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# **Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church**

**24 BURKE ROAD**

**FREEHOLD, NJ 07728**

**Sunday Before Nativity Of Our Lord**

**December 20, 2015**

**Father Robert E Lucas, Pastor;  
Subdeacon Daniel J. Korba and Nikitas Tsokris,  
Cantors**

**Rectory 215-862-9227; Parish Center 732-780-3158**

## **We Are A Stewardship Parish Of Time, Talent and Treasure**

The mission of our parish faith community is to teach the Gospel message in the rich tradition of the Orthodox Church; to enable people to reflect the image of Jesus Christ in every day activities of life; to offer spiritual formation through changing times; and to celebrate community among Orthodox believers in our Freehold area.

We of St. Paul the Apostle Parish dedicate ourselves to maintaining the sanctity of worship and spiritual enlightenment in a family environment that reaches and involves all ages and unifies all people.

We believe in the spirit of ecumenism in which we share our faith by word and example and extend our spiritual insights to all people.

We accept the responsibility of Christian Stewardship that through generous giving we may all experience a faith communion with Christ as the Center of our lives.

We dedicate ourselves to insuring the well-being of all people so that we may truly experience the message of Christ's salutary gospel.

We are a beacon on a hill with the eyes of many upon us; that beacon is the inspired Light of Christ which must shine brightly in our lives.

*It is not ourselves we preach but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts, that we in turn might make known the glory of God shining on the face of Christ. This treasure we possess in earthen vessels to make it clear that its surpassing power comes from God and not from us. We are afflicted in every way possible, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in us 2 Corinthians 4: 5 – 8.*

## **GLAD TIDINGS**

**+++ The Holyday Bake Sale was this past week. We thank all who came, prepared for, secured orders, baked and distributed our products. God bless you faithful souls with your loved ones with good health for Many and Blessed Years!**



+++ Every Monday, we have prayerful devotions before the Myrrh bearing icon at 6:00 PM. Everyone is invited to be present in praise. The Birthgiver invites us to manifest our faith in response to her first shown love, to unite our prayers with hers for the salvation of our souls. Invite your friends and neighbors to join us.

+++ Please keep the intentions of these members of our parish intercession community in your daily prayers: Barbara, Betty, James, Yevlogia, Nicholas, Maria, Cynthia, Pani Anna Marie and Andrea.

+++ The sign-up sheet for both the Web Site and Bulletin sponsors is on the bulletin board in the kitchen. Please sign up as soon as possible. Do NOT make payment until your sign-up month has arrived. This will make it easier for Father to keep track of payments. Thanks in advance to all who support the parish in this way.

+++ We offer thanks to the Blessed Trinity for inspiring generosity in the souls of our faithful and the blessing of abundant grace in our midst with the offering received last Sunday: Tithe Offering, \$171.00; Candles, \$14.00; Holyday, \$45.00; Kitchen, \$150.00, Flowers, \$10.00; Food Coupons, \$200.00; Clothing Drive, \$230.00; Pennies from Heaven \$23.00, for a total of \$843.00. We express our profound gratitude to the parishioner communicants who offer their God-given treasure and labored for the sake of the Lord and the good of our parish. God bless and reward you good and faithful souls!

+++ As faithful believers, we intercede and associate ourselves in prayer with the following who have prayed and offered seven day lights for their intentions: Father Lucas, Maria Idronmenos, Anna Zacharyczuk, Bob Gorbich, Marilyn 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 **\$1828.00** from this apostolate. Even your pennies can help and are a blessing to our parish.

+++ Please be certain to see 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 \$6750 on this project to date!

+++ The Clothing Drive is a permanent on-going project in our parish. Please bring any type of clothing and fabrics along with stuffed animals and shoes for the benefit of our parish. The bags can be left in the vestibule or on the front porch of the rectory. Please invite your friends and neighbors to assist us in disposing of unwanted clothing, shoes and fabrics.

+++ We invite all pray the Lord our God grants us the grace of enrichment of our spiritual lives for his glory.

+++ Please prepare to light a Votive Candle in honor of the Lord's Birth among us.

## The Virtues of Men and Women

The perennial question about what it means to be a man or a woman and how the sexes relate to one another are of crucial concern to the Body of Christ. After all, human identity is grounded in the truth that *God created man in his image...male and female he created them* Genesis 1: 27. This is reflected often in the teachings of the Fathers of the Church who make references to spiritual fatherhood and motherhood, calling us to cultivate the manly virtues modeled by St. Joseph, the foster father of our Lord.

The virtues of authentic masculinity shine through together with the virtue of fatherhood. The vocation of St. Joseph's as protector and servant is made evident by his immediate response to God's command through the angel of the Lord. *When Joseph awoke he did as the angel of the Lord directed him and received her into his home as his wife* Matthew 1: 24; *Joseph got up and took the child and his mother and left that night for Egypt* Matthew 2: 14.

And there is good reason to highlight the genius of women. Much of the confusion and antagonism in contemporary society stems from a lack of appreciation of "feminine" values. A one-sided emphasis on stereotypically masculine qualities disparages characteristics like receptivity, compassion, and obedience, casting them aside as forms of weakness and passivity. The Church has sought to correct this error over time so there is more understanding and appreciation for the collaboration of men and women. While woman may be more immediately attuned to and live as the privileged sign of certain values, that which is called femininity, it is more than simply an attribute of the female sex. The word designates indeed the fundamental human capacity to live for the other and because of the other.

When the Birthgiver of God declared her *fiat*, her full and free consent to the Incarnation, she did so as an icon of the entire and whole Church. In answering his vocation, St. Joseph demonstrated a similar readiness of will to respond to our heavenly Father and give his life in service to love. Seeking to become mature and loving Christian men and women, today we are invited to contemplate and imitate the virtues of the Holy Family as we look forward with joy to celebrating the glorious feast of the Nativity of our Lord.



## Micah

MICAH was	BETHLEHEM.
a PROPHET who	He PREDICTED
LIVED in the	JERUSALEM'S
SMALL	DOWNFALL and
TOWN	the DESTRUCTION
of MORESHETH	of the TEMPLE.
NEAR Jerusalem	This CAME TO
in the TIME	PASS WHEN
of ISAIAH.	the BABYLONIANS,
He PROPHESED	and LATER the
that the MESSIAH	ROMANS,
would BE BORN in	DESTROYED

THEM.

for ITS SINS

The RUIN of

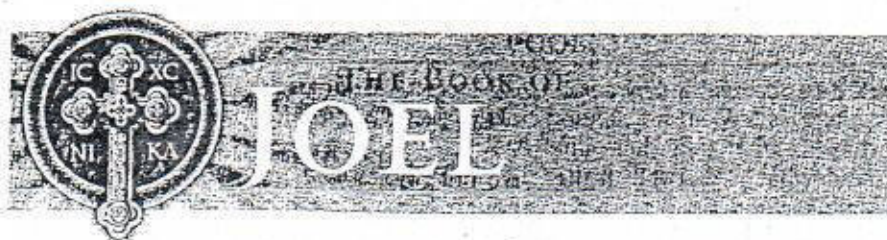
AGAINST

the CITY was

the TRUE GOD.

a PUNISHMENT

A	H	S	N	I	S	S	T	I	H	N	E	I	N	A
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D	Y	M	I	A	O	T	W	A	W	E	E	S	O	Y
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N	W	O	T	B	J	K	E	P	G	C	T	Z	D	Q



***Author***—Traditionally the prophet Joel (commemorated October 19), son of Pethuel, of the tribe of Reuben. His is a common Jewish name, meaning “Yahweh is God.” Nothing is known of his life outside of his short prophecy.

***Date***—Any number of dates have been suggested for Joel’s life. Fathers such as Ss. Jerome and Isidore place Joel in the time of the prophets Isaiah and Hosea, about 740 BC. Tradition held Joel to be one of the earlier prophets; modern scholars are undecided about the matter, often placing him at about 450–400 BC, after the restoration of Israel from exile.

***Major Theme***—*Ultimately, the Lord is victorious.* Three major themes are prominent. (1) A call summoning the people of God to turn their sorrow into penitence (1:1–2:17). (2) The faithfulness of God to rise up on behalf of His people, restore their prosperity, and bring the nations to justice (2:18–27). (3) The coming of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity (3:1–5). Joel emphasizes the universal mission of the Spirit, anticipating the Day of Pentecost, when He is poured out on all flesh.

***Background***—It is likely the prophet Joel wrote in the face of a double disaster—the attack of military aggressors such as the Babylonians, and the onset of a plague of locusts. The prophet freely switches between the two calamities, likening them to each other. As the narrative proceeds, Joel employs two distinct prophetic genres: (1) he calls his people to contrition and repentance; and (2) he uses vivid apocalyptic imagery to convey deep spiritual truths. The contrast created by these two approaches prompted St. Jerome to comment, “Joel is clear at the beginning, but at the end more obscure.”

### ***Outline***

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|--|---|
| I. Devastation in Israel (1:1–20)          | IV. The Outpouring of the Holy Spirit (3:1–5) |
| II. Call to Repentance (2:1–17)            | V. The Judgment of the Nations (4:1–17)       |
| III. The Deliverance of the Lord (2:18–27) | VI. The Prosperity of Zion (4:18–21)          |



## The Journey of the Nativity Fast

*I will instruct you in the way you should walk; give you counsel with my eye upon you*  
Psalms 32: 8.

This liturgical season is primarily about the coming of God among us, and only then in a secondary way about our asking, seeking, waiting and longing. There is hope, because we are unconditionally loved; whatever may be our failures, our tepidity, or our secret despair. The word "Come" is a bearer of profound mystery.

So hallowed and gracious is this time. The brilliant ravishing autumn foliage has for the most part vanished and the trees stand stark and bare. In early winter we delight gazing upon the sunset through the elaborate patterns of branches that portion the pink sky like the elegant tracery of a stained glass window. The trees, with their bare branches reach quietly toward the sky, look to the heavens, toward the dying sunset light, and seem to share in the pleading of our seasonal prayer, "Come, Lord Jesus, Come!"

We know that early Christians, after the example of Joshua and Moses, traditionally prayed with their arms outstretched towards the heavens as is depicted in the icon, *Virgin Orans*. It is from heaven our Lord is expected to come again. We have lost and abandoned and forgotten this pattern of physical posture in prayer. The bare trees with their branches outstretched is a symbolic reminder for all believers, especially during this holy season that we, too, must gaze up at all times toward our God in unceasing prayer and reach with open arms toward him with deep yearning. Not only is it a sign of surrender of our own will to him in prayer, but more than a sign of our self-eager giving to the Lord of Life. It is an expression of the soul yearning for union with the eternal God, seeking oneness with the Creator.

For believers who themselves are in on a pilgrimage through life, this holy time intensifies and deepens the senses of our spiritual journey. We move with expectation toward an arrival, an encounter. The monk, secluded in his monastic desert, longs and prays expectantly for the blessed coming of the Saviour Lord and God. The ordinary believer elevates himself in the mystery of this fast moving world, to slow down, to contemplate and meditate on what astounding event is about to take place. In our homes there ought be something special about this preparation period beyond the silliness of shopping and running around endlessly. We ought always look to *Come all*



*you faithful, joyful and triumphant*, as we grow with the blessed time, giving an awareness of how beautifully the words of the hymnology of the Church expresses the rich meaning of the various feast days commemorated at this time. The endurance of the musical voice of the Body of Christ, sanctified by centuries of use, repeating as it does ancient truths, has in its own unique way of conveying something of the rich mystery which the Bride of Christ proclaims in liturgical prayer and song. We must never forget that the chant is not music or melody alone, but words to music, sung joyfully with inspiration because of the truth they convey, thus making the chant truly a vehicle of melodious prayer.

With their simplicity the songs of the Church express in their richness Scriptural truths from which they are inspired with serene beauty, and have a way of transforming our vocal sounds into acts of enduring praise and adoration to God, our Lord and Master with one heart, one mind and one voice. The Lord God Creator, for all his wonderful benefits to us is praised by every means, in speech and song, in word of poetry and adoration.

The Psalms constitute the fullness of antiphonal singing and praise. So we meditate on *In that day, of the Lord's coming, sweet wine will flow from the mountains, milk and honey from the hills, alleluia.*

This journey we take, this time we invest with our God is reason for a subtle invitation to climb the Lord's mountain. The journey is slow, gradual, ascending up the narrow mountain incline path. As with all uphill climbing there are certain hazards along the way, but also a joyful expectation of one day finally reaching the mountaintop, that is the sacred place where the Lord dwells. Our sacred season journey reminds us also of another journey: that of our earthly pilgrimage towards communion with our Maker, God, toward a rich plenitude of life with him. The very character of the Nativity Fast season is to instill in us a vision of our Christian life as a constant pilgrimage, as a dynamic ongoing movement toward a final, ongoing fulfilling encounter. We wish to reach our ultimate destination where we enter into possession of the only our hearts desire.

We certainly are in journey, a very real journey that takes us from the forces of darkness and sin into the light of certain hope and actual grace. At the beginning we may undertake the journey with feelings of fear and insecurity. Yet as we continue walking, traveling and growing into the realization that He who is the object of our destination is also our companion on the road. The landscape of the sinner's journey begins to change. We discover the joyful expectancy and patient waiting. We rejoice

with great joy for we find out and discover as once did the disciples on the way to Emmaus, that He has been at our side all along. Jesus, as our ultimate Judge is waiting for us at the final moment of the journey, but He, as Saviour and Messiah, is also with us now as we walk through the whole of it.

To truly discern the art of the holy and sacred journey, we must never lose sight of this divine presence, who facilitates the journey by driving away those negative elements in our lives as He swept away the negative influence of Herod after the birth of the Saviour. We are imparted necessary grace to facilitate the journey by overcoming despair, fear, insecurity, sinfulness, superficiality, pride, etc. During the long nights of our journey to Bethlehem, we can find comfort in the prayer of the Church from the Matins service of the Nativity of our Lord:

*To those who are caught in the night straying into the works of darkness, grant O Christ our God, your light and your blessing. Make the path easy for us, whereby we may ascend and so attain to glory.*

## PRAYER

It is customary to pray before any activity, especially before we travel. Please pray this short prayer with your family before departing for Church. With prayer, our journey will be safer and less stressful.

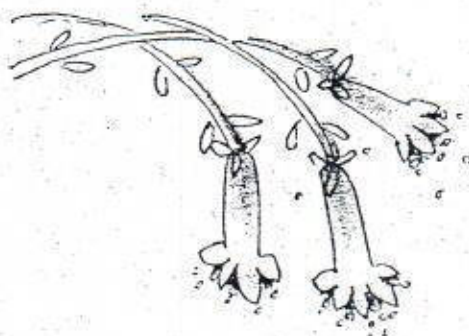
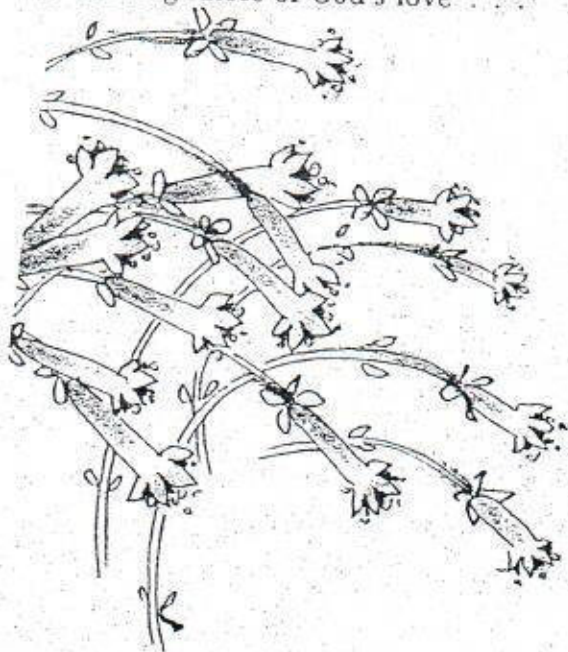
### PRAYER BEFORE DEPARTING FOR CHURCH

O Lord our God, the True and Living Way, who traveled with Your servant Joseph; travel together with us as we make our way to Your Church and deliver all of us from agitation raised up against us. Grant us peace and strength, by Providence fulfilling all righteousness according to Your commandments, and that being filled with earthly and heavenly good things, You deign that we may return home again in peace. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.



## "The Fruit of the Spirit Is Love and Peace"

There is no thinking person  
Who can stand untouched today  
And view the world around us  
Slowly drifting to decay  
Without feeling deep within him  
A silent, unnamed dread  
As he contemplates the future  
That lies frighteningly ahead . . .  
For, like watching storm clouds gather  
In a dark and threatening sky,  
Man knows that there is nothing  
He can formulate or try  
That will stop the storm from breaking  
In its fury and its force,  
Nor can he change or alter  
The storm's destructive course,  
But his anxious fears are lessened  
When he calls on God above,  
For he knows above the storm clouds  
Is the brightness of God's love . . .



So as the "*clouds of chaos*"  
Gather in man's muddled mind,  
And he searches for the answer  
He *alone* can never find,  
Let us recognize we're facing  
Problems man has never solved,  
And with all our daily efforts  
Life grows more and more involved,  
But our future will seem brighter  
And we'll meet with less resistance  
If we call upon our Father  
And seek Divine Assistance . . .  
For the spirit can unravel  
Many tangled, knotted threads  
That defy the skill and power  
Of the world's best hands and heads,  
And our plans for growth and progress,  
Of which we all have dreamed,  
Cannot survive materially  
Unless our *spirits* are redeemed . . .  
So may our prayer  
Be that God may dwell again  
In human hearts throughout the world  
And bring *Good Will* to men.

## A PROPHET OF VISION

**D**aniel, along with Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, is considered one of the four GREAT PROPHETS of the Old Testament. Living in the 6th century B.C., Daniel was captured and taken off into slavery when Jerusalem was plundered by the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar.

A careful study of the scriptural book that bears Daniel's name, provides us with fascinating details of the prophetic gift that this remarkable man of God possessed. Daniel had an uncanny ability to interpret dreams. By doing so, he found favor with King Nebuchadnezzar, rising to prominence in the Babylonian palace because of this special talent. Some years later, Daniel was able to interpret a vision experienced by Belshazzar, who succeeded his father as King.

Daniel himself had many visions, some of which closely resemble those that are recorded by the Evangelist John in the Book of Revelation. He writes about the "four beasts" and about the "Ancient of Days" seated on a throne beside a "river of fire", with "open books" set before Him. Similar imagery is used in the New Testament's baffling final book. Daniel even mentions the well-known Archangels Gabriel and Michael in his writings!

The Book of Daniel reveals a stunning foretelling of the coming of the Messiah, His Death and Resurrection, the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple and the end of the practice of sacrifices for religious purposes.

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