

δ' ἐν Χόρναις θανάμ



# Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 9, 2007

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 solemn feast of the Nativity of the Birthgiver of God. The customary greeting is "Christ Is Among Us" to which we reply, "He is And Shall Be!"

+++ 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]; Holy Day, \$[REDACTED]; Candles, \$[REDACTED]; Grocery Coupons, \$[REDACTED]; Pennies From Heaven, \$[REDACTED]; Christian Fellowship, \$[REDACTED]; September Bulletin, \$[REDACTED]; Rental, \$[REDACTED] 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 with the following who have prayed and offered seven day lights for their intentions: Anna Sabo, Debbie Szmaida. Pani Lucas, Paul Szmaida, Father Lucas, Marilyn Korba, Eleanor Korba 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 \$1189.00 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 \$[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 \$20.00 denominations. We invite **ALL** to be caring and use Grocery Coupons for food shopping as we have gratefully realized \$[REDACTED] on this project to date!

+++ The weekly sponsor list for Christian Fellowship Food for this year is available to be filled out on the table in the kitchen. We appeal to **ALL** our parishioners to participate, not just a few, so that it is equitable and the responsibility shared by **ALL**.

+++ The first Pirohi Sale for the season took place yesterday. We sincerely thank all the workers who contributed to its success in soliciting orders, making preparations and actually pinching the pirohi. The revised working schedule is available on the desk in the vestibule. **The Pirohi now sell for \$6.00 a dozen and we are pleased no one complained about increase, but are grateful we provide this service for the community.**

+++ Our Jesus School for the children of the parish will begin classes next Sunday, September 16 with three subdivided classes. We would like all the teachers and children to receive Confession the day before so that with

a d clean slate we can all begin seriously the task of teaching and learning. Our teachers will be commissioned on that day and each child will receive an individual blessing for studies.

+++ On Sunday, September 30 we will have our annual picnic on the grounds. The food donation listing is available on the table in the kitchen. Please think about a favorite recipe you can prepare for the enjoyment of all in the parish and enter it on the list.

+++ Today we celebrated at 9: 15 AM a Memorial Service for the repose of the soul of +Grace Henry, mother of our parishioner, Robert Henry. We pray our merciful Lord continue to comfort the family of Robert and Joan in their loss and that He grants to the soul of their dear mother, +Grace a blessed repose and creates for her Eternal Memory!

+++ The Thanksgiving Bake Sale will take place on Friday and Saturday, November 16 and 17 while that for the Nativity of our Lord will be conducted on Friday and Saturday, December 14 and 15.

+++ This coming Friday we celebrate the glorious feast of the Exaltation of the holy and life-giving Cross, which is one of the twelve feasts of the liturgical year at which ALL the faithful are to be present in response to their faith commitment to Christ. In anticipation the vesperal Divine Liturgy will be celebrated Thursday evening at 7: 30 PM. Please come and join us in prayer and praise. Veneration of and blessing with the relic of the Cross of Christ which we are privileged to have in our parish, will be imparted.

+++ Monday evening we will have the monthly service of healing and devotions through the intercession of St. Nectarios the Wonderworker at 7: 30 PM. Please come and join us in prayer and praise.

+++ May all glory, adoration, 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!

### Web Site Address

Parish: [www.stpaul-freehold.com](http://www.stpaul-freehold.com)

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## God Is Incomparable

*Among the gods there is none like you, O Lord, no deeds can compare with yours. For you are great and do marvelous works, you alone are God* Psalms 86: 8, 10.

*All our righteousness is like filthy rags* Isaiah 64: 6.

*The heavens proclaim your wonders, O Lord, and your faithfulness, in the assembly of the holy ones. For who in the skies can rank with the Lord? Who is like the Lord among the sons of God? God is greatly to be feared among the saints and to be honored over all those who are about him. O Lord, God of armies, who is strong like you? Mighty are you, O Lord and your faithfulness surrounds you* Psalms 89: 6 – 9.

*O Lord, you have been our refuge through all generations. Before the mountains were begotten and the earth and the world were brought forth, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. You turn man back to dust, saying 'return O children of men.'* Psalms 90: 1 – 3.

*Lord, there is no one like you. For you are great and your name is full of power. Who would not fear you, O King of nations? That title belongs to you alone! Among the wise people of the earth and in all the kingdoms of the world, there is no one like you* Jeremiah 10: 6, 7.

*"To whom will you compare me? Who is my equal?" asks the Holy One. Look up into the heavens. Who created all the stars? He brings them out one after another, calling each by its name. And he counts them to see that none are lost or have strayed away* Isaiah 40: 25, 26.

## When God Seems Distant

*The Lord has hidden himself from his people, but I trust him and place my hope in him*  
Isaiah 8: 17.

God is real no matter how you feel.

It is so very easy to worship God when things in your life are going great, when He has provided abundant food, friends, family, health and happy occasions. But circumstances are not always pleasant. How do you worship God then? What do you do when God seems a million miles away?

The deepest and most enriching level of worship is praising God in spite of pain, thanking God during a trial, trusting Him when tempted, surrendering while suffering, and faithfully loving Him when He seems distant.

Friendships are often tested by separation and silence; you are divided by physical distance or you are unable to talk. In your friendship with God, you won't always feel close to Him. Any relationship involves times of closeness and times of distance and in a relationship with God, no matter how stable and intimate, the pendulum will swing from one side to the other. That is when worship can become difficult, when the stability of the friendship can be enriched. When Jesus said, "Love God with all your strength..." Matthew 22: 37. He pointed out that worship takes concerted effort and directed energy. It is not always convenient or comfortable and sometimes worship is a sheer act of the will, a willing sacrifice. Passive worship is an oxymoron and sitting in the pew like a lump on a log is a waste of time. You cannot be in the presence of God and not recognize or respond to Him!

To mature your friendship, our God will permit circumstances to enter it which will elevate it to a new and higher level if we cooperate with its challenges. At times it will feel

as if He has abandoned or forgotten you. God will feel like a million miles away. St. John of the Cross referred to these days of spiritual dryness, doubt and estrangement from God as “the dark night of the soul.” Others have described them as “the ministry of absence,” “the ministry of the night” or the “winter of the heart.”

Besides Jesus, David of the Old Covenant probably had the closest friendship with God of anyone. God took pleasure in calling him “...a man after my own heart” 1 Samuel 13: 14. Yet David frequently complained of God’s apparent absence. “Why, O Lord do you stand aloof? Why hide in times of distress” Psalms 10: 1?; “My God, my God why have you forsaken me, far from my prayer, from the words of my cry? O my God, I cry out by day, and you answer not; by night, and there is no relief for me” Psalms 22: 2, 3; Why do you keep me so far away” Psalms 43: 2?

Certainly, our God did not really abandon David at all, and He does not leave you either. He has promised repeatedly, “I will never leave you nor forsake you” Deuteronomy 31:8; “For the Lord loves what is right and forsakes not his faithful ones” Psalms 37: 28; “I will ask the Father to give you another Paraclete, to be with you forever, the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot accept since it neither sees him nor recognizes him...I will not leave you orphaned” John 14: 16 – 18; “I will never desert you nor will I forsake you” Hebrews 13: 5. Certainly, our God has *not* promised “you will always feel my presence.” In fact, God admits that sometimes he hides His face from us. “Truly with you God is hidden, the God of Israel, the Saviour” Isaiah 45: 15. Yes, we can say, there are times He appears to be *MIA*, missing in action in your life.

God seems distant when you wake up one morning and all your spiritual feelings are gone. You pray, but nothing seems to happen. You feel depleted, empty. You rebuke the devil, but that does not change anything. You engage in spiritual exercises...you seek the intercessory prayers of your friends...you secure the grace of the sacramental Mystery of Reconciliation by confessing every sin you can imagine after you have gone around seeking forgiveness of everyone you know. You fast and still nothing occurs. There is no change. You begin to wonder how long this spiritual gloom might last. Days? Weeks? Months? Will it ever end? It feels as if your prayers simply bounce off the ceiling. In inner desperation, you cry out, “What is the matter with me?”

The truth is, there is nothing wrong with you! This is a normal part of the maturing of your friendship with God. Every Christian goes through it at least once, and usually several times. It is painful and disconcerting; but it is absolutely vital for the

development of your faith. Knowing this gave Job hope when he could not feel God's presence in his life. "But if I go to the east, he is not there; or to the west, I cannot perceive him; Where the north enfolds him, I behold him not; by the south he is veiled, and I see him not...Therefore I am dismayed before him; when I take thought, I fear him. Indeed God has made my courage fall and the Almighty has put me in dismay" Job 23: 8 – 10, 15, 16.

When God feels distant, you may conclude He is angry with you or is disciplining you for some sin. In fact, sin absolutely *does* disconnect us from intimate fellowship with God. We grieve God's Spirit and quench our fellowship with Him by disobedience, conflict with others, unnecessary busyness in the affairs of the world, friendship with the world and other sins. "Against you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, that you may be justified in your sentence, vindicated when you condemn" Psalms 50: 6; "Do nothing to sadden the Holy Spirit with whom you were sealed against the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, all passion and anger, harsh words, slander, and malice of every kind" Ephesians 4: 30, 31; "Do not stifle the Spirit...Test everything; retain what is good. Avoid any semblance of evil" 1 Thessalonians 5: 19; "Does a virgin forget her jewelry; a bride her sash? Yet my people have forgotten me days without number" Jeremiah 2: 32; "When you sin thus against your brothers and wound their weak consciences, you are sinning against Christ" I Corinthians 8: 12; "...are you not aware that love of the world is enmity with God? A man is marked out as God's enemy if he chooses to be the world's friend" James 4: 4.

But most often this feeling of abandonment or estrangement from God has nothing to do with sin. It is a test of faith; one we all must face. Will you continue to love, trust, obey and worship God, even when you have no sense of His presence or visible evidence of His work in your life?

The most common mistake Christians make in worship today is seeking an experience rather than seeking God. They look for a feeling and if it happens, and they are able to sustain it, they conclude that they have genuinely worshipped. Absolutely wrong! In fact, God often removes our misplaced feelings so we won't depend on them. Seeking a feeling, even the feeling of closeness to Christ, is not worship, but a substitute of the real thing. When you are an infant Christian, God gives you a lot of confirming witness and often answers the most immature, self-centered prayers, simply so you will know He exists. But as you grow in faith, He will wean you of these simple dependencies.

God's omnipresence and the manifestation of His presence are two different things. One is a fact; the other is often a feeling. God is always present, even when you are



unaware of Him, and His presence is too profound to be measured by mere passing and changing emotions and transient feelings. Yes, unquestionably He wants you to sense His presence, but He is also more concerned that you *trust* Him than that you *feel* Him. It is faith, not feelings that pleases God.

The situations that will stretch your faith most will be those times when life seemingly or actually falls apart and God is nowhere to be found. This is precisely what occurred in the life of Job. On a single day he lost *everything*; his family, his successful business, his health, and everything he owned. Most discouraging because for thirty seven chapters in this book of Scripture, God said nothing!

How do you praise God and worship Him lovingly and devotedly when you do not understand what is happening in your life and God is purposefully silent? How do you stay connected in crisis without communication from God? How do you keep your eyes on Jesus when they are full of streaming tears? You do what Job did. "Then Job began to tear his cloak and cut off his hair. He cast himself prostrate on the ground and said, 'Naked I came forth from my mother's womb and naked shall I go back again. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!'" Job 1: 22, 21.

**+++Tell God exactly how you feel.** Pour out your heart to God. Unload every emotion that you are feeling and experiencing. Job did this when he said, "My own utterance I will not restrain. I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul...Why have you set me up as an object of attack? Or why should I be a target for you?" Job 7: 11, 12. He cried out in anguish when God seemed distant, "As I was in my flourishing days, when God sheltered my tent; when the Almighty was yet with me, and my children were round about me; when my footsteps were bathed in milk and the rock flowed with streams of oil, when I went forth to the gate of the city and set up my seat in the square; the young men saw me and withdrew, while the elders rose up and stood; the chief men refrained from speaking and covered their mouths with their hands; the voices of the princes were silenced, and their tongues stuck to the roof of their mouths. For me they listened and waited; they were silent for my counsel. Once I spoke they said no more, but received my pronouncement drop by drop. They waited for me as for rain; they drank in my words like the spring rains. When I smiled on them they were reassured; mourners took comfort from my cheerful glance...Whoever heard of me blessed me; those who saw me commended me" Job 29: 4 - 26. Our God can handle your doubt, your lack of assurance, your anger, fear, grief, confusion and myriad questions. They ought to increase your faith commitment, not demean or detract from it.

Did you know admitting your hopelessness to God can be a statement of profound faith? Trusting God but feeling despair at the same time, David wrote, "I believed, even when I said, 'I am greatly afflicted'" Psalms 116: 10. While seeming like a contradiction, "I trust God, but I am wiped out!" David's frankness actually reveals deep faith. First, he believed in God. Second, he believed God would listen to his prayer. Third, he believed God would let him say what he felt and still love him.

**+++Focus on Who God is; His unchanging nature.** Regardless of circumstances and how you feel, hang onto God's unchanging character. Remind yourself what you know to be eternally true about God: He is good, He created me and loves me; He is with me; He knows what I am going through; He cares, and He has a good plan for my life. Never doubt in the dark what God told you in the light. When Job's life fell apart and God was silent, Job still found things He could praise God for:

That He is good and loving. "Grace and favor you granted me and your providence has preserved my spirit" Job 10: 12.

That He is all-powerful. "I know you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be hindered" Job 42: 2.

That He notices every detail in my life. "Yet he knows my ways; if he proved me, I should come forth as gold" Job 23: 10.

That He is in control. "Surely God cannot act wickedly, the Almighty cannot violate justice. Who gave him government over the earth or who else set all the land in its place" Job 34 12, 13?

That He has a plan for my life. "For He will carry out what is appointed for me and many such things may be in his mind" Job 23: 14.

That he will save me. But as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives and that he will at last stand forth upon the dust" Job 19: 25.

**+++Trust God to keep His promises.** During times of spiritual dryness you must patiently rely on the promises of God, not our emotions and misplaced feelings, and realize that He is taking you to a deeper level of maturity. A friendship based on emotions is shallow indeed. Do not be troubled by trouble. Circumstances cannot change the character of

God. God's grace is still in full force; He is still *for* you, even when you do not feel it. In the absence of confirming circumstances, Job held on to God's Word. He said, "From the commands of his lips I have not departed; the words of his mouth I have treasured in my heart" Job 23: 12.

This trust in God's revelation to us inspired Job to remain faithful even though nothing made sense. His faith was exceedingly strong even in the midst of pain: "Slay me though he might, I will wait for him" Job 13: 15. When you feel abandoned by God yet continue to trust him in spite of your feelings, you worship Him in the deepest way.

**+++Remember what God has already done for you.** If God never did anything else for you, He would still deserve your continued praise for the rest of your life because of what Jesus did for you on the Cross and sealed with His Resurrection. God's Son died for you. God's Son rose from the dead for you. This is the greatest reason for worship. Unfortunately, we forget easily the details of the agonizing sacrifice God made for us. Familiarity can breed complacency, even indifference. Even before His crucifixion, the Son of God was stripped naked, flesh ripped from His body, He was scorned and mocked, crowned with thorns and spit upon contemptuously – all for our sake. Abused and ridiculed by heartless men, He was treated worst than an animal. Then, nearly unconscious from blood-loss, He was forced to drag a cumbersome cross up a hill, was nailed to it, and was left to die the slow, excruciating torture of death by crucifixion. While His lifeblood drained, hecklers stood by and shouted insults, making fun of His pain and challenged His claim to be God. As Jesus assumed all of mankind's sin and guilt in Himself, our heavenly Father looked away from the ugly sight and Jesus cried out in total desperation, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Matthew 27: 46. Surely, Jesus could have saved Himself, but then He could not have saved you! So we see, even our Saviour was not spared and experienced the distance of His heavenly Father!

Words cannot describe the darkness of that moment. Why did our God permit and endure such a ghastly, evil mistreatment? Why? So *you* could be spared from eternity in hell and so *you* could share in His glory forever! He wanted the purpose of your creation to be fulfilled. He wanted to restore you to Himself. He wanted the pleasure of your company at His heavenly throne forever! "For our sake God made him who did not know sin, to be sin, so that in him we might become the very holiness of God" 2 Corinthians 5: 21. Jesus gave up everything so you could have everything. He died so you could live. That alone is worthy of your continual thanks and praise. Never again should you wonder for what you ought to be thankful and appreciative.



We all go through  
pain and sorrow,  
but the presence of God,  
like a warm  
comforting blanket,  
can shield us and protect us,  
and allow the deep inner joy  
to surface, even in the most  
devastating circumstances.

## We Must Matter

We must matter to each other—  
Or we matter, not at all—  
For the Lord bequeathed us kinship  
To befriend each other's fall.  
When a heart cries out in hunger  
Or a pauper weeps in pain,  
It must matter, to our kinship,  
That they do not cry in vain.

We must help the soul who struggles  
Through a trying time in life;  
We must help the one who flounders  
In some agony of strife;  
It must be our Christian duty  
To pay heed to every cry  
And deny no soul the kindness  
Of some need we can supply.

We could be the weeping pauper  
Who is lonesomed by despair;  
We could be the voice of hunger—  
If we had the pain to bear—  
So, we must pay heed and substance  
To the needs of every plea  
For— the voice that cries tomorrow—  
Could belong to you or me.

We must not ignore the stranger  
Who, in passing, staggers by;  
We must not deny the beggar—  
Or the aged, feeble cry,  
For, our Lord gave love and kinship  
To endear each heart, within—  
And He made us all to matter  
To each other and to Him.

## THE ARCHANGEL MICHAEL WORKS WONDERS!

When the Apostle John the Theologian was preaching the Gospel in Chonae near Hierapolis, he foretold that a spring of healing would exist there one day, and that this special place would be visited by the Archangel Michael himself. The prophecy was soon fulfilled and, indeed, the healing waters of this spring were said to have restored health to many who came from far and wide.

A pagan named Laodicea, who had a daughter who was unable to speak, heard of the spring's miraculous powers. The Archangel Michael had appeared to him in a dream, commanding him to take his daughter to Chonae, which he obediently did. Upon arrival there, he was instructed to pray to the Archangel Michael, entreating his aid "In the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit." Upon doing so, the young girl was immediately able to speak! In time, a church was built near the sacred spring by Laodicea, who became a Christian after this great miracle.

The church was viewed with great distain by the pagan population of the region. In an attempt to destroy the church and its revered spring, they altered the course of a nearby river, hoping the waters would flood it. Miraculously, the Archangel Michael appeared, and with a blow of his staff, opened a fissure in the rocks outside the temple, causing the waters to rush into it and spare the sacred site from certain destruction. The church was preserved! Once again, the Archangel Michael "... encompassed his people beneath the wings of his immaterial glory" and "protected those who cried out to him."

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