





# Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 21, 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

+++ We joyfully welcome all our faithful today in Christian Fellowship for the annual parish picnic which follows in the grove after the Divine Liturgy. We thank all who made the success of this event possible with their tasty donations and generous presence. God Bless Us All!

+++ A number of people have inquired about Scripture Classes this 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. First Class will take place on Tuesday, September 30. 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: Tithing Offering, ~~XXXXXX~~; Candles, ~~XXX.00~~; Food Coupons, ~~XXXXXX~~; Holyday, ~~XXXXXX~~; Pennies From Heaven, ~~XXX.00~~; Christian Fellowship, ~~XXX.00~~; Kitchen, ~~XXXXXX~~, for a total of ~~XXXXXX.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: Pani Lucas, Father Lucas, Paul Szmajda, Kent & Robin Pasquino, Maria Garcia, 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 ~~XXXXXX.00~~ from this apostolate. Even your pennies can help and are a blessing to our parish.

+++ Our religious education program will commence next Sunday, September 28. The Jesus School Classes will be held following the Divine Liturgy each Sunday. Scripture Classes will start Tuesday, September 30 at 7:00 PM. Please invite and bring along a friend as classes are open to the interested public.

+++ 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.

+++ 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 ~~XXXXXX~~ 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.

**+++ TODAY, we will have our Parish Picnic in the Picnic grove of the property. We thank all who prepared foods for our common enjoyment and who join us in Christian Fellowship to make it the success it always is, thus benefiting from the blessed grace of the Lord on all our efforts.**

**+++ Accompanied by a parish bank draft amounting to ~~\$5050.00~~, application was made for Site Plan approval to the Planning Board of the Township of Freehold recently. An additional check for ~~\$110.00~~ was also sent to the Zoning Board. This past week we dispatched a check for ~~\$1250.00~~ to the Freehold Township District Soil Conservation Board which plans a visit to our property. A ~~\$200.00~~ 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.**

**+++ Prior to the picnic today, Father will meet with our parishioners to share some very encouraging information recently received and explored. Please pray the Lord continues to bless our fidelity in faith. Like the freed children of Israel, wandering in the desert, we, however eagerly pursue the path the Lord chooses for us. We TRUST where He will lead us.**

**+++ 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!**





## Names Of God

*I am the Lord; this is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to idols* Isaiah 42: 8.

*Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts!* Isaiah 6: 3.

*The Lord of hosts is with us; our stronghold is the God of Jacob* Psalms 46: 8.

*God replied, "I am who am." Then he added, "This is what you shall tell the Israelites: I AM sent me to you"* Exodus 3: 4.

*For the Lord, the Most High, the awesome is the great king over all the earth* Psalms 47: 3.

*Abraham planted obelisk at Beer-sheba, and there he invoked by name the Lord, God the Eternal* Genesis 21: 33.

*They have forsaken the Lord, spurned the Holy One of Israel* Isaiah 4: 1.

*...in the same way that the Father knows me and I know the Father, for these sheep I will give my life...The Father loves me for this...This command I have received from my Father* John 10: 15, 17, 18.

*Should not the Judge of all the world act with justice* Genesis 18: 25?

*So Gideon built there an altar to the Lord and called it Yahweh-Peace* Judges 6: 24.

*Blessed be Abram by God, mistt High, the Creator of heaven and earth* Genesis 14: 19.

## Fourteenth Sunday

The Wedding Feast is significant in salvation history among the Old Covenant Chosen People. It is a sign of God's special favor and those invited to the celebration are destined for salvation in Christ. That is why it is important to notice what is happening in today's prescribed gospel reading. The king, who invites all the guests his celebration is our heavenly Father himself and as He enters the place of the banquet He catches sight of a man not properly dressed for the event. So he approaches him and asks, "How is it you came in here not properly dressed" Matthew 22: 12?

The man apparently wanted to have a good time, to celebrate an important event, but he did not seriously invest anything of himself into achieving readiness or preparation for the august event. The reading is concluded with a sobering reminder, "The invited are many, the elect are few" Matthew 22: 14. Everyone wants to get to heaven, everyone wants to win the race, everyone wants eternal salvation and security, but how may actually want to invest of themselves significantly and meaningfully enough to make this reality?

We are thus reminded of other events, such as occurred in the history of the Apostolic Church. In the Book of the *Acts of the Apostles*, it is said, "A few days later Felix came with his Jewish wife Drusilla and sent for Paul to hear him speak about faith in Christ Jesus. As Paul talked on about uprightness, continence, and the coming judgment, Felix became frightened. Before long he exclaimed, "that's enough for now! You can go. I'll send for you again when I find the time"" Acts of the Apostles 24: 24, 25. Felix and Drusilla did not believe salvation of their souls should be a preoccupation of their lives, a motivating purpose behind their every activity, the inspiration of their entire earthly lives. In the same precise way the lone man appeared at the wedding banquet, so Felix and Drusilla "almost" saved their souls. But "almost" does not count from the perspective of eternity.

To be almost converted and almost saved is certainly to be in a very serious and critical state. It is to be near the kingdom of God and yet, not necessarily certain of a place in that kingdom, And while it is entirely true we can never be entirely and totally sure of our place there because it is ultimately God who saves, the effort and devotion must be made; we must not deviate from the path, we must not detour to assure our abandonment by the angel of victory. What then does it mean to be almost converted, almost saved?

It means in the first instance, that the mind has been enlightened in spiritual values. So it was with Felix, so it must have been for the lone man at the banquet. They both



recognized the value of keeping company with God, except that they didn't want too much of His company, or always, or forever. They wanted heaven, but not too much of it. We read in Scripture Felix had a more perfect knowledge or understanding of that way, of the doctrines preached by St. Paul. During the six years he ruled over the Jews, Felix learned something of their precious faith and he would still learn more from his Jewish wife. Of the new way of Christianity, he must have known something of significance. It was not thirty years since the Resurrection of Jesus, the coming of the Holy Spirit and the first preaching of the apostles. The first Gentiles were received into the bosom of faith some eighteen years before in the very city of Caesarea. This new way, was therefore well-known and it was everywhere opposed and spoken against, and therefore everywhere spoken about. Therefore Felix must have known something about it even before St. Paul appeared on the scene. And now Paul gives a clear account and makes that masterful defense in the presence of his Jewish accusers and of their ruler.

A second time Felix sent for Paul that he might hear further from him for himself and Drusilla concerning the faith of Jesus Christ. His mind was enlightened. He did know something about Jesus Christ and his redemption and knew he himself was a sinner, needing redemption. And this is a vitally important step towards total conversion and fidelity to Christ.

We recall when the scribe came to Jesus and questioned him about the law and when Jesus saw he answered discreetly, He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God" Mark 12: 34. In other words, he was almost converted. Even when St. Paul, on another occasion was teaching, being in the presence of Agrippa, he appealed to him as one expert in all questions and customs of the Jews. He said, "King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe!" Acts of the Apostles 26: 27.

He, too, was almost ready to become a Christian. And so it always is. When the mind is enlightened by the Word of God, when the sinner is made to understand what he is, what he needs, where and how to get where he must go, then there is yet an important step to be taken towards profession of faith because divine enlightenment is not in itself conversion. A second step is when the conscience is aroused and leads to righteousness, uprightness, chastity and judgment to come. No wonder the guilty and now fully awakened conscience of Felix spoke in thunder tones and as Scripture reveals to us, "Felix trembled." Self-condemned and self-convicted because of the grave guilt he bore, he sat alone with excitement. Surely the scales were turned. The prisoner preacher became the judge from eternity and the governor descended into the role of the defendant. Alarmed and stricken, he acknowledged himself to be guilty.

When the conscience of the sinner is thus stirred and alarmed, then another important step is taken towards conversion. We know and believe the heart must also be touched. We believe he felt and saw his own guilt and misery, had some longings after deliverance and a better life. If his heart had not been touched and exposed, we believe he would have dismissed St. Paul in anger. But he did not. He simply intimated that he could bear to hear no more and wanted to hear again at another time. He was so deeply impressed he wanted to think it over. He hoped to have other times to learn more and become fully satisfied. We know when the heart is touched it is because Jesus of Nazareth passes by. The listener is moved toward conversion, he is almost converted. Surely Felix in a hopeful way was moved; the mind was enlightened, the conscience was aroused and the heart was directed. What did he yet lack? One other most vital faculty must be approached, reached and changed. It is the will of man which must be brought to give its assent and consent. If that happens, Felix will be entirely converted, will then fully belong to Christ.

Just like the lone man at the banquet table, all set to celebrate even though he did not have everything necessary to be there in victory and success, Felix has to come to recognize what it is that brings a sinner almost into the kingdom. He must be clothed in the garment of virtues enumerated by St. Paul in today's epistle reading, all gathered together by the primary virtue of loving charity.

The prime and original cause of all such experiences of grace is the Holy Spirit himself. He comes to the sinner and operates through the written and sacramental word, through the liturgical life of the Church, through the worship hymnology of the Body of Christ. He arouses an interest, a compelling interest in the searching and interested soul. Through the Word of God, the invited visitor at the banquet and Felix before St. Paul, both hear God's presence and invitation. Divine grace reaches down to save and no one is ever readied except by the Spirit of God. God sometimes uses other influences as helps to reach the sinner. He sends upon him a grievous affliction, a stroke, a heart attack or gives him more and bitter losses and disappointments. He lays upon him a chastening hand.

Some imagine that such afflicting and correcting dispensations convert the sinner. But this is a perceptive mistake; their actual purpose is not to convert, but to direct attention away from the sinful self on to eternal, never-ending values. They are intended to drive the sinner away from his good friend, the devil, in whose alienation he seemingly prospers on his own terms, by his own judgment. It is like the shepherds staff which cannot satisfy the hunger of the sheep, but drives them to green pastures and beside still waters where God's grace is abundantly present. Just like the eager participant for food at the banquet, not all are totally concerned about living the life of Christ.



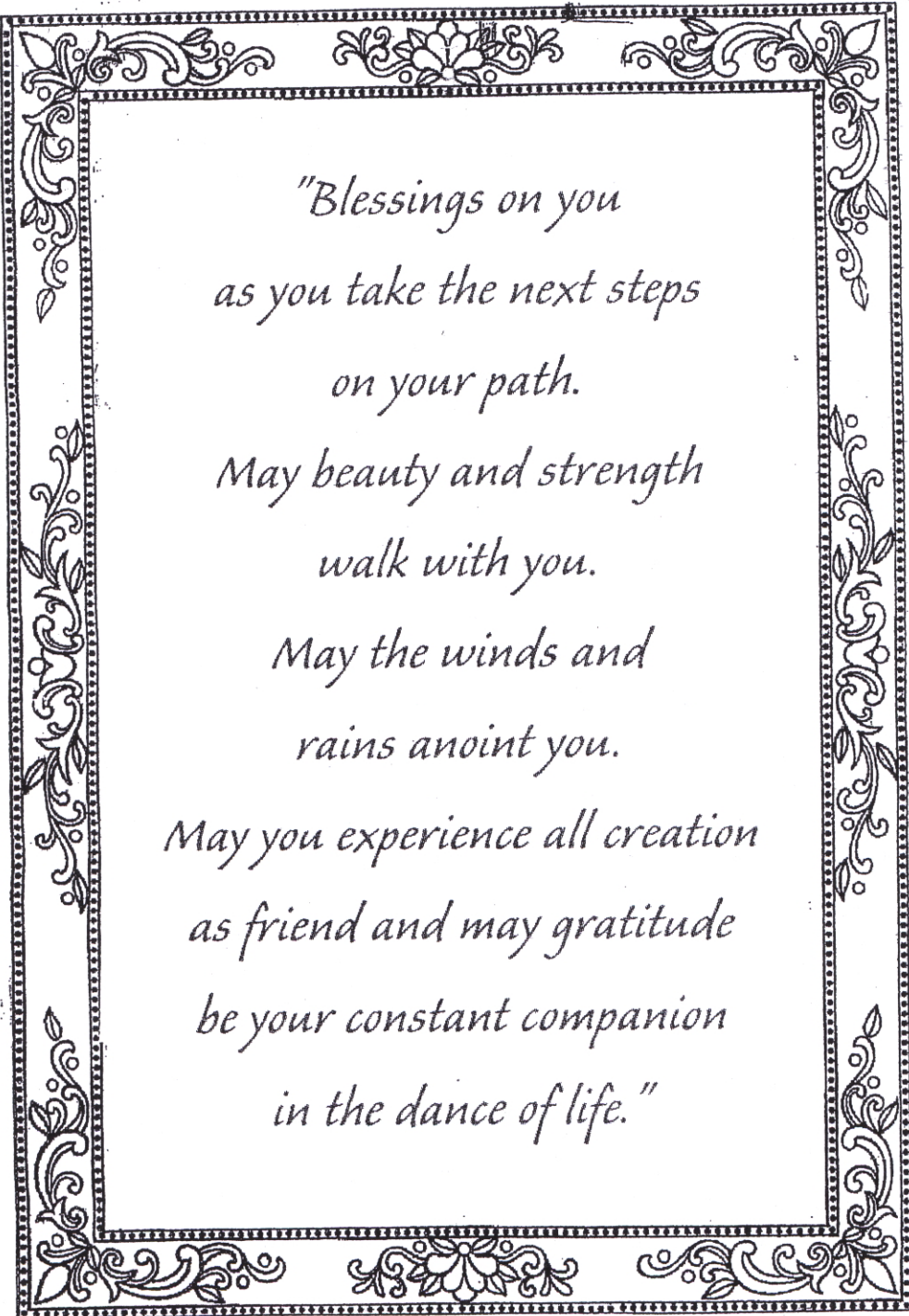
They simply want the benefits, not the lifestyle and they decline to make the final surrender. While the intellect, the conscience and the heart have all become interested, the will of man refuses sometimes, even rebels. And as long as the will does not entirely surrender, no matter what the knowledge, the conviction and the feelings, there is no real conversion to Christ. Oftentimes what happens is there is a holding on to one sin. Some have one evil practice and they cherish it openly or secretly because they are in love with it and do not want to be separated from it. They rattle the chains of their own slavery and they clutch and kiss them as if they were cords drawing them to heaven.

So we see the power of one cherished and therefore unforgiven sin! It has kept thousands out of heaven when they were almost in. Felix was almost converted; the banquet wedding guest participant had the personal invitation, but neither would give up their own much-loved and cherished idiosyncrasies which were sinful. Judas no doubt had his better moments and his serious impressions and felt himself drawn to Christ. But he loved money overwhelmingly and was unwilling to give up that love.

In another similar instance, Ananias and Sapphira were drawn by the apostles' preaching and wanted a place in the infant Church. But he decided he could serve both God and mammon and lied to the Holy Spirit. That kept him out of the Church and out of heaven for all eternity. Today we have the same problem with people who have their own pet sins, their cherished sins, their favorite sins which they prefer to indulge and never seek forgiveness for. Thus they are in servitude to them and prefer them and choose them rather than seek God's comforting and enabling forgiveness and freedom.

And then, finally, just like Felix and Drusilla, they put off their living a genuine Christian life to what they judge would be a more convenient time. Their interest is aroused, but is peaked before it is fulfilled. The man at the banquet table decided it would be enough now to simply show up, even though he was not prepared. Apparently he had not place more interesting or important to go. He entered prematurely and did nothing to change his circumstances. Thus he never accepted the grace of the Holy Spirit fully and totally. Felix tells Paul to go away until a convenient time arrives. He drives away the Holy Spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation.

It is indeed an awful thing to trifle with conviction and not take it seriously. Christ has called all of us here every Sunday and holyday in all seriousness. He has redeemed us and saved us. Seriously think about what it means to belong to him totally and begin anew the journey which will assure us all of forever belonging to His flock in seriousness and sincerity.



*"Blessings on you  
as you take the next steps  
on your path.*

*May beauty and strength  
walk with you.*

*May the winds and  
rains anoint you.*

*May you experience all creation  
as friend and may gratitude  
be your constant companion  
in the dance of life."*



**THE DECLINE OR GROWTH OF A PARISH CHURCH  
IT ALL DEPENDS ON YOU!**

Ten little Christians came to church all the time;  
One got angry at the priest and then there were nine.  
Nine little Christians stayed up late;  
One overslept on Sunday, then there were eight.  
Eight little Christians on their way to heaven;  
One took a detour and then there were seven.  
Seven little Christians chirping like chicks;  
One didn't like the singing, and then there were six.  
Six little Christians seemed very much alive;  
One wanted to travel and then there were five.  
Five little Christians, pulling for heaven's shore,  
One stopped to rest a while, and then there were four.  
Four little Christians, each one busy as a bee;  
One got his feelings hurt, and then there were three.  
Three little Christians couldn't decide what to do,  
One couldn't have his way, and then there were two.  
Two little Christians,.....the story is almost done;  
For one of them grew weary, and then there was one.  
One little Christian can't do much, it's true;  
But I brought a friend last Sunday, and then there were two.  
Two little Christians each got one more;  
now don't you see you add them up and two and two make four.  
Four little Christians worked early and late;  
Each of them brought one, and now there were eight.  
Eight little Christians, if they double as before.....  
In just seven Sundays, we'd have one-thousand twenty-four!

# Did You Know That ...

...the beauty we love can be what we do?

...all the flowers of tomorrow are in the seeds of today?

...the pursuit of truth, beauty and salvation is a sphere of activity in which are permitted to remain children all our lives?

...each day is too short for all the thoughts we want to think, all the walks we wish to take, all the books we desire to read and all the friends we need to see?

...each day the trees play their music for us?

...what we are is God's gift to us; what we become is our gift to God?

...the child within us wishes us to be playful, creative, always saying 'yes' to possibilities of holiness?

...your sacred space can be that time and place in prayer where your encounter the Triune God?

...birthdays, when we celebrate the gift of life, always remind us of eternal life for which we are destined?

...we are each of us angels with only one wing; to fly we need only to embrace each other?

...if we could see the miracle of a single flower clearly, our whole life would change?

...each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us?

...when you give of yourself that you truly give?

...gratitude is the fairest blossom that springs from the soul?

...when eating some fruit, think of the person who planted the tree?

...a thing of beauty is a joy forever?





*"...if you have faith as a mustard seed,  
you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,'  
and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you."*

*Matthew 17:20*

## “PEACE I LEAVE WITH YOU . . .”

**T**he primary definition for the word “peace” in Webster’s Dictionary is: “the state of quiet and tranquility.” In Jewish tradition, “peace” was the customary word exchanged for greeting and taking leave, indicating the desire that our personal contact with one another has been a calm experience from beginning to end. That’s a beautiful thought, isn’t it? Persons of all races, creeds and colors long to live in that state! Individuals want peace. Families want peace. Nations want peace. Indeed, all of mankind wants peace. Yet peace is such an elusive ideal! Since Cain slew his brother Abel, it seems like it is unrealistic to think anyone can ever exist together without conflict. The majority of marriages are hardly peaceful anymore. Relationships and friendships seem so fragile. We even fight wars under the pretense of seeking peace.

Perhaps we have little peace in the world today because we are looking for it in all the wrong places! The Great Litany at the beginning of Divine Liturgy tells us precisely where to seek it: we are told that it comes from HEAVEN ABOVE – not from any earthly sources. At the time of greatest turmoil in His earthly life, Christ left His Apostles with this message: “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you.” (John 14:27) True peace is brought to us by the “Prince of Peace”, Who carries out the work of salvation and reconciles humanity with God. It is an internal peace that He brings us – a peace which reaches the depths of the human heart and cleanses it from evil and passions, bringing real joy to our lives. Simply put, if we know Christ, we will have peace in our lives "that surpasses all understanding." (Philippians 4:7)