



Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

August 31, 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

+++ Today we have festal anointing on the occasion of this past week's simple feast of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist. The customary greeting is "Christ Is Among Us!" to which we respond, "He Is And Shall Be!"

+++ Tomorrow is the start of the liturgical New Year. As we initiate a new beginning in our spiritual lives, let us join in prayer to implore the Lord's blessings on our efforts. The Divine Liturgy will be

celebrated at 7: 30 PM. as an invocation for the continued good health and abundant rich grace of the Holy Spirit upon each of our faithful communicants. Join us in praying for ourselves!

+++ A number of people have inquired about Scripture Classes in the fall. There is a signup sheet in the kitchen. Please advise us if you will participate on Tuesday evenings at 7:00 PM to 8: 30 PM. We will have copies of the new translation of the Orthodox Bible available for our faithful. This is an important apostolate and opportunity for adults to learn more about our precious Orthodox faith. The Bible is the text of our faith and we should be aware of what it teaches and contains. Orthodoxy gave the Bible to the world, so others should not outshine us. We urge all to seriously think about this, pray about it and commit to learning together by the grace of the Holy Spirit. These classes are open to non-parishioners as well. Bring along a friend!

+++ 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, \$343.00; Candles, \$47.00; Food Coupons, \$200.00; Holyday, \$17.00; Bible Camp, \$45.00; Pennies From Heaven, \$2.00, for a total of \$654.00. We express our profound gratitude to the parishioner communicants who offered their God-given treasure for the sake of the Lord and the good of our parish. God bless and reward you good and faithful souls! The attendance was 38 adults and 14 children last Sunday.

+++ As faithful believers, we intercede and associate ourselves in prayer with the following who have prayed and offered seven day lights for their intentions: Debra Szmaida, Pani Lucas, Father Lucas, Paul Szmaida, Rachel Korba, Maria Garcia, and Pani Buletza.

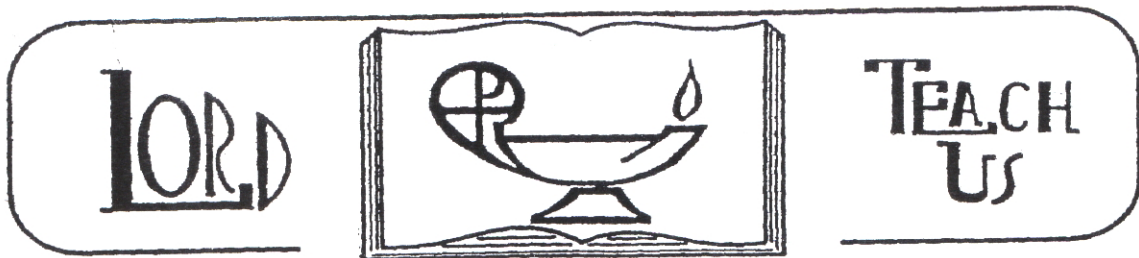
+++ **The first PIROHI SALE of the season will be this coming Saturday, September 6, with preparations being made Thursday, September 4. Please begin securing orders so it will be a success and join us with helping hands on Thursday preparing the fillings.**

+++ 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 **\$1352.00** from this apostolate. Even your pennies can help and are a blessing to our parish.

+++ **Our religious education program will commence on Sunday, September 28. The Jesus School Classes will be held following the Divine Liturgy each Sunday.**

+++ For the expansion of our much needed parochial facilities, our parish pledge support to date totals **\$99, 685. 00**. As we thank the Lord for inspiring generosity in the hearts of our faithful, we also thank the donors for accepting the challenge of the Lord in building up His Body. We cordially invite and look forward to receiving additional and increased pledges from all our devoted parishioners.

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



Hell

They shall go out and see the corpses of men who rebelled against me; their worm shall not die, or their fire be extinguished; and they shall be abhorrent to all mankind Isaiah 66: 24.

The wicked shall be angry to see this; they will gnash their teeth and waste away; the desires of the wicked come to nothing Psalms 112: 10.

Then he will say to those on his left, "Depart from me, you accursed ones, into eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels" Matthew 25: 41.

And you will say, "We ate and drank in your company and you taught in our streets." Then he will say to you, "I do not know where you are from. Depart from me, all you evildoers!" And there will be wailing and grinding of teeth when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets of the kingdom of God and you yourselves cast out Luke 13: 26 – 29.

A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice, "Anyone who worships the beast or its image, or accepts its mark on forehead or hand, will also drink the wine of God's fury, poured full strength into the cup of his wrath, and will be tormented in burning sulfur before the holy angels and before the Lamb. The smoke of the fire that torments them will rise forever and ever, and there will be no relief day or night for those who worship the beast or its image or accept the mark of its name" Revelation 14: 9 – 12.

The devil who had led them astray was thrown into the pool of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet were. There they will be tormented day and night forever and ever Revelation 20: 10.

+++ 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 \$4400.00 on this project to date!

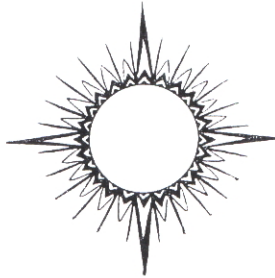
+++ Please see Marilyn Korba to sign up for the Alaskan Cruise next August, 2009 as well as for starting a new Ten Week Club.

+++ On Sunday, September 21, we will have our Parish Picnic in the Picnic grove of the property. We will have a listing for donated foods available next Sunday Please plan on being with us on that day.

+++ 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 \$540.00 was also sent to the Zoning Board. This past week we dispatched a check for \$1350.00 to the Freehold Township District Soil Conservation Board which plans a visit to our property. A \$300.00 check was sent to the State of N, J. for recording our agreement not to build anything else on the property but the church and parish center. 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 Township Planning Board.

+++ **The Thanksgiving Bake Sale will take place on Friday and Saturday, November 14 and 15 while that for the Nativity of our Lord will be held Thursday and Friday, December 12 and 13. Cookies will be available at the Nativity Bake Sale.**

+++ 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!



From the rising of the sun even to
the going down, my Name is
great among the Gentiles, and
in every place there is sacrifice,
and there is offered to my Name
a clean oblation.

(Prophecy of Malachias, 1 : 11-12)

Arise, O Jerusalem, and stand on
high, and look about towards the
East, and behold your children
gathered together from the rising
to the setting sun, by the word of
the Holy One, rejoicing in the re-
membrance of God. For they went
out from You on foot, led by the
enemies : but the Lord will bring
them to You, exalted with honor
as children of the kingdom.

(Baruch, 5 : 5-6)

The Treachery He Endured

Rare indeed is the spiritual leader who does not experience disloyalty and defection, even betrayal. Even Jesus had to endure the treachery and betrayal of Judas. Usually, betrayal comes from where you least expect it. True believers are not betrayers. The greater the effort exerted by the priest, the more he inspires the ire of the devil who influences his minions into opposition, jealousy and envy. St. Paul's experience was no exception to the rule. In fact, the wounds of a good and seemingly faithful trusted friend's defection were still smarting when he wrote his epistle to St. Timothy. We recall but two of the worst and most destructive former friends of St. Paul whom in retrospect, he perhaps should not have trusted. But they, like Judas, were given an opportunity for salvation, but refused to assume its responsibilities seriously while they reveled for a time in its dignity.

Demas

We turn to Demas whom St. Paul mentioned "Do your best to join me, for Demas, enamored of the present world, has left me and gone to Thessalonica" 2 Timothy 4: 10. In fact, St. Paul; mentioned Demas as one of the reasons he needed St. Timothy to come speedily: "Come to me quickly, for Demas has forsaken me." Why is Demas' defection a reason for asking St. Timothy to make haste? Could it be that Demas had occupied such a strategic role in St. Paul's ministry that only St. Timothy could take his place? The implication is that St. Timothy needed to come not only for the sake of encouraging St. Paul, but also for the sake of whatever work had up until then been Demas' responsibility.

We do not know much about Demas aside from the fact that he had been with St. Paul for some time. He is mentioned along with St. Luke in the epistles as one of the esteemed and intimate companions of St. Paul. "Luke, our dear physician sends you greetings. So does Demas" Colossians 4: 14. While St. Paul was writing to the Colossians, during his first imprisonment in Rome, Demas was there. St. Paul most likely wrote Philemon at about the same time and Demas is mentioned in the litany of friends in that brief epistle too. "...my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus greets you, as do Mark Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers" Philemon 24.

So Demas had been associated with St. Paul at least since that first imprisonment in Rome. He must have been given some kind of important or strategic and vital ministry in assisting the Apostle to the Gentiles. He was no doubt someone in whom St. Paul had invested much time and effort. He obviously was one whom St. Paul dearly trusted. He certainly knew much truth because he was constantly exposed to it. And when he deserted St. Paul, he left such a deep void that St. Paul needed St. Timothy to step into a deeply cultivated and abandoned void.

The verb translated “forsaken” is the Greek word *egkataleipo*. It is a strong word that speaks of desertion. Its root, *leipo* means “to leave.” It is compounded with two prepositions, *eg* and *kata*, having the sense of “against “ and “alone,” making it doubly intense and the result particularly painful and odious. In this context, it conveys the idea of “leaving me in the lurch.” Indeed, Demas had not only abandoned St. Paul, but he also left him in a dire situation, at a most inappropriate time.

Perhaps the deprivation had become too much for Demas. It may have been that in the midst of St. Paul’s most extreme difficulty, he could see the handwriting on the wall. St. Paul was about to lose his life, and apparently Demas also felt threatened but was not willing to give his own life for Christ. He was not that deeply committed to Christ or St. Paul.

Maybe Demas had first joined and been drawn to St. Paul because of the noble cause. But he had never really counted the cost. He may well have been like the rocky soil, where the seed has no root in itself, but when tribulation comes, it withers. “Similarly, those on rocky ground are people who on listening to the word accept it joyfully at the outset. Being rootless, they last only a while. When some pressure or persecution overtakes them, because of the word, they falter” Mark 4: 16, 17. Or, more likely, Demas was a classic example of weedy ground, where “the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful” Mark 4: 19. He probably was never a true Christian at all because St. Paul said he “loved the present world.” And of course, we know “friendship with the world is enmity with God” James 4: 4. As the apostle John wrote, “If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him” 1 John 2: 15.

Demas had much in common with Judas. He fell in love with the world because he apparently never had any genuinely committed love for Christ. Like Judas, he seemed to follow for a while, but his heart was always in this world. It was where he felt most comfortable. The heart returned to where it felt it belonged

Why did Demas go to Thessalonica? Most likely, that was his home. St. Paul linked him with Aristarchus in Philemon, and according to the early history of the Church, Aristarchus was a Thessalonian. “...Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica” Acts of the Apostles 20: 3. Whatever the reason for the place, the inspiration or reason for the desertion is clear: he loved the fragile temporary world more than he loved the eternal enduring Christ.

Virtually every Christian believer will eventually face the desertion of a Demas, someone you pour your believing life into, you think he is on the believing team, he is outwardly following Christ, but he brings deep and enduring pain and a sense of betrayal when it finally becomes

apparent that without peer, he loves the present world. This is no reflection on St. Paul's leadership, any more than Judas' defection reflected negatively on the leadership of Jesus Christ.

Alexander the Coppersmith

In his epistle to St. Timothy, St. Paul mentions another man whose treachery caused him great grief. "Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him according to his words. You must beware of him for he has greatly resisted our words" 2 Timothy 4: 14, 15.

Alexander was a common name in the ancient world, and ironically the name means "consoler or comforter from God." There is no need to assume this Alexander was the same one mentioned elsewhere together with Hymenaeus as a false teacher (1 Timothy 1: 20). Nor do we need to assume that this is the same Alexander mentioned in early Church history (Acts of the Apostles 19: 33), whose testimony sparked a riot. In fact, by referring to him as "Alexander the coppersmith," St. Paul seems to set him apart from others of the same name. This man was a craftsman who worked with metals. Perhaps he was an idol maker. Recall that a silversmith named Demetrius had once caused a riot in Ephesus because St. Paul's preaching against idol worship was a threat to his idol-making business. "There was a silversmith named Demetrius who made miniature shrines of Artemis and brought in no little work for his craftsmen. He called a meeting of these men and other workers in the same craft. "Men," he said, "you know that our prosperity depends on this work...He tells them that man-made gods are no gods at all" Acts of the Apostles 19: 24 - 26.

Whatever the details of Alexander's story, he caused St. Paul great harm and therefore St. Timothy needed to be warned, to be on guard against him. The nature of the harm he caused is also clear. He opposed St. Paul's teaching. That meant he stood against the fundamental truth of the gospel because it was alien to him as he did not make it a part of his own life. Notice St. Paul's response: "May the Lord repay him according to his works" 2 Timothy 4: 14. St. Paul is not asking St. Timothy to take any action against Alexander, only to beware of him. He did not take personal vengeance. He did not threaten or revile Alexander in return. Following the example of Christ, he simply "...committed himself to him to judges righteously" 1 Peter 2: 23.

Everyone who attempts to seriously lead the flock of Christ encounters people who set themselves against the truth of God and seeks to do harm. They want to discredit faithful teachers and make them appear as fools, liars and charlatans or whatever else the devil inspires in their destructive behavior. Alexander, like Demas was a living example of the treachery St. Paul endured.

Healing Sermon

How strange, how seemingly outlandish these stories. They defy all logic. Such things don't ordinarily happen in daily living. But of course, that is precisely the point of God's revelation to us in Scripture. The stories we continually read over and over again hold the imagination precisely because they upset the normal order of things. Bread rained down from heaven to feed a wandering band in the desert; waters well up from hard rock and gush out into the valleys below. The blind see; the lame walk, the dead are raised. Miracle stories recount unexpected divine intervention in the daily affairs of human beings.

When we ask people what they think of miracles, they usually recount a childhood sense of delight at the exploits of Jesus or the saints, which has given way in adulthood to a more skeptical vision. "Well, when I was young, I believed they were true..." and then they trail off, not giving notice to what we might suspect they think deeply inside: "fairy tales." Perhaps the sometime believer, now grown older in years doesn't want to be rude. But if the stories we read about so voraciously in God's revelation to us are simply accounts of actual events, then they could be proven or disproven.

In the form they come down to us, however, they are not only pure history, reflecting generations of storytelling, but because they have the witness of God himself, that is the inspired account by the Holy Spirit Who cannot deceive nor be deceived, we are brought about to a newer and better understanding and perception of the miracles our God almost daily works in his relationship with us. As we look at the events so many times related, that are above and beyond the normal ordinary natural workings of creation, we see the touch of God's hand in our lives which inspires and strengthens us to a deeper faith. The reasons the accounts of the extraordinary dealings of our God with us are so compelling is because they speak in the language of unconditional love, they speak in the language of hoped for reality under difficult circumstances, or redeemed values so desperately needed in our daily living.

The same themes and motifs recur again and again. For the believer, these are not accounts of ages past, but living stories which become our own if we but match them with the same measure of faith commitment which brought about their actuality in the

first instance. That is why, even in our liturgical spiritual music, we do go down with Moses to the court of Pharaoh and see the signs and wonders he wrought there at the command of our God. We accompany him to the Red Sea and witness it spread wide open so the freed Chosen People can march right through on its sandy base.

Our iconography, our liturgical gestures, our church prayers take us back to the place where Christ frees the cripple of his limitations, when He opens up the eyes of the blind and as He raises the cold dead body of the widow's son to life once again. From the Scriptural account, we can actually sense the smell of death on Lazarus Saturday as Christ waits just long enough for everyone to realize He has in fact died and was buried, so that the greatest sign before Resurrection glory is made evident for believers. We can identify with the children of Israel in their captivity and limitations before being led out of their pagan paradise into the desert of redemption when the stories are told over and again of how our God works to uplift and bless us under all circumstances of daily living.

Miracle stories provide us with inspiration, with continued hope, with resolution to remain faithful, to respond to the challenge for strengthened faith and how it, coupled with divine grace can overturn even the most regretful circumstances of life. Jesus healing the woman in hemorrhage reintegrates her from an outcast into the believing community. His transforming water into wine simply to save the devoted couple the embarrassment of lack of proper preparation for a large crowd conveys the very warm sensitivity of our God towards our almost insignificant needs and in celebrating the joys of hospitality.

The signs and wonders and miracles worked by God serve as a reaffirming sign of a Creator who cares and identifies with his choice creation. We have been gathered here this evening by the Holy Spirit to reaffirm our belief in the way our God cares for us, how He is eager to relate to us. We respond to his first shown love with our own personal eagerness to be integrated into His fullness, one which is anxious to identify with the glorious loving God who created us, so that He can recreate in us what our sinfulness has defiled.





Wisdom Of
The



Byzantine
Fathers

And while the stones of his tomb were fastened upon the vault and the seals yet upon them, the dead one arose; the crucified one, pierced with nails, having filled his eleven disciples with his mighty power, sent them to men throughout all the world to be the common healers of their kind, to correct their way of living, to spread through every part of the earth the knowledge of their heavenly doctrines, to bring down the tyranny of devils, to teach those great and unspeakable blessings, to bring to us the good news of the soul's immortality, and the eternal life of the body, and rewards which are beyond conception and shall never have an end St. John Chrysostom.

Just as those who are conscripted soldiers examine the age and physical condition of those being drafted, so also the Lord, in enlisting souls, examines their attitudes. If anyone harbors hypocrisy, even in secret, he rejects him as unfit for true service. But he readily gives his grace to whomever is found worthy. He does not give holy things to dogs; but where he perceives a good conscience, he gives the wondrous and saving seal St Cyril of Jerusalem.

In His Name

The Father will give you anything you ask in my name
John 15: 16.

“How did you get in here? Why are you talking to me this way?”

Our Heavenly Father would be justified in asking us this when we come to him, because two things disqualify us: we are small and we are sinners alienated by our own eager efforts from his holiness.

But we can pray in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. That makes God the Father approachable. “You may ask me for anything in my name and I will do it” John 14: 14, we hear from the lips of Christ. Later on, He insists the Father will do the same, “...apart from me you can do nothing...If you live in me, and my words stay part of you, you may ask what you will and it will be done for you” John 15: 5, 7.

We must always remember we can pray because of what Christ has achieved for us as baptized in his name. We do not have any right to speak to our heavenly Father on our own or by ourselves. We pray through the power of the name of our Lord Jesus Christ because we recall his perfect life and sacrifice which makes reconciliation possible if we cooperate with its grace. Because Jesus paves the way for us, we can approach our heavenly Father with confidence which the blood of Christ assures.

When conscious we must always pray in the name of Jesus, we realize we must pray appropriately. We cannot pray for trivial things or for anything which opposes the kingdom of Jesus. Praying in his name, we, like the Saviour, submit our will to that of our heavenly Father.

The assurances we receive from Christ are absolutely magnanimous. If we could understand perfectly what it means to pray in his name, we could unravel the mystery of prayer and how our heavenly Father answers and we could pray perfectly. In the meantime, we do our best in the name of Jesus Christ.

There are so many things in our lives which we do not at all understand, but through the promise of Christ Jesus, assurance comes to us to be bound closer by the Holy Spirit to the will of the Eternal Father.

"HE MUST INCREASE, BUT I MUST DECREASE"



With the exception of our Lord, St. John the Baptist was the most charismatic figure of his time. People flocked to the banks of the Jordan River to hear him preach and to be baptized by him. So powerful was his presence that many believed that he might be the Messiah for whom they had waited for so long. John never pretended to be anything more than he was. He promised his followers that ". . . there stands One among you Whom you do not know. It is He Who, coming after me, is preferred before me, Whose sandal I am not worthy to loose." (John 1:26-27) Indeed, when the "One" made Himself known to the world, the Baptist willingly stepped into the background with these words: "He must increase, but I must decrease." (John 3:30)

Although John's role in God's plan for salvation diminished, it did not end entirely. He continued his ministry, challenging everyone who listened to him to repent of their sins. King Herod himself, who had taken his brother Philip's wife, could not escape John's harsh words of condemnation. When the Forerunner spoke out openly against the King's adulterous relationship, Herod, who actually enjoyed listening to him, had no choice: John was arrested and put into prison.

This, however, was not enough for his wife Herodias. When her daughter Salome danced at a birthday celebration for Herod, pleasing him so that he vowed to give her "half of his kingdom," Herodias knew exactly the "reward" she wanted: the head of John! Thus ended the earthly life of the Forerunner.