



Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost

October 7, 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, following the feast of St. Romanos the Melodist and Hymnwriter, celebrated this past week, our Church remembers and honors those who lead us in singing God's praises. We give thanks to our Creator God for the gifts bestowed on the parish by our cantors, Subdeacon Daniel J. Korba and Nikita Tsokris in leading us in our singing praise of the Blessed Trinity. As we acknowledge and thank

them for sharing their blessed gifts with us, we ask the gracious Lord to continue blessing them in good health for Many & Blessed Years!

+++ Today we have festal anointing on the occasion of this past week's simple feast of the Protection of the Mother of God. The customary greeting is "Christ Is Among Us!" to which we reply, "He Is And Shall Be!"

+++ Monday we have the regular healing service through the intercession of St. Nectarios the Wonderworker. Please come and join us in prayer, intercession and praise at 7: 30 PM. Confessions are heard prior to and after the services.

+++ 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, ██████, Candles, ██████; Grocery Coupons, ██████, Holyday, ██████, Building Fund, ██████; Diocesan Dues, ██████, Fire Relief, ██████, for a total of ██████. 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, Mary Jaakobs, 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 ██████ 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 ██████. 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 \$█████ on this project to date!

+++ We acknowledge with deep gratitude the sponsorship of the Parish Bulletin for this month of October by Louis and Robin Pasquino Family. We pray the gracious Lord continue to bless them with abundant good health for Many & Blessed Years!

+++ 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.

+++ Today at 9:15 AM we celebrate a Memorial Service for the repose of the soul of +Terry Young, beloved mother of Robin Pasquino on the occasion of the anniversary of her death. We pray our merciful Lord continue to comfort Robin and her family in their loss and that He grants to the soul of the departed a blessed repose and creates for her Eternal Memory!

+++ We thank our faithful for their generosity and spirit of sharing in the offering taken last Sunday for the victims in Greece of the fire rampage suffered there recently. We pray the Lord continue to bless us with good health for Many & Blessed Years!

+++ We thank the good souls who came Thursday and yesterday for the monthly Pirohi Sale preparations, those who secured orders and by their support made the event a successful one. May God continue to bless you devoted souls!

+++ Please be certain to take the candy order blanks and catalogues available in the vestibule for the coming Nativity Feast Day. We do depend on the support of our faithful to make it a success. Start now and begin getting orders from friends and neighbors. Your efforts assist our parish immeasurably.

+++ 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.

+++ We continue to be in need of Web Site donor-sponsors. The amount is \$25.00 per month. Please see Father as soon as possible.

+++ 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

Father's address: fatherbob@stpaul-freehold.com

**Narcissism
Goes
To Church**

**An Encounter
With American
Religion**

**This is an article by a
clergyman of the American
Religion persuasion who
exposes the narcissism that it
is promoted in so many
American churches.**

Narcissism Goes to Church: Encountering Evangelical Worship

By Monte Wilson

Evangelical Worship

Have you attended any modern evangelical worship services lately? (Question: Is "Evangelical Worship" an oxymoron?) No? Well, let's walk through one, shall we?

"Good Morning!" bellows the greeter, Mr. Rapport. "Why don't we stand and greet one another?" While every-one nervously pretends to happily welcome those around him with body language that says, "I can't believe he made us do this," Mr. Rapport will walk up and down the aisle shaking hands with the members, kissing babies and, in essence, acting as if he were running for office. (Maybe he is.)

What is this? It is the evidence of the modern proof of God's presence: Warmth and Fuzziness. The service must have the correct ambiance. People must feel wanted, even needed--or they will go elsewhere. Not long ago, the normal service would begin with Bible reading and prayer, declaring the congregation's allegiance and submission to Christ. Today, our allegiance is to user-friendliness.

Some churches will open with a cheery choir special or a hap-hap-happy song sung by the musicians. After all, happiness must mark the service. "We are a happy people. We have something to offer you. We are exciting and positive--and you *too* can be like us if you join our church!" Compare this with the ancient liturgies that began with, "O God the Father of heaven, have mercy on us miserable sinners." Whoa! That won't do. What a downer. This certainly won't work in a church that wishes to make everyone feel good about himself.

Now the music leader steps to the microphone to lead the "worship." He is a combination of Pavarotti (albeit without the training), Dick Clark and Liberace. He stands, sometimes with other singers, at the center of the stage. The sound booth has been instructed to make certain that his voice is always louder than all others combined. He cajoles, he exhorts, he waves his arms, he explains the depth of meaning in the lyrics of each song, he cheerleads, he cries--all on cue. We then sing songs like "Glo-ho-ho-ry-he-he" or some other such ditty that is equally as intellectually and theologically vacuous. By the way, are the people a little dull this morning? No problem. Change keys on each verse, increase the volume and dump all songs in minor keys. What matters is that everyone has a great, happy, ego-renewing experience.

To insure that everyone is engaged, he will choose songs that match the musical tastes of the congregation. (The demands of Scripture are secondary: preferences and tastes of the people are primary.) Who cares that the church sang majestic hymns and chanted the Psalms for century after century, these are now too complicated, too content laden. What we demand are songs that excite, move and gratify without over-taxing the mind or soul.

It is now time for The Reverend Doctor Raconteur. First, he will tell a story. Now this yarn need not have anything to do with the message, but it *must* assure everyone that he is a) glad they are there; b) capable of wowing them; c) a real master of the pulpit; and d) just plain folk, like all of them. If he fails to accomplish one of these objectives, he is in trouble. If he fails in two, his job is in jeopardy.

It doesn't matter how well educated in theology the minister is because he will rarely deal in theology: the real need is psychology and entertainment. The man must *move* the audience. He must make them feel loved, needed, wanted, appreciated, cared for and special--reeeeeal special--all in one message. Content is secondary, if it is relevant at all. What matters is that the minister is personable and able to make every individual present feel like he is talking just to him.

It is not just the people's ego being stroked here, but the minister's as well. He moves, he cries, he laughs and he woos. The spotlight is his. He is on center stage and loving it. Men revere him, women adore him and children laugh at his jokes: all stand in awe of his skills. What a life! Except, that is, when there is no response from the people. He stands at the back door and receives only the most mundane of compliments. No one is saved. No one spoke to him of his brilliant performance. No one fell down at the altar. Nothing visible, nothing audible, nothing happened, period. And what of his ego, now? It is dashed. He is a failure. No one appreciates him. No one knows his toil, his anguish--his insecurity and the ravenous hunger of his ego for approbation.

Where to Go for Real Worship

Where does the serious believer go to worship? Where do Christians go who do not want a circus but the sacraments? Where does a hungry seeker go to be fed with doctrine deeper than messages that can be boiled down to, "Don't worry, be happy"? Where are the Houses of Prayer? I was taught that, "You get what you fish for." We fished for people who wanted to be entertained. Now, if we pull the plug on the spotlights, they will go elsewhere. We built our services around the tastes of our members and, thereby, told them that their ego's were The Standard for evaluating the worship service is. What happens when we stand and quote Rushdoony, "Worship

is not a matter of taste but of obedience"? What will happen is that we will gain the favor of God and all those who fear him. Those serious about their life in Christ will find their way to our worship services; those who prefer smoke and mirrors will go elsewhere. If space permitted we could take a similar walk through the last years' counseling sessions. Here we see a parade of whiners, victims and self-indulgent, self-proclaimed prophets coming to the pastoral staff to let them know of all that is wrong with the church, the officers, the music, the teaching, their spouses, their lives, etc. All of this can be summed up in one brief sentence: "My needs are not being met." Are some of these needs legitimate? Of course they are. But more often than not the needs all center on the gratification of the ego, not the strengthening of faith.

Hear the mantas of modern evangelicals:

I feel, therefore, I am.

I do not feel God; therefore,
something or someone is
wrong.

I feel God; therefore, whatever
is being said and done must be
The Truth.

I feel good; therefore, I am
good.

I feel needy and my needs are
demands on your abilities and
possessions.

Is it any wonder that the average Christian is led around by his experiences and feelings rather than by God? The modern church--the place where he was to encounter God and learn of his ways--has told the Christian through symbols, teachings and structures that his needs and feelings are paramount!

Why are ministers shocked when members come in and say that their discontent with their spouse is grounds for divorce? After all, this same pastor told them that they could ignore covenants with past churches if their "felt-needs" were not being met. Why are we surprised when our members convert to Roman Catholicism where they feel-at-home-in-Rome or attend Laughing Revivals because they feel-the-Spirit?

Haven't we told them that the gratification of their feelings is of highest import to God? Isn't it amazing how ministers who pandered to experience and emotions all of the sudden want to talk about truth-claims when one of their members decides he can have more intense experiences at another church!

The Quest for Experience

What is going on in Church-O-Rama? Quite simply, it is the exaltation of emotional gratification outside any theological parameters. This shapes our liturgies, dictates the style and content of our message, directs our counseling strategies, produces deformed theologies and severely damages souls and institutions wherever it prevails.

Modern American Christianity is filled with the spirit of narcissism. We are in love with ourselves and evaluate churches, ministers and truth-claims based upon how they make us feel about ourselves. If the church makes me feel wanted, it is a good church. If the minister makes me feel good about myself, he is a terrific guy. If the proffered truth supports my self-esteem, it is, thereby, verified.

Whence does this error spring? What is its source? One source is the belief that salvation is solely due to an experience of conversion, rather than to what happened on the Cross of Christ. Most Christians today define their salvation exclusively in terms of what happened to them subjectively, having no notion whatsoever of the objective basis for their salvation. This in turn focuses all of their attention on anxiously caring for that experience.

I suggest that another source is the common modern presupposition that *experience is the foundation for belief*. This cannot be so, however, because experiences do not happen in vacuums. People experience something or someone. The question, then, becomes, "What or Who has been experienced?" The "What" or "Who" must be interpreted. And simply because the Who or What was encountered in a religious setting does not mean that the encounter was sent by God.

One of the attractions for basing beliefs and theologies on experience is that it gives various religious groups a common starting point for ecumenical dialogue: "We have all experienced Jesus (or Truth or the transcendent God), have we not?" But this begs the question: who is going to verify exactly Who was experienced and by what standard shall they make their evaluations? How shall we ascertain if we have experienced God or Truth—or have only been experiencing *ourselves*?

To those who say that experience is The Standard for evaluating truth, goodness, beauty, etc., Luther had an interesting question. On Good Friday, when the disciples stood before the Cross, where was God? Was he not absent? For years they had experienced him on a daily basis; now he was demonstrably absent. Jesus himself cries out that God had forsaken him. Now, what do we believe? Well, as Luther pointed out, we had better believe the theology of the Bible.

When we allow experience or feelings to guide our faith we will end up in a ditch. Our feelings will tell us that God is absent while, all the time, he was right there "present in a hidden manner." What we need, then, is a theology with which to interpret our experiences.

Ignoring the Quest

There is another problem to which we in the Reformed camp do not always give sufficient thought. Some of these experience-based people are truly hungry for more of God in their lives. They may be misguided, they may fall prey to psychological manipulation, they may fall into grievous errors, but their sense of neediness for God is legitimate. Whereas many modern evangelical churches try to satiate this thirst with MTV Christianity, there is--or at least was--in many of these folks a desire to fill the soul with God's presence.

In what I believe is an overreaction to the lust for experiences in Church-O-Rama, some Christians and churches have denied any and all pursuits of experiencing God and his Truth. All that matters to these folks is the cognitive apprehension of doctrine. But the fact is that Biblical truth is to transform the individual. This means by necessity that we must "experience" the Truth of God.

Quite often in the Reformed world there is a lack of any appeal whatsoever to the imagination: or the emotions, as if humans were only a "brain." This was one of the reasons why Anglican churches suffered such loss during the Great Awakening. Wesley and Whitefield were speaking to men and women who were semi-illiterate. However, while they may not have been able to read, these people could *feel* their need for God and forgiveness. Lecturing these people with theological treatises would not work: they needed to be *touched* where they *sensed* their (legitimate) need for God. This is not to suggest doctrine should have been secondary or that everything these evangelists did was right. It is to assert that some of their success was because they presented the truth in such a way as to truly communicate to the needs and

hunger of the people.

Augustine pointed out that we were made in the image of God. We have, therefore, a capacity to fellowship with God. After the Fall, however, we insisted on trying to fill this need with creation and created things rather than with the Creator. But as Augustine noted, we can fill the void of God *only* with God. "You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You."

People long for God: they intellectually and psychologically crave his presence. However, as Augustine wrote, they are constantly trying to fill this need with experiences that will not satiate their desire. Sadly, the church all too often notes the need of the people, takes a survey of what it is they are using to try and fill this void, and then baptizes the chosen avenues with proof texts and Christian jargon. To compound the problem, those churches that react to such an approach often craft their message and worship in utter disregard of the human need to experience God. So, in one church people's emotions and emotional needs are pandered to, while in the other they are ignored. In one church the spirit of narcissism reigns, in the other the human spirit's capacity for and need of God is, for all intents and purposes, ignored.

People "need" a worship service that says, God Is Here. Here God is worshipped, revered, met. This is not entertainment. This is not a lecture hall, and we are not the audience: God is the audience and we are the performers. We recognize God's demand to be glorified and the human need to be filled with his presence. Prepare to meet God.

The poet Annie Dillard captures this spirit when she writes:

On the whole, I do not find Christians, outside of the catacombs, sufficiently sensible of conditions. Does anyone have the foggiest idea of what sort of power we so blithely invoke? Or, as I suspect, does no one believe a word of it? The churches are children playing on the floor with their chemistry sets, mixing up a batch of TNT to kill a Sunday morning. It is madness to wear ladies' straw hats and velvet hats to church; we should all be wearing crash helmets. Ushers should issue life preservers and signal flares; they should lash us to our pews. (*Teaching A Stone To Talk: Expeditions and Encounters*, p. 40)

Do you think Dillard extreme? Consider: Moses sees God, kicks off his shoes and starts stammering about how God should send Aaron and not him. Isaiah sees God, crawls under a church pew and begins blabbering about needing his foul mouth washed out. Jeremiah hears God and tells the Almighty that he is just a kid and not up

for the rough-and-tumble world of a prophet. Paul saw God's presence and is knocked off of his donkey, blinded by the light of glory. While in the spirit on the Lord's Day, John spends a lot of time on his face. These are not pretty pictures. People "see" God and they are struck with terror. "Holy God, plus sinful me, equals dead meat."

When I contemplate gathering to worship the Triune God in the presence of angels, arch-angels and the Cloud of Witnesses--which is exactly what we do when we "gather as the church"--I am struck with the sinful and irreverent nonsense of much of what goes on in our worship services. I am not only speaking of people falling down laughing or of rock bands screaming; I am also thinking of the bored familiarity with which many approach worship. Both services fail to glorify God and invite his presence. Consequently, both services fail to meet the real needs of God's people.

While the primary purpose of worship is to glorify God, we must not discount how worship shapes and molds people for life. "Worship" that panders to narcissism leaves people void of true devotion and of the will to obey. "Worship" that is cold and heartless is a breeding ground for rationalism, leaving people empty of true spiritual power. Both are incapable of meeting the quest for more intimate fellowship with God or for being filled with his presence.

Feelings and experiences are not foundations for beliefs. However, as Jonathan Edwards wrote,

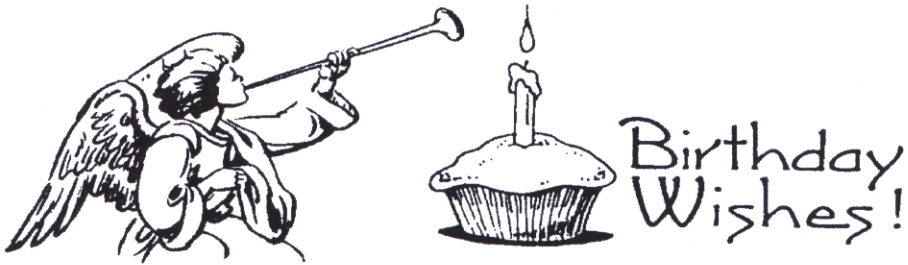
That religion which God requires, and will accept, does not consist in weak, dull, and lifeless wishes, raising us but a little above indifference. God, in his word, greatly insists upon it, that we be in good earnest, *fervent in spirit*, and our hearts vigorously engaged in religion: (*Rom. 12:11; Deut. 10:12; 6:4, 5*)

As there is no true religion where there is nothing else but affection [feelings/experiences], so there is no true religion where there is no *religious affections*. As on one hand, there must be light in the understanding, as well as an *affected fervent* heart; or where there is heat without light, there can be nothing divine or heavenly in the heart: so, on the other hand, where there is a kind of light without heat, a head stored with notions and speculations with a cold and unaffected heart, there can be nothing divine in that light, that knowledge is no true spiritual knowledge of divine things. If the great things of religion are rightly understood, they will affect the heart. (*On Religious Affections*, Section 2:1; Section 3:1)

I understand and agree with those who ridicule and rebuke the extremes of emotionalism and the theologies that spawned those extremes. However, the solution to the problem of the narcissistic quest for self-gratification in religious experiences is not in denying the soul's legitimate need and desire to encounter God. On the contrary, the solution is in recognizing that such an encounter is possible only where God in all of his glory is exalted and worshipped. This God--the Triune, sovereign God who requires nothing less than worship that engages the whole person--where ever he is proclaimed and honored, will fill the void within true seekers.

Sooner or later, those who have been attending Church-O-Rama who are truly seeking God will discover that what they have been fed is cotton candy for the soul and that all they have to show for years of eating such things is a heart and head filled with cavities. When they show up, do not merely introduce them to correct theology: lead them to an encounter with the Sovereign Lord.

Dr. Monte Wilson is a noted Reformed speaker and writer. He can be contacted at 770-740-1401, montethird@aol.com, or P.O. Box 22, Alpharetta, GA 30239. He is available for preaching, lectures and conferences.



We are pleased to greet those of our faithful communicants who celebrate their birthday this month. Our Lord has offered these souls yet another year of blessed life. The most obvious way He blesses us and participates in our life is by sharing His divine life with us in the Eucharist at the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. Thus we can gather together and offer thanks to Him for yet another year of life blessed by His most gracious hands. Today, we prayerfully remember in the Divine Liturgy the following souls who celebrate their birthday during the month of October.

October 3 Susan M. Sorochka

October 11 Elizabeth A. Simon

October 15 Elise Velez

October 27 Father John Cmur

With a prayerful heart and grateful soul, our parish faith community asks the Lord to continue to bless these birthday celebrants with good spiritual and physical health for the coming year. We invite all to add their intercessory prayers so that with one voice and one heart we may also participate in the grace and joy of their celebration. As we wish them a happy and blessed celebration of their birthday, our ardent prayer is that the Lord will continue to bless them for

Many and Blessed Years!

SERGIUS AND BACCHUS: SOLDIERS IN CHRIST'S ARMY

In the early centuries of the Christian Church, openly professing one's faith in Jesus Christ could be a costly proposition. Brutal torture and execution was usually the price paid for such a belief. Consequently, many men and women secretly pledged their loyalties and allegiance to Christ as a simple matter of survival.

Sergius and Bacchus were two such men. These 3rd century martyrs were soldiers in the Roman army of the Emperor Maximian. Their courage and bravery was noted by the Emperor, and Sergius and Bacchus were held in high esteem in the imperial court. Little did anyone know, however, that the real "Master" that they served was Jesus Christ, having embraced Christianity long before their rise in favor in Roman society. It is known, however,

that we "... cannot serve two masters." One day, Maximian invited Sergius and Bacchus to offer a sacrifice with him before the Roman idols. To the Emperor's surprise, they steadfastly refused! The enraged ruler immediately stripped Sergius and Bacchus of their royal robes, dressed them in women's clothing and had them dragged through the streets of Rome to be mocked by all. They were tortured and imprisoned - they were urged to deny Christ and save themselves from a painful death. To this, the saints replied: "Both honor and dishonor, both life and death - all are the same to the one who seeks the kingdom of Heaven." After several months of severe suffering, Sergius and Bacchus became martyrs for the faith in 303 A.D.