

# Saint Sebastian



A STRONG AND  
BLESSED MARTYR

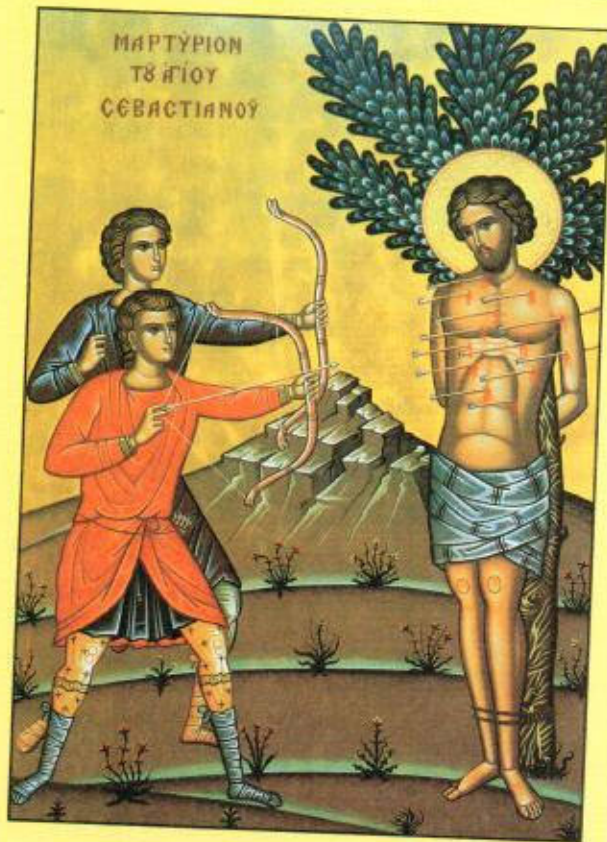
**S**AINTE SEBASTIAN was a fervent soldier of Christ while serving in the army of the Emperor Diocletian. Greatly regarded, he was elevated to the command of the first legion. He was a prudent man, upright in word and deed and faithful in spirit. His rank enabled him to be of service to those who were imprisoned for their faith in Christ. He relieved their suffering and urged them to remain steadfast, despite persecution.

Two brothers, Mark and Marcellian, had been accused of being Christians, and were awaiting execution in prison. Their friends implored them to save their lives by abandoning what they believed in. They seemed to waver in their faith. When Sebastian heard of it, he planned a visit to strengthen them.

In the meantime, Tranquillin, the father of the two brothers, had obtained a postponement of thirty days for the youths and also had them transferred to the house of Nicostratus, the keeper of records.

So, Sebastian went to see them there. Gathered together along with the two brothers were their parents, 16 heathen prisoners, Nicostratus and his wife, Zoe. Of course there was the danger that Sebastian could be betrayed.

The room was illuminated by an opening in the roof, and Sebastian entered and stood in the rays that poured through. The metal of his armor shone with brilliance,



# Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Twenty Seventh Sunday After Pentecost

December 14, 2014

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 Annual St. Nicholas Day Luncheon takes place today following the Divine Liturgy. We thank all who brought a prepared dish to assure its success.

+++ We thank sincerely all the good souls who labored to make yesterday's Pirohi Sale a success. God bless you devoted souls!



+++ The Special Offering for flowers to beautify our parish church for the coming feast of the Nativity of our Lord is taken today. We pray all were generous.

+++ The Bake Sale will take place this Friday and Saturday, December 19 and 20. Packaged Cookies will also be available.

+++ 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 remember we are in the Nativity Fast which began yesterday. Impose seriously on yourself the prescriptions of the Church that our hearts and souls become worthy mangers of our Saviour on the feast of His Nativity. Fast from sin, meat and dairy products that your soul is enriched. Prior to all services, Confessions are heard, so come and unburden yourself from the sinful weight you carry.

+++ Please keep the intentions of these members of our parish intercession community in your daily prayers: Father George, Anna, Barbara, Betty, James, Yevlogia, Nicholas, Maria, Cynthia, Nicholas, 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, \$354.00; Candles, \$15.00; Flowers, \$10.00; Holyday, \$35.00; Nativity of our Lord, \$120.00; Food Coupons, \$200.00; Kitchen, \$1498.00, for a total of \$2232.00. 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 **\$1818.00** 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 \$5750 on this project to date!



### Controlling The Tongue

*O Timothy, guard what has been committed to you. Stay clear of worldly, idle talk and the contradiction of that is falsely called knowledge. In laying claim to such knowledge, some men have missed the goal of faith. Grace be with you 1 Timothy 6: 20, 21.*

*But avoid foolish questions and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law, for they are unprofitable and vain Titus 3: 9.*

*While I breathe and the spirit of God is in my nostrils, my lips shall not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit Job 27: 3, 4.*

*But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. What? Shall we accept good at the hands of God and complain about evil which befalls us? In all this did not Job sin with his lips Job 2: 10. .*

*For he who loves life and desires to see good days, let him divert his tongue from evil and his lips that they speak no guile 1 Peter 3: 10.*

*Just as he who has called you is holy, so be holy in all manner of conversation 1 Peter 1: 15.*

*When he was insulted, he returned no insult. When he was made to suffer, he did not counter with threats. Instead, he delivered himself up to the One who judges justly 1 Peter 2: 23.*

*A wholesome tongue is a tree of life, but perversity in it is a breach in the spirit Proverbs 15: 4.*

*A fool's mouth is his destruction and his lips are the snare of his soul. The words of a talebearer are as wounds and they go down to the innermost parts of the person Proverbs 18: 7, 8.*



## **An Escort Through The Valley**

*Death, where is your sting, O place of death, where is your victory?*  
1 Corinthians 15: 55.

All of us have heard people say, "I am not afraid of death because I am confident I am going to heaven; it is the dying process that scares me!" If we are living the life of Jesus Christ as communicants of His Body, the Church, we should have no fear and be possessed of the hope within us for a glorious eternity. Yes, as believers, we look forward to heaven but still may be afraid of dying.

We need not necessarily be ashamed to admit that we are afraid. It is not unnatural to be afraid of the pain that comes with dying many times, of being separated from our loved ones, of possibly impoverishing our families due to lack of preparation, and to regret over missed earthly opportunities.

But we must think about why the genuine believer does not need to be afraid of death. Because Jesus was raised from the dead and we who are in Christ will also be raised. That is why St. Paul proclaims assuredly, "The sting of death is sin and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Corinthians 15: 56, 57.

The dying process is but an escort that ushers us into eternity with our heavenly Father. As we "...walk through the valley of the shadow of death," we can have this confidence from God's Word and the teaching of the Church: "You are with me, your rod and your staff comfort me" Psalms 23: 4. The picture here is of the Lord coming alongside us, offering comfort in the transition and sure direction as He escorts us through the seeming dark valley to the "...house of the Lord." There we have the promise of dwelling with him forever.

Just think of crossing a river, stepping out safe on the shore, with sadness and suffering over, dwelling with Christ forever!

Death is the last shadow in our temporary earthly life before heaven's eternal dawn!

## Christ's Measurement

*It is not the man who recommends himself who is approved, but the man  
whom the Lord recommends*  
2 Corinthians 10: 18.

To see ourselves as we really are, a comparison with Christ is vital. Because we are too inclined to excuse ourselves with flimsy excuses and emotional platter, Christ issues a direct challenge on a number of occasions. How much plainer can He get?

"...his mother and his brothers appeared outside to speak with him. Someone said to him, 'Your mother and your brothers are standing out there and they wish to speak to you.' He said to the one who told him, 'Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?' then, he extending his hand toward his disciples, said, 'There are my mother and my brothers. Whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is brother and sister and mother to me'" Matthew 12: 47- 50.

"His mother and his brothers arrived and as they stood outside they sent word to him to come out. The crowd seated around him told him, 'Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside asking for you.' He said in reply, 'Who are my mother and my brothers?' And gazing around him at those seated in the circle he continued, 'There are my mother and my brothers. Whoever does the will of God is brother and sister and mother to me'" Mark 3: 31 - 35.

"His mother and brothers came to be with him, but they could not reach him because of the crowd. He was told, 'Your mother and your brothers are standing outside and they wish to see you.' He told them in reply, 'My mother and my brothers are those hear the word of God and live it' Luke 18: 19 - 21.

As we take inventory of our lives and what we have done in the Lord's service, let us not be too quick to commend ourselves. The real test is whether we are those "whom the Lord commends," And whether we hear the word of God seriously enough to live it faithfully.

**"Would he be grateful to the servant who was only carrying out his orders?  
It is quite the same with you who hear me. When you have done all that  
you have been commanded to do, say,  
'We are useless servants. We have done no more than our duty'"**  
Luke 17: 9, 10.



## Thy Power

Father, do Thou this day free me . . .

From fear of the future,  
From anxiety for tomorrow,  
From bitterness toward anyone,  
From cowardice in face of danger,  
From laziness in face of work,  
From failure before opportunity,  
From weakness when Thy power is at hand.

But fill me, I beseech Thee, with . . .

Love that knows no barriers,  
Courage that cannot be shaken,  
Faith strong enough for the darkness,  
Strength sufficient for my tasks,  
Loyalty to Thy kingdom's goal,  
Wisdom to meet life's complexities,  
Grace to meet life's perplexities,  
Power to lift others unto Thee.

## Trust

When all seems lost, and the future dim,  
The Lord will help, just turn to Him;  
When dreams are gone, and you can't cope,  
God's endless love will give you hope.  
He knows your needs, He'll show the way  
To meet your problems day by day;  
His strength and help will be with you,  
Just let Him in, His light shine through.  
Trust in God, He's always there  
To hold you in His loving care.



## What about tithing?

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be equipped for every good work" 2 Timothy 3: 16.

As the *Serious Orthodox Christian* – SOC-- if he or she is sure there is a God:

SOC: Absolutely!

Q: How can you be so sure?

SOC: God is *everywhere* in the Bible. Only "the fool says in his heart there is no God" Psalms 14: 1.

Q: So you believe the writings of the Bible?

SOC: *Every* word!

Q: Do you believe there is a heaven?

SOC: Jesus said, "No one has ever gone to heaven except the One Who came from heaven – the Son of Man" John 3: 13.

Q: Who did Jesus mean by "Son of Man"?

SOC: *Himself*, of course.

Q: Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?

SOC: Yes! "Grace and truth come through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, but the only-begotten Son at the Father's side has made him known" John 1: 17.

Q: Is it true that He rose from the dead?

SOC: Read for yourself what the angel told the myrrhbearing women: "You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified. He is not here. He is risen! Luke 16: 6.

Q: And the part about Mary, His mother, giving birth without human conception?



SOC: It's there, too. "'How can this be, since I am a virgin?' she asked the angel. The angel answered, 'the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the most High will overshadow you, so the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God'" Luke 1: 34.

Q: What about hell?

SOC: Jesus warns us against hell in the Sermon on the Mount. "Anyone who calls his brother 'fool' will be in danger of hell fire" Matthew 5: 22. And "every tree that does not bear fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire" Matthew 7: 19. And "...the darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" Matthew 8: 12.

Q: Where is there anything written about the devil?

SOC: The Almighty Lord talks with the devil about Job (Job 1: 6).

Q: And I suppose you believe that human beings also will live after they die in heaven?

SOC: Some, not all. Jesus Himself tells us in Scripture that those who did nothing for the hungry, or the thirsty, or the estranged, or those in need of clothing, or those who were sick or in prison will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous will be invited to "Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world" Matthew 25: 44 - 46.

Q: I think your faith is awesome. Do you *truly* believe every word of the Bible?

SOC: Yes, *every single word!* It is *all* inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Q: What about *tithing*?

SOC: *Tithing?* What about tithing?

Q: It's there also. "A tithe of everything from the land whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees belongs to the Lord. It is holy to the Lord" Leviticus 27: 30.

SOC: That's just *one* place in the Bible.

Q: Not really. "Put the whole tithe into the storehouse" Malachi 3: 10; and "Give to the Levites all the tithes in Israel" Numbers 18: 21; And the last book of the Old Testament warns about robbing God: "'Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me' But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' 'In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse - the whole nation of you - because you are robbing me'" Malachi 3: 8 - 10.

SOC: Well, you know, you can't take *everything* in the Bible literally!

## Twenty Eighth Sunday

Today we have the repeated over and again invitation extended by our heavenly Father out of goodness and benevolence to all mankind to participate in the Great Supper of salvation and bliss. It is thus shown that not only is salvation extended to the Chosen People but to all around us. No one is excluded, just as our husbands or wives, our children and relatives who do not belong to the Body of Christ should have ears to hear this encompassing love of our Creator. Initially, here and now it means we who are communicants of the Body of Christ should by our example and actual invitation, urge and invite our loved ones to join us in the worship of our God, and thus then become communicants of the Body and Bride of Christ, the Church of salvation.

If they like and enjoy our earthly company and relationship, it seems logical they would want it to endure. Likewise if we truly love our husbands, our wives, our children, parents and other relatives here and now, we would naturally want them to be with us, in our actual company when the Lord comes to judge and takes us to himself forever. Otherwise, those who are now on the outside, will forever be on the outside looking in. The seeming joy and actual love we now share will come to an abrupt end and remain that way for all eternity. Will our marriages and family life endure into eternity or do we face the possibility our churchless loved ones will be separated from us in the next world?

We, by our example here and now, by our loving devotion for salvation of souls, must be the lips that explain God's never-ending and irrevocable love for every person created, have to draw them into the orbit of redemption.

This invitation extended over and again, we cannot as his devoted followers accept from our irreligious loved ones a negative response. We must in our daily living pray for the salvation of their souls. We must do all and everything which will deliver them to the altar of salvation, to the banquet of eternal bliss. Simply because someone has had a bad experience with a priest or fellow parishioner in the past does not mean a permanent separation from the Church should occur. We all have had bad experiences with physicians, lawyers, even friends and relatives, but that does not mean we abandon faith in all doctors, all lawyers, all people because of these isolated instances.



The Lord speaks in parable about our heavenly Father and the everlasting good things of his kingdom. Forgiving and forgetting are paramount in God's kingdom. It is to this giftedness the Lord invites us. We are all, with our loved ones, invited to this Great Supper. "Come, because everything is ready". Every thing is ready to save us, to reconcile us, to redeem us, to unite us so that we may heartily eat and be nourished on the food of heaven in one heart, one mind, and one body. God invites all together to save us from the danger of perdition, to the inheritance of the good things of everlasting life. He made all men intelligent and free, in order that they might be able to understand and keep in mind what is in their own interest to pursue for their best advantage. He wishes we all choose his gifts, his company freely in response to his first shown love. We cannot feel compelled or be forced to respond.

By means of right reason and the law of conscience and by means of the formal written invitation in Scripture and precepts of the Church, through his Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, through the witness of the apostles and holy men and women saints, in fact through the entire tradition of the Bride of Christ, our heavenly Father God himself today points out once again what is evil, what is truth, what is self deception what is important and what is to be pursued. When we delude ourselves into emphasizing God's loving eager forgiveness we most usually forget about his justice.

Our Creator God has been busy pointing these truths to us in the work of enlightenment ever since creation. He sent his Son into the world as everlasting and irrevocable witness of his eagerness to save us. The Holy Spirit descended on us to affirm the cause of salvation. We cannot and will not save ourselves. His Son comes among us in the guise of a servant, to serve our need of salvation. We must be saddened that not all who hear wish to conform to his will for our lives. God is ready to save us, but are ready to be saved? Do our husbands, wives, children, parents, loved ones experience the need of salvation in response to God's loving invitation?

"I pray you, excuse my presence" is what the servants of God heard so many times. That kind of prayer is no prayer. That kind of language is offensive to the love offered us by our Maker.

In another instance our Lord announced to his listeners "Now is the day of salvation." Do not put off until tomorrow what ought be done here and now. Do not make yourself unworthy for another time and place. Allow God to use you for the salvation of the souls of your loved ones here, today, now!

There is only  
one sacrifice —  
the SELF-GIVING  
OF CHRIST  
on the cross at  
Calvary.



Live like you will wear the  
crown of Victory!

+++++

God is too wise to  
ever make a mistake  
and too loving to  
ever be unkind. . . .



**HELP  
SOMEONE  
CROSS  
AN IMPORTANT  
THRESHOLD.**

Invite a  
friend to our  
house of worship.





## SCRIPTURE

## TRIVIA



## QUIZ





1. Where did the mayor of Ephesus claim the image of the goddess Diana came from?
2. What took forty six years to build?
3. What did Jesus make and use to drive the money changers from the temple?
4. On what day of the week did St. Mary Magdalene come to the tomb and find the stone rolled away?
5. Where did the foreigner that Jesus said these words to come from, "Didn't I heal ten men?"
6. Which disciple was laying on Jesus' chest at the Mystical Supper?
7. Who is the farmer that sows the choice seed?
8. Of what city did Jesus say, "I wanted to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks... but you wouldn't let me"?
9. Did Jesus openly say He was the Messiah?
10. What did the five foolish bridesmaids fail to carry in their lamps?

### Answers to Trivia Quiz

1. He said it fell down from heaven. Acts of the Apostles 19: 35; 2. The Jerusalem Temple. John 2: 20; 3. A whip. John 2: 15; 4. Sunday, the Day of the Resurrection. John 20: 1; 5. Samaria. Luke 17: 11 - 19; 6. The beloved disciple, St. John the Theologian. John 21: 20; 7. Jesus. Matthew 13: 37; 8. The Jewish capital city, Jerusalem. Matthew 23: 37; 9. Yes! John 4: 26; 10. Oil. Matthew 25: 3.



What you get by  
achieving your goals  
is not as important as  
what you become by  
achieving your goals.





# Did You Know That ...

...many times it is the not clothes on the neighbor's line that are gray and streaked, but our own unwashed windows?

...prayer and faith are powers that can influence the course of history in our parish?

...since Christ founded just one Church, it is wrong to say that 'one religion is as good as another'?

...it is good to be wise and wise to be good?

...if we all did the things we are capable of, we would literally astound ourselves?

...charm is the quality in others that makes us more satisfied with ourselves?

...if you want to avoid traffic, get on the road to success?

...we are seldom able to see an opportunity until it ceased to be one?

...you may not know all the answers, but you probably won't be asked all the questions either?

...our strength is shown in the things that we stand for; our weakness is shown in the things that we fall for?

...worry gives a small thing a big shadow?

...no amount of self-improvement can make up for a lack of self-acceptance?

...we ought pray that the hinges of friendship never grow rusty?

...only those will risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go?

...genius is the ability to reduce the complicated to the simple?

...gratitude is not only the greatest of all the virtues, but the parent of all the others?

...if you want to feel genuinely rich, just count all the things money cannot buy?

as if he were an angel of light. "O most happy soldiers of Christ, valiant warriors in the fight," he said. "Are you now, I ask, about to withdraw from the fight and lay aside the crown? Let them see you as Christian soldiers, sheathed rather in fortitude than in armor of iron." Words of hope poured from his lips.

The scene that followed baffles description. All were moved and they wept. Mark and Marcellian were ashamed of their hesitation. Their parents were convinced; the prisoners also felt a swelling of affection. Zoe knelt before Sebastian with an outstretched arm, but spoke not a word, for her tongue had been paralyzed since the age of six. But Sebastian prayed and she was healed, crying: "Blessed art thou, and blessed is the word of thy mouth, and blessed are they that believe in Christ." When Nicostratus saw the grace of God revealed in the healing, he fell to the feet of Sebastian and offered to unlock everyone's chains. But this they could not consent to.

The effort Sebastian made to strengthen the groups' courage could not long remain a secret and he was denounced to the Emperor. Diocletian sent for him and in a rage said: "What, I have had you around my person, and you conspire against me?" Sebastian answered, "I pray daily for your safety and for the prosperity of the state, to the God in heaven, for I believe no help can be received from gods of stone."

Diocletian ordered him to death by arrows. He was left for dead, but a widow took him and nursed him until he was convalescent. One day, as he began to heal, the Emperor passed. Sebastian crept to greet him. The Emperor was astounded to see him! "I am Sebastian," the saint said, "raised from the dead to witness against you for the persecution of the servants of Christ." The Emperor ordered him beaten to death and the body cast into the sewer.