



*Saints*

*Florus*

*and*

*Laurus*





# Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

August 22, 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

+++ Next Sunday is the feast of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist. Although ordinarily a day of strict fast, since it is Sunday, please forego meat on this day. Festal anointing will conclude our celebration. The customary greeting is "Christ Is Among Us!" to which we respond, "He Is And Shall Be!"

+++ We have received donations to our parish amounting to \$435.00 in blessed memory of +Mary Gorbich, beloved mother of our good parishioner, Bob Gorbich. To those who expressed their condolences in heartfelt generosity to the cause of the Lard, we acknowledge and sincerely thank offerings from:

Robert Gorbich, Barbara Bowker, Betty Samaris, Eleanor Korba, Paul & Helen Pallas, Father and Pani Lucas, Anna & Bill Zacharyczuk, Helen Litwinetz, Nina Harrison and daughters and Joseph & Kyra Choti Family. We express our gratitude to these devoted souls and pledge our continued prayers for their good health and repose of the soul of +Mary. 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, ~~\$695.00~~; Candles, ~~\$14.00~~; Food Coupons, ~~\$180.00~~; Holyday, ~~\$59.00~~; Bible Sale, ~~\$50.00~~; Refund, ~~\$1452.00~~; Pennies From Heaven, ~~\$1.00~~, for a total of ~~\$2451.00~~. 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 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: Subdeacon Daniel J. & Marilyn Korba Family, Father Lucas, Pani Lucas, Louis Pasquino, +Paul Szmaida, Debra 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 **\$1576.00** 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 ~~\$104,815.00~~. 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.

+++ We thank the good souls who made a success of the bus trip yesterday to the Icon Exhibit in New York City. Anyone wishing to see the commemorative booklet printed for this occasion and obtained for our parish library, can see Father.

+++ *The first **Pirohi Sale** of the coming season will be on Friday and Saturday, September 3 and 4. Worker's schedule is available in kitchen.*

*SEXUALITY*  
*MARRIAGE*  
*FAMILY*  
*IN THE*  
*ORTHODOX*  
*CHURCH*



# SEXUALITY

The sexual identifying character of human beings most assuredly has a positive role to play in human spirituality. Like all things human, sexuality must be sanctioned and blessed by our God and inspired with the grace of the Holy Spirit and used for the purposes our Creator intended when we were gifted with our sexual nature. And like all things human, through its misuse and abuse, sexuality can be perverted and corrupted, becoming an instrument of misery and sin rather than a means for glorifying God and fulfilling oneself as made in His image and according to His likeness.

The body is not meant for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body....Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who joins himself to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, it is written, 'The two shall become one.' But he who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Shun immorality. Every other sin which a man commits is outside his body; but the immoral man sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body 1 Corinthians 6: 13 - 20.

The teaching of God enunciated through St. Paul about sexuality is analogous to his teaching about eating and drinking and all other bodily functions. They are given to us by our Creator for spiritual reasons to be used for His glory. In themselves they are holy and pure. When misused outside of marriage, abused in marriage or adored simply for the pleasure they offer, as an end in themselves, they become the instruments of sin and eventual spiritual death. The apostle specifically says that all sexual perversions have as their direct cause man's explicit rebellion against God.

Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. Their women exchanged natural relations for the unnatural, and men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were

consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men receiving in their own persons the due penalty for their error. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a base and improper conduct....Though they know God's decrees that those who do such things deserve to die, they not only do them but approve those that practice them Romans 1: 24 - 32.

That those who "do such things deserve to die" was taken literally in the law of Moses; thus adulterers, homosexuals, fornicators, incestuous people and those committing sexual acts with beasts were ordered to be

"...put to death" Leviticus 20: 10 -16.

In following this teaching, while hoping on the mercy of God and the forgiveness of Christ for all sinners, the new Testament revelation of Christ is even more stringent in its demands regarding sexual purity. Jesus, Who forgave the woman taken in adultery (John 8: 7 - 11) and the repentant harlot who washed His feet with her hair (Luke 7: 36 - 50), gave the following admonition to His followers and listeners in the Sermon on the Mount:

You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go to hell. It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the grounds of unchastity, makes her an adulteress; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery Matthew 5:27 - 32; 19: 3 - 9; Romans 7: 3.

The Apostle of God, St. Paul simply says that unrepentant adulterers, fornicators, and homosexuals will not enter the Kingdom of God. There is no salvation for them.

Do not deceive yourselves no fornicators, idolaters, or adulterers, no sodomites, thieves, misers, or drunkards, no slanderers or robbers will inherit God's kingdom 1 Corinthians 6: 9, 10.

It is obvious what proceeds from the flesh: lewd conduct, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hostilities, bickering, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish rivalries, dissent,, factions, envy,



drunkenness, orgies and the like. I warn you, as I have warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God! Galatians 5: 19.

Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled; for God will judge the immoral and adulterous Hebrews 13 4.

Thus according to the revelation of God, sexual relations are holy and pure only within the community of marriage, with the only ideal relationship being between one man and one woman forever. Those who are not married and those who choose by the inspired will and vocation of God not to marry must abstain from all sexual relationships since such relations cannot possibly fulfill the functions ascribed and given the sexual act by our loving God in creation. This does not mean that there will be no sexual character to the unmarried person's spiritual life, for the unmarried man and the unmarried woman will still express their humanity in masculine and feminine spiritual forms. The virtues and fruits of the Holy Spirit in each, as in those who are married, are identical, but the manner of their incarnation and expression will be proper to the particular sexual form of their common humanity, as well as the individual uniqueness of each person.

The unmarried person who lives his or her whole life without husband or wife is called to virginity as a witness in this world of the Kingdom of God where

...in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven Matthew 22: 30.

It is for this reason that those following the monastic life are said to have assumed the "angelic habit." This does not mean that they become bodiless or unsexual. It simply means that they perpetually serve and praise God as His children, comprising as it were, the universal family of God without themselves being the leaders of families on this earth. In this way, they live and express their spirituality as fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters of all mankind in Christ.

"Who is my mother, and who are my brethren?" And stretching out his hands towards his disciples, He said, "Here are my mother and my brethren! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother" Mark 3: 34, 35.

Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as you would a father; treat younger men like brothers, older women like mothers, younger women like sisters, in all purity 1 Timothy 5:1, 2.

These words, of course, are intended for all, married and unmarried, but they most obviously have special significance for those, who for the sake of Christ, are living an unmarried virginal life. For as those who are married have the task of living their spiritual lives with the cares of the family, and within the context of its needs and demands, the Christian who is single lives his or her life in Christ without these conditions.

I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own special gift from God, one of one kind and one of another....The unmarried man is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to please the Lord, but the married man is anxious about worldly affairs, how to please his wife and his interests are divided. And the unmarried woman or girl is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit; but the married woman is anxious about worldly affairs, how to please her husband. I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord. 1 Corinthians 7: 34, 35.

So he that marries...does well; and he who refrains from marriage will do better 1 Corinthians 7: 7 - 40.

The teaching is clear. People can serve God and live a spiritual life both in marriage and in the single state of virginity. And people can sin in both just as easily.

Each has his own special gift from God 1 Corinthians 7: 7.

St. Paul, thinks, however, that among those who want to do as perfectly as they can, they who do not want to marry,

...will do better 1 Corinthians 7: 38 - 40.

The spiritual tradition of the Church clearly agrees with the Apostle, but this does not at all mean that marriage is in any way disparaged or disdained. It is, after all, given to us and established by God and is a sacramental Mystery in the life of the Church and those who abhor it for "spiritual" reasons are to be excommunicated from the Church (Law of the Council of Gangra). It simply means only that, most practically, one can be of greater service to the Lord and more perfectly a witness to His unending Kingdom if he gives up everything in this world, sells all that he has, and follows Christ in total detachment and poverty.

---



The idea, however, that a single person is free to indulge oneself in the things of the world, including unabated sexuality, and still be a servant of God in Christ is totally rejected and condemned. One can forsake marriage in the body only for greater freedom from anxiety about worldly affairs in order to be concerned seriously with the affairs of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. The single unmarried person who is holy in body and soul has sexual relations with no one!

## MARRIAGE

Marriage is an integral part of human life on this earth as created by our God.

Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh Genesis 2: 24; Matthew 19: 5, 6.

God created male and female so that man and woman could live their lives together in marriage as one flesh. This union should be broken for no earthly reason.

What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder. They said to Jesus, "Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to put her away?" He said to them, "For the hardness of your hearts Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife except for sexual impurity and marries another, commits adultery." The disciples said to him, "If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is not expedient to marry." But he said to them, "Not all men can receive this precept, but only those to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to receive this, let him receive it" Matthew 19: 6 - 12.

Human marriage exists explicitly by the will of our Heavenly Father on earth as the created expression of God's love for mankind and as man's participation in the creative love of God.

The union of man and woman in the community of marriage is used in God's Revelation to us as the image of God's faithful love for Israel, His chosen people, and Christ's sacrificial love for His Bride, the Church. (Read Isaiah 54; Jeremiah 4; Ezekiel 16; Hosea)

Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, His body, and is himself its Saviour. As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives be subject in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself in splendor without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes it and cherishes it, as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one flesh. This is a great mystery, and I take it to mean Christ and the church; however, let each of you love his wife as himself, and the wife see that she respects her husband Ephesians 5: 22 - 33.

These words of St. Paul, read as they are at the sacramental celebration of the Mystery of marriage in the Church, contain the entire program for spiritual life in the sacred community of marriage. The husband must love his wife to the point of death, as Christ loves the Church. And the wife must be totally given to her husband in everything as the Church is given to Christ. The union in love must be complete, perfect, total, enduring, and lasting forever. Within this union, the sexual act of love is the mystical seal of the total union in life; the act whereby the two are united in mind, heart, soul and body in the Lord.

According to the spiritual teaching of the Orthodox Church, marriage and so, the sexual act of love is made perfect only in Christ and within the Body of the Church. This does not at all mean that all those who are married in church have an ideal marriage. The sacramental Mystery of marriage is not mechanical or magical. It must have the participants' consent and ideal participation. God's grace does not work outside the individuals, but with their cooperation. Its reality and gifts may be rejected and defiled, received therefore to condemnation and judgment, like the Eucharist and all of the other sacramental Mysteries of our faith which require a pure response from the believer. It does mean, however, that when a man and woman are married in the Church of Christ the possibility for the perfection of their marriage relationship in Christ is most fully imparted and bestowed by God our loving Father. It remains for the individuals to utilize the grace of the sacramental Mystery in their lives to guide their cherished life style.



When a man and woman truly love each other, they naturally desire their love to be perfect. They want their relationship to be filled with all virtue and every fruit of the Holy Spirit. They want their love to be ever more perfectly expressed and fulfilled. They want it to last forever. Those who do not desire such perfection for their love, do not really love and base lust may be the only reason for the marriage. True sexual love has the possibility to exist only in sacramental Mystery of marriage where Christ is an integral part of the union in love. Outside of sacramental marriage and Christ's love, we reduce our sexuality only to fulfilling a pure physical, carnal need which is destined for eternal death forever, however lofty and deluded the mentality of its participants becomes. The possibility for human love to be what our heavenly Father created it to become is itself only given by our God. This is the faith of devoted Orthodox believers. Communicants of the Church of Christ believe that

If you can? Everything is possible to the man who believes Mark 9: 23.

For man it is impossible, but for God all things are possible Matthew 19: 26.

It is for this reason and no other that believers in the Orthodox Church find it so vitally necessary to be married sacramentally in church and naturally it must precede their living and loving together. Because Orthodox believers want their love to be perfect and whole and because they believe this wholeness necessarily is bestowed only by our loving heavenly Father, they prepare themselves and come to the Church of Christ and offer themselves to the Father through Christ by the grace of the Holy Spirit in the sacramental Mystery of marriage. They explicitly come to ask our God to give them what this world cannot give, to bestow upon them what the world does not by itself have. They ask the Father to do for them what they cannot do for themselves. They come and ask our heavenly Father to join their marriage union that their limited and sin-filled lives might be made complete, holy and divine as well as a source of His blessings for them. Premarital sexual activity necessarily excludes our God, puts Him on broad notice that He is not wanted or needed as a Participant in what should be a glorious unity. It destroys, perverts, twists, debases and makes a caricature of the true love of God for man and of the love of Christ for His Body, the Church.

Not being married in church for believing Orthodox Christians is a grave and deadly sin. It is a sin not because honorable sexual love in and of itself is dirty, or sinfully evil. It is a sin because sexual love by itself, in isolation, not made holy, not sanctified, not blessed, consecrated and sanctified, without God is impossible. It degenerates into something it was never intended to be by our heavenly Father. It will never have an opportunity at perfection in Christ by the grace of the Holy Spirit; it will never share in its eternal dimension and will be a source of condemnation to both parties for all time. It is condemned to pass away with all the things of the earth which

are not saved and redeemed, not transfigured, not sanctified, not resurrected and divinized by Christ our Saviour and Redeemer.

God's revelation to us puts it most simply. Without God, all is imperfect, incomplete, and ultimately lost. But with God's grace, all is perfected, completed, fulfilled, and ultimately redeemed and saved. And most certainly human sexual love is no exception. If Christians are those who do all in God and Orthodox believers are those who do all things in the sacramental Mysteries of His Church, sexual love and marriage can hardly be excepted.

St. Paul compares the intimacy enjoyed by a man and a woman united in Christ as being a sign of the love and intimacy which exists between Christ and His Bride, the Church. Far from being simply a lusty fulfillment of pure physical need, it is by far the most profoundly meaningful spiritual encounter with the Blessed Trinity that a human being can possibly experience. Beyond being sinful, premarital sexual activity becomes satisfied with only a small part of the goal realized and accepts physical fulfillment without the Source of fulfillment being a part of the relationship. It raises a clenched fist to our Creator and insists He is not at all necessary to our alleged happiness and natural human fulfillment.

When a believing man and woman have love bestowed upon them by Christ, they realize they can find its fulfillment only in the Saviour. He makes it possible; no one and nothing else can do it. So, for those who live in Christ truly, the Saviour and Accomplisher of their love is Christ. He bestows every virtue and every grace of the Holy Spirit. He permits and allows them to grow ever more perfectly in one heart, soul and body. He allows them to live and love for all eternity in the Kingdom of God. A marriage in Christ does not end in sin; it does not part in death. It is finally fulfilled and perfected in the eternal kingdom of Heaven. It is for this reason and this reason alone that those who seek true everlasting love and perfection in marriage come to the Church of Christ to be married by Christ so they can live in Christ.

A truly Orthodox and spiritual marriage is one where authentic love in Christ abides and reigns. In the community of marriage true love is expressed and lived in the total union of the couple in all that they are, have and do, and yet hope to become by His grace. It is the love of each one living completely for the good and salvation of the other, the love in erotic union expressed in total oneness of mind, heart, soul, and flesh; the love of perfect friendship in Christ.

In the spiritual tradition of the Orthodox Church, the aim of all life is the acquisition of the Holy Spirit which is expressed most perfectly in the manifestation of love. Indeed, the Holy Spirit Himself is Identified with God's love by all the saints as witnessed in the writings of St. Simeon, New Theologian:



O Holy Love, that is the Holy Spirit of God, he Who knows you not has never tasted the sweetness of Your mercies which only living experience can give us. But he who has known You, or who has been known by You, can never have even the smallest doubt. For you are the fulfillment of the law, You Who fills, burns, inflames, embraces my heart and soul with a measureless love. You are the teacher of the prophets, the strength of the martyrs, the inspiration of the fathers and masters, the perfection of all the saints. Only You, O Love, prepare even me for true service of God Homily 53.

Thus, our God, Who is love, is vitally invited, and enters into union with a believing man and woman through the Son of His love by the Spirit of His love. To live in this divine life is true spiritual life, meant and destined for all baptized believers who have received the vocation of marriage from the hands of the Eternal Father.

The first definition of love as "*agape*" is love as the action of perfect goodness for the sake of the other. This is the most basic meaning of love: to do everything possible for the well being of others. God Himself is possessed of this love as the very essence and content of His being and life, for "God is *agape*." It is with this love that spiritual persons must love and cherish first of all.

The second dimension and understanding of love as "*eros*" is simply love for the sake of union with the beloved. Erotic love is no sin when it is free from sinful passions, misuse or abuse. It can and must be an utterly pure desire for communion with the beloved, including God. All spiritual writers in the tradition of our Orthodox Church have insisted that such love should exist between God and mankind as the pattern for all erotic love in the world between husband and wife. Thus the mystical writers and spiritual fathers have utilized the Old Testament's *Song of Songs* as the poetic image of God's love for mankind and mankind's loving response to God. Indeed, the prophets have used the image of erotic love in explaining the Lord's everlasting love for His Chosen People Isaiah: 54; Jeremiah: 2, 3, 31; Ezekiel: 16; and Hosea. And St. Paul uses this image for Christ's love of the Church He founded, for communicants of the new way of life He brought to earth from heaven itself. In the Scripture, the union of mankind with the Lord in the Kingdom of God is primarily revealed in the image of *eros* Matthew: 22; Revelation: 19, 22.

...for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready; it was granted to her to be clothed in fine linen, bright and pure, for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints Revelation 21: 9.

"Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb" Revelation 21: 9.

The final and third type of love is "friendship" or "*philia*." This also should exist between husband and wife and between them and our God, the Source of their existence and being. Mankind has no greater friend than our God and God Himself always desires the friendship of man and woman. According to the Scriptures, the very purpose of the coming of Christ was to dispel all enmity between God and man, and to establish the co-working of Creator and creature in the fellowship of friendship.

Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend  
Exodus 33: 11.

Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing. But I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father, I have made known to you John 15: 13 - 15.

Within such a communion of pure love, the sexual act is the complete and total expression of all this conviction. It was created for this purpose by our God. It is the intimate act which finds its total joy when perfected by those who are fully devoted and dedicated to each other in all things, in every way forever, without reservation. It is for this sacred and divine reason that the sexual act cannot be engaged in casually or promiscuously simply for one's own bodily pleasure. It is the act of loving self-sacrifice in eternal fidelity to God and each other. Only when accomplished in this way does it yield divine satisfaction and infinite delight to the lovers in Christ who enact it.

Sexual dissatisfaction in marriage is virtually never simply a bodily or biological problem. It is almost without exception, always the result of some spiritual defect of mind, heart and soul. It is very plainly a spiritual problem. Most basically, it is a defect of perceived love itself. For when each considers only the eternal good of the other, desiring total spiritual and bodily union in perfect friendship, the sexual act is always most satisfying and fulfilling. When this is absent and something else is central, the gratification of some unworthy passion of body and mind, then all is lost and the perversion of love brings sadness and death to the union.

Normally, the sexual act in marriage bears fruit in the procreation of children. The marriage ceremony in the life of the Church prays for

...chastity, a bed undefiled, the procreation of children and for every earthly blessing that they may in turn share with the needy Marriage Ritual.



The sexual act, however, is not limited merely to the bearing of children. It exists and has been bestowed upon man historically from God's revelation to us for union in love and the mutual fulfillment and edification and joy of those who are married. If this were not the case, St. Paul would not have offered this counsel:

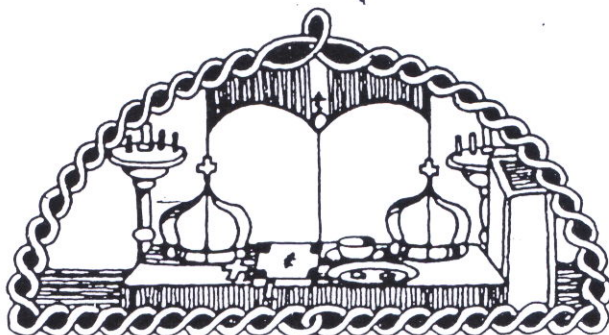
...each man should have his own wife, and each wife her husband. The husband should give the wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not rule over her body, but the husband does; likewise the husband does not rule over his body, but the wife does. Do not refuse one another except perhaps by agreement for a time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, lest satan tempt you through your lack of self-control 1 Corinthians 7: 2 - 5.

Nowhere does the Apostle say that the married couple should be separated and come together only with the intention of bearing a child, although the sexual act should always remain open for this purpose if it is the will of God. He says rather that they should stay together, separating "by agreement, for a time," and that, for the purpose of being devoted "to prayer." The words "by agreement" are central to the counsel for each must live totally as belonging to the other.

Sexuality in a pure marriage is pure. The Apostle has taught us:

To the pure, all things are pure, but to the corrupt and unbelieving nothing is pure; their very minds and consciences are corrupted. They profess to know God but they deny him by their deeds; they are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good deed Titus 1: 15 - 16.

Only those who live the spiritual life in genuine love and devotion have sexual lives that are holy and pure, mutually fulfilling and satisfying and well-pleasing in the sight of God. This is guaranteed when our spiritual lives are grounded in Christ and His Mystical Body, the Church.



## FAMILY

True love in marriage supposes and expects the bearing of children and always being open to the grace of the Lord and His will for married life. Those who truly love in marriage will naturally have children as the fruit of their love and the greatest bond of their eternal union. Those who despise children and refuse to offer them appropriate care and nurturing as well as devotion, do not truly love in the sight of our Creator. Those who can, but refuse to have children do not love and are bereft of the love of God. They are caught up in spiritual death and so can produce nothing living. They are carnal and obtuse and have no hope of life beyond this existence to which they so profoundly devote themselves. They already have their reward.

Of course, there are those whose marriages will be childless because of some tragedy of nature brought on by the sin of the world. In such marriages perfect love can and does exist, but the mutual devotion in the service of God and man will assume and take on other forms, either the adoption of children or some other service for the sake of others. The childless marriage can be pleasing in the sight of God if His will is discerned and followed faithfully. There are in the Orthodox tradition no means of controlling or manipulating birth that are acceptable in the sight of the Lord. All means are equally sinful, and distressing for those who truly love. For the Christian, marriage is the way of life that abounds with as many children as possible. Believers must use God's mind and heart in counting their children, not mere human limited earth-bound numbers.

The abortion of a child is absolutely condemned by the Church of Christ. Clinical abortion is not a means of birth control and those who practice it for whatever reason, both the practitioners and those who request it, are punished according to the tradition of the ancient Church with the penalty for murder. So odious is this practice that from earliest times of the Church, even true repentance did not permit the guilty parties to receive the sacramental Mysteries for years on end.

Within the life of the Orthodox family, the father must be the leader and head. He must love his wife and children as Christ loves the Church, remembering always that Christ willingly assumed death to redeem the Church! He must never be harsh or abusive. The wife must be totally devoted to her husband and must demand, encourage and enable his leadership. This is the normal way of life for believers as prescribed in the Scriptures. But the husband must be careful that he genuinely serves in the leadership role in a Christ-like way. Because the Resurrection of Christ has done away with distinctions as St. Paul notes in his message to the Galatians, headship



and leadership must be characterized by service, greater service in the case of the husband and father, who devotedly follows the example of Christ, Who came among us as One Who serves. The one who serves is not overbearing and does not insist on his "rights", or any kind of privileges, but enlarges and broadens his scope of service when difficulties arise.

Let no one delude himself. If any one of you thinks he is wise in a worldly way, he had better become a fool. In that way he will really become wise, for the wisdom of this world is absurdity with God. Scripture says, "He catches the wise in their craftiness"; and again, "The Lord knows how empty are the thoughts of the wise." 1 Corinthians 3 : 18 - 20.

A dispute arose among them about who should be regarded as the greatest. He said: "Earthly kings lord it over their people. Those who exercise authority over them are called their benefactors. Yet it cannot be that way with you. Let the greater among you be the least, the leader as servant. Who, in fact, is the greater, he who reclines at table or he who serves the meal? Is it not the one who reclines at table? Yet I am in your midst as the one who serves you Luke 22: 24 - 27.

The servant is not greater than his master John 15: 20; 13: 16.

...the head of every man is Christ, and the head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God 1 Corinthians 11: 3.

...the husband is the head of his wife just as Christ is head of his body the Church, as well as its Saviour. As the Church submits to Christ, so wives should submit to their husbands in everything Ephesians 5:23, 24.

You who are wives, be submissive to your husbands. This is your duty in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives Colossians 3:18, 19.

There does not exist among you Jew or Greek, slave or freeman, male or female. All are one in Christ Jesus Galatians 3: 28.

When the husband or wife is a non-believer, and such should only be the case when one member of the marriage becomes a believer after being married, or when one member of a married couple loses his or her faith, for a Christian never enters into marriage with a non-believer, the couple, according to St. Paul should not separate or divorce, but should continue

to live together. The believer must show the best example of spiritual life of love to the non-believer in every word and deed, totally without coercion or compulsion regarding faith in Christ and certainly without condemnation or accusation.

For the unbelieving husband is consecrated through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is consecrated through her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. But if the unbelieving partner desires to separate, let it be so; in such case the brother or sister is not bound. For God has called us to peace. Wife, how do you know whether you will save your husband? Husband, how do you know whether you will save your wife? 1 Corinthians 7: 13 - 16.

You married women must obey your husbands so that any of them who do not believe in the word of the gospel may be won over apart from preaching through your wives' conduct. They have only to observe the reverent purity of your way of life....Your adornment is rather the hidden character of the heart, expressed in the unfading beauty of a calm and gentle disposition. This is precious in God's eyes 1 Peter 3: 1 - 6.

Here, the Apostle, for the sake of peace, permits separation, but does not at all encourage it. Nevertheless, in dire circumstances, such as when there is physical or spiritual danger to the soul, the Church then counsels separation as the lesser evil. However, in such cases, the Church also counsels the separated Christian, if possible to remain single.

To those, now married, however, I give this command, though it is not mine; it is the Lord's: a wife must not separate from her husband. If she does separate, she must remain single or become reconciled to him once again 1 Corinthians 7: 10.

Within the family, the spiritual life of love should be sought and lived as fully as is humanly possible. This means that every member of the family should live for the greater good of the others in all circumstances

...bearing one another's burdens in that way you fulfill the law of Christ  
Galatians 6: 2.

There should be a constant and discernible presence of mercy and forgiveness and mutual upbuilding and affirmation. There should be every expression of true love as is generally found in those who are genuinely holy in the sight of the Lord.



Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in right. Love bears all things, believes all things, endures all things 1 Corinthians 13: 4 - 7.

Only this kind of love can be the basis of enduring family life, lived and expressed joyfully and cheerfully, without reluctance or compulsion.

Let me say this much: He who sows sparingly will reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will reap bountifully. Everyone must give according to what he has inwardly decided; not sadly; not grudgingly, for God loves a cheerful giver. God can multiply his favors among you so that you may always have enough of everything and even a surplus for good works 2 Corinthians 9: 6 - 9.

For marriage is not an "unholy deadlock" as some cynical writer has suggested, but in the words of St. John Chrysostom,

...a miniature church Sermons of Chrysostom,

in the home where the grace and freedom of God abounds for man's bountiful life and abundant salvation,

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and your mother...that it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth Ephesians 6: 1 - 3; Exodus 20: 12.

There are those who curse their fathers and do not bless their mothers... if one curses his father or mother, his lamp will be put out in utter darkness Proverbs 30: 11; 20: 20.

For everyone who curses his father or his mother shall be put to death; he who has cursed his father or his mother, his blood is upon him Leviticus 20: 9.

The eye that mocks a father or scorns an aged mother, will be plucked out by the ravens in the valley; the young eagles shall devour it Proverbs 30: 17.

Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord Colossians 3: 20.

---

St. John Chrysostom says that those who cannot honor or love and respect their parents can certainly not claim to serve our God, for He is the

...Father of all...Ephesians 4: 6,

the One

...from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named Ephesians 3: 15.

It is entirely true that every believing family is guided by the teaching of our Saviour.

You will live in my love if you keep my commandments, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and live in his love. You are my friends if you do what I command you John 15: 10, 14.

The love of each family member is a reward itself.

Behold how good it is, and how pleasant, where brethren dwell as one! It is as when the precious ointment upon the head runs down over the beard, the beard of Aaron, until it runs down upon the collar of his robe Psalm 133: 1, 2.

The family is called to living faith in Christ. Baptism has brought them out of the dead past into the life of love in the Saviour. It is to vibrant life that all family members are to be committed.

That we have passed from death to life we know because we love our brothers. The man who does not love is among the living dead. Little children, let us love indeed and in truth not merely talk about it. This is our way of knowing we are committed to the truth and are at peace before him 1 John 3: 14, 18, 19.

The true loving Christian father loves and disciplines his child as God loves and disciplines his people. He never forgets that discipline has as its purpose making a disciple of the Lord of his offspring.

My sons, do not disdain the discipline of the Lord nor lose heart when he reproves you. For whom the Lord loves, he disciplines; he scourges every son he receives Hebrew 12: 5, 6.



It is the love of Christ in a devoted father which impels him to teach and discipline his child in the Lord. He wants to return to God the gift of a child in advanced and perfected condition so the Lord will be praised and glorified. He desires to give back to God a greater gift in the child than when it was first given to him as its physical father. So our God ennobles us when he says,

Endure your trials as the discipline of God who deals with you as sons.  
For what son is there who his father does not discipline? If you do not know the discipline of sons, then you are not sons, but bastards. If we respect our earthly fathers who disciplined and corrected us, are we not all the more submit to the Father of spirits and live?  
Hebrew 12: 7 - 9.

He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him. Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him. Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it Proverbs 13: 24; 22: 6, 15; 23: 13.

The love of a father for his children is expressed in loving discipline without hypocrisy because the best teacher is one's own best Christ-like example,

They disciplined us as seemed right to them, to prepare us for this short span of years of mortal life; but God does so for our true profit, that we may share in his holiness. At the time it is administered, all discipline seems a cause for grief and not for joy, but later it brings forth the fruit of peace and justice to those who are trained in its school. So strengthen your drooping knees and your weak hands. Make straight the paths you walk on, that your halting limbs may not be dislocated, but healed Hebrews 12: 2 - 13.

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger but bring them up with discipline and instruction in the Lord Ephesians 6: 4.

Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged Colossians 3: 21.

Very much like the fathers of Christian parishes, the priests of the Church, natural physical human fathers of families must be

...temperate, sensible, dignified, hospitable, an appropriate teacher, no drunkard, not violent, but gentle, not quarrelsome and no lover of money 1 Timothy 3: 2.

The father must be an example to the entire family

...in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity 1 Timothy 4: 12.

Just like the father in Christ's parable, the earthly father must always be ready to receive home with joy his prodigal children. The wives and mothers of families must be fully devoted to their husbands and children. They must be the very embodiment of all the fruits of the Holy Spirit as those who impart and give life, both physical and spiritual.

A good wife, who can find? She is far more precious than jewels. The heart of her husband trusts in her...she does him good and not harm all the days of her life.

Strength and dignity are her clothing and she laughs at the time to come. She opens her mouth in wisdom and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.

She looks well to the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness.

Her children rise up to call her blessed; her husband also praises her saying: "Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all."

Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is greatly to be praised Proverbs 31: 10 - 31.

The teaching of the wisdom books from God's revelation to us is also found duplicated in the writings of the Apostles of Christ.

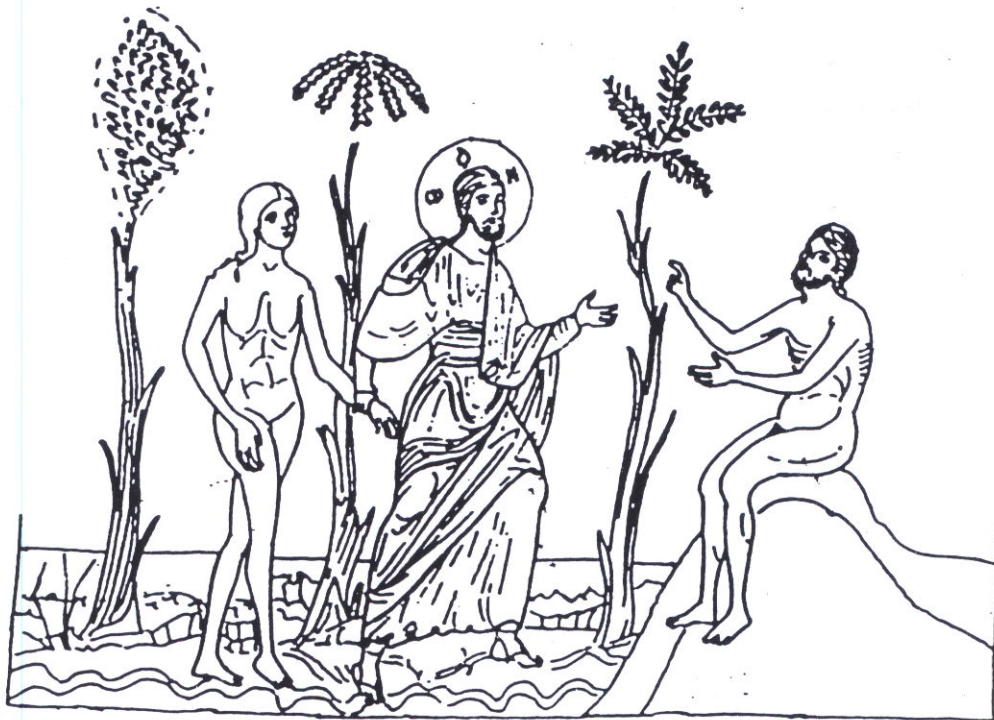
I desire that women should adorn themselves...by good deeds as befits women who profess piety 1 Timothy 2: 8, 10.

Likewise, wives. be submissive to your husbands, so that some, though they do not obey the Lord, may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, when they see your reverent and chaste behavior. Let yours... be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable jewel of a gentle



and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. So once the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves and were submissive to their husband as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are now her children if you do right and let nothing terrify you  
1 Peter 3: 1 - 6.

Thus, in the miniature church of the believing 'family, with each member participant living according to God's will, the kingdom of God is already present and active, waiting to be perfectly fulfilled and completed in the eternal Kingdom of Heaven, which will never end, where all will come to fully and completely learn, understand and know that we all God's precious children, constituting the Bride of His Divine Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to Whom be glory now and forever. Amen.



Presentation of Eve to Adam

## TRUE "BUILDERS" OF CHRIST'S CHURCH

**T**he Holy Martyrs Florus and Laurus lived in the 2nd century in the region of Illyria, which is located today in Yugoslavia. The brothers were zealous Christians in an era where professing one's faith in Jesus Christ was a costly - often deadly - proposition. By occupation, Florus and Laurus were stonemasons. They were talented craftsman, and the prefect of Illyria sent them to another district to work on the construction of a pagan temple. They obediently carried out their assigned task, distributing their earnings to the poor and needy.

One day, the son of a local pagan priest carelessly ventured too close to the worksite, and was struck by a stone chip, severely injuring his eye. Florus and Laurus instructed the boy's father that if he would profess belief in Jesus Christ, his son would be healed. The fervent prayers of the brothers were answered. The boy recovered

his sight completely, and he and his father both became Christians.

When the work on the temple was completed, Florus and Laurus gathered all of the local Christians together - including the newly converted priest Mamertin - and went about destroying all of the idols that had been placed in the pagan structure. They went so far as to place a cross in the eastern portion of the temple! The brothers led their fellow Christians in an all-night vigil, consecrating the building in the name of Jesus Christ. When the local magistrate heard of this "*desecration*" he flew into a rage. Over 300 Christians were executed by being burned alive. Florus and Laurus were arrested and sent back to Illyria, where they were put to death by being thrown into a well. Centuries later, their relics were discovered and were found to be in an incorrupt state. Their saintly bodies were taken back to Constantinople for veneration.