdom, not just for success in the here and now. It is astounding how many parents do not find important religious, spiritual or moral education for their children but expend all their effort on worldly values and standards for advanced education to succeed in the world. So our generation has seen bright kids, well educated according to job values, but literally bankrupt as far as God's values are concerned.

There are parents who think children should not be forced or taught anything beyond what they assume and accept by themselves. They thus set themselves up for disaster in the future.

Bring up children in fear of the Lord requires patience and persistence, qualities too many parents do not have. How then, can they offer their children what they do not have, nor find important to possess? Scriptural truths must be repeated witnessed in the example of parents often to be engrafted into young lives and teaching must be accompanied by a firm and loving life, patterned after that of the Lord.

The exhortation from the Book of Proverbs is clear and the promise is reassuring. There is no question a child may not inherit his parents' talents, but he certainly will absorb their values. Perhaps this is why so many parents are distressed today. They are becoming known by the values their children assume and do not have the dignity to cover and hide any longer.

Whatever parents write on the heart and soul of a child, the story of faith in Jesus Christ, that heaven has blessed or that earth has defiled, they will unchangingly linger there.

WISDOM! BE ATTENTIVE

Let us the faithful praise the Word eternal with the Father and the Spirit. Let us adore Him Who was born from the Virgin for our salvation. For He willed to ascend the cross as a man, and to suffer death, and to raise the dead by His glorious Resurrection Troparion, Resurrection Tone Five.

O Saviour, You descended into the Abyss. Being the Almighty, You destroyed its power. Being the Creator, You raised the dead and dulled the sting of death. Adam was delivered from the curse and we all cry out to You: "O Lord, Lover of mankind, save us!" Kontakion, Resurrection Tone Five.

You, O Lord, will keep us and preserve us always from this generation Prokimenon, Resurrection Tone Five.

The Lord, Who bestows Resurrection upon the race of men was led like a lamb to the slaughter. The powers of the Abyss trembled; its gates opened. Christ the King of glory entered it. He said to those in chains: "Come out!" To those in darkness, He said, "Let light surround you!" Vesper Hymn, Tone Five.

We offer You this evening worship, O Light Who never fade! In the fullness of time You filled the world with light, Your flesh being a mirror of Your splendor. You descended into the Abyss, dispelling its darkness. You revealed the light of Your Resurrection to the world. O Lord, Giver of light, glory be to You! Vesper Hymn, Tone Five.

O Virgin most pure, you are a temple, palace, the throne of the King. Through you, Christ the Lord has appeared. He is the Sun of Justice and the Saviour. He willed to enlighten those in darkness, those fashioned in His image by His hand. We beseech you, worthy of our praise, You are His mother. Intercede for the salvation of our souls Vesper Hymn, Tone Five.

A symbol of the pure Virgin and bride is revealed in the Red Sea: There, Moses divided the waters; here Gabriel is the minister of a wonder. There, Israel crossed the deep as on dry land; here the Virgin gives birth and remains a Virgin. There, the sea remained uncrossable after Israel passed; here, the immaculate one remains a Virgin after the birth of Immanuel. O immortal and eternal God, have mercy on us! Vesper Hymn, Tone Five.

SIMPLE THOUGHTS ABOUT LIFE'S JOURNEY

When we drive along any road, there are signs in place to make our trip easier and safer. If we go through stop signs, exceed the posted speed limit and disregard any warning or danger signs, chances are we will never get to where we want to go!

For an Orthodox Christian, life itself is compared to a journey, with our "final stop" being the Kingdom of Heaven. It is an arduous trip, with road blocks and hazards all along the way. Fortunately for us, Christ has made our travels along the "highway of life" more accessible by posting His own "signs" to assist us. There are plenty of "Do Not Enter" signs set up for us. We must learn the many areas of temptation to avoid along the way. If we stray from the "main road," it is often difficult to find our way back onto it! "Do Not Pass" signs are equally important as well. On our journey, we

must understand the necessity of "keeping in line" and following the path of the spiritual leaders of the Church. We must be good followers, going at the proper pace on our trip!

Finally, the "Yield" signs may be the most important ones of all along our imaginary spiritual avenue. Submitting to the will of God is crucial to our survival. We are guaranteed a fatal accident if we do not ". . . commend ourselves and our entire life to Christ our God."

May we all follow the course mapped out for us by Christ and His Church for our journey along the "highway of life." To answer a child's inevitable travel question of "Are we there yet?" the answer is "No." But travel patiently! When we do arrive safely one day - when we reach the "end of the road" - all that we have endured along the way will have been well worth it!