



Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Sunday of the Holy Fathers

June 1, 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

+++ We have festal anointing today on the occasion of this past week's solemn feast of the Ascension of our Lord. The customary greeting is "Christ Is Among Us" to which we respond, "He Is And Shall Be."

+++ 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.

+++ TODAY, the special offering for flowers for the coming feast of Pentecost, the Birthday of our blessed Church, will take place. Please be generous.

+++ The final All Souls' Day will be celebrated on Saturday at 9:00 AM with Divine Liturgy and Memorial Service. Please join us in prayer and intercession.

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

+++ 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, \$213.00; Candles, \$20.00; Food Coupons, \$320.00; Holyday, \$1.00; Diocesan Dues, \$130.00, for a total of \$684.00. 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, Anna Zacharyczuk, Eleanor Korba, Marilyn Korba and Pani Buletza.

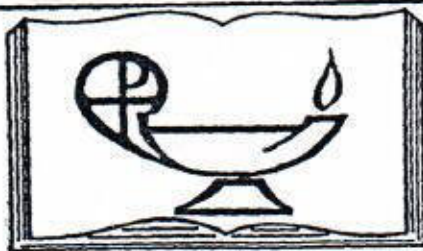
+++ We make a **PENNIES FROM HEAVEN** Canister available for our faithful to bring in pennies for our altar and its appointments. We are already in receipt of **\$1809.00** from this apostolate. Even your pennies can help and are a blessing to our parish.

+++ 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!

+++ 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 an enrichment of our spiritual lives for his glory. May we all be so enriched that this Passion Week is particularly rewarding for each of us, to triumph in Resurrection joy!

LORD



TEACH
US

Eternal Life

There are heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies. The splendor of the heavenly bodies is one thing, that of earthly bodies another. The sun has a splendor of its own, so has the moon and the stars have theirs. Even among the stars one differs from another in brightness. So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown in earth is subject to decay and what rises is incorruptible. What is sown is ignoble, what rises is glorious. Weakness is sown, strength rises up. A natural body is put down and a spiritual body comes up. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. Scripture has it that Adam, the first man became a living soul; the last Adam has become a life-giving spirit. Take note, the spiritual was not first; first came the natural and after that the spiritual. The first man was of earth, formed from dust, the second is from heaven. Earthly men are like the man of earth, heavenly men are like the man of heaven. Just as we resemble the man from earth, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven 1 Corinthians 15: 40 - 49.

He died for us so that we can live with him forever, whether we are dead or alive at the time of his return 1 Thessalonians 5: 10.

This is what I mean, brothers, flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; no more can corruption inherit incorruption. Now I am going to tell you a mystery. Not all of us shall fall asleep, but all of us, are to be changed, in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, at the sound of the last trumpet. The trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised incorruptible and we shall be changed. This corruptible body must be clothed with incorruptibility, the mortal body with immortality. When the corruptible frame takes on incorruptibility and the mortal immortality, then will the saying of Scripture be fulfilled: Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? The sting of death is sin and sin gets its power from the law. But thanks be to God who has given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Be steadfast and persevering my beloved brothers fully engaged in the work of the Lord. You know that your toil is not in vain when it is done in the Lord 1 Corinthians 15: 50 - 58.

In One Lord, Jesus Christ...

The profession of faith, the Creed, is our proclamation of faith in the Holy Trinity. The first part is about faith in God the Father, the source of the unity of the Blessed Trinity. By confessing God as Creator of all that is, we reorient our lives from self-centeredness to God, from selfishness to community. Our faith in God cannot remain theoretical; it must touch and transform our lives.

When we say the Creed, we first establish ourselves on the God who revealed himself to the Hebrew people centuries before the coming in the flesh of Christ. The first part of our Creed corresponds to the uncompromising faith in one God and one God only by the people to whom He revealed himself. This is the one true God who revealed himself to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the one true God who revealed himself to Moses in the burning bush and liberated his people from the captivity of the Egyptian Pharaoh. This is the one true God who frees all of us from the dark power of sin and death. Therefore, the central proclamation of the Jews is, "Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. Therefore, you shall love the Lord, your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength" Deuteronomy 6: 4.

Observe carefully that our faith leads to action, to responsive love of God with our total self. As Christians, we maintain this new orientation of our whole being in our worship. For example, at Matins, we sing, "The Lord is God and has revealed himself to us," and in the Creed we profess, "I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible."

If we believe so clearly in one God, what is the meaning of the Trinity? For the Creed continues, "...and in one Lord Jesus Christ..."

For original Christians, the coming of Jesus was a manifestation of God. This is perhaps most eloquently proclaimed in the first letter of St. John the Theologian, "What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we looked upon and touched with our hands concerns the Lord of life – for the life was made visible, we have seen it and testify to it and proclaim to you

the eternal life that was with the Father and was made visible to us – what we have seen and heard we proclaim now to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; for our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ” 1 John 1: 1 – 3.

The manifestation of Jesus in the world touched and transformed all who heard and saw him. The record of this is found in the Scriptures. Belief in Jesus as Lord, the Son of God and Messiah was compelling to those who knew him and opened themselves to his words. We see this on every page of the New Testament. Jesus is God’s Word revealing itself to us, and through him, God becomes more immediately present to us.

At the Mystical Supper, the Apostle Philip asks, “Master, show us the Father,” and Jesus replied, “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father...do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me” John 14: 8 – 10?

The Resurrection of Jesus is the confirmation of this quite plain manifestation of God, as when he touched the wound in the glorified body of Jesus, the apostle Thomas made his profession of faith, “My Lord and my God” John 20: 28.

The meaning of the Trinity, then, is God revealing himself to us more clearly and emphatically. As the gospel professes, “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish, but have life everlasting” John 3: 16.

Our God reveals himself in Trinity for the sake of our lives. “I come,” Jesus tells us, “that they might have life and have it more abundantly” John 10: 10.

The hallmark of a Christian, then, is faith in Jesus Christ as Lord, a title that in his time was equivalent to “God.” St. John the Theologian therefore writes, “This is how you can know the Spirit of God, every spirit that acknowledges Jesus Christ come in the flesh belongs to God...whoever acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God remains in him, and he in God” 1 John 4: 2, 15.

This is the faith of all who were touched by Christ. The letters of St. Paul tell us, "...there is one God, the Father from whom all things are and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things are and through whom we exist" 1 Corinthians 8: 6. The two titles, "God" and "Lord," are exactly equivalent here, for in the Father and through Jesus Christ, we have our very existence.

St. Paul further confesses, "At the name of Jesus, every knee should bend in worship, for those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father" Philippians 2: 10, 11.

Because Jesus is God and Lord, St. Matthew tells us that those who come to faith are to be baptized "...in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit..." Matthew 28: 19. To be a Christian is to proclaim Jesus as Lord, as the Fathers gathered at the Council of Nicea in the year 325 knew well, and continued our profession of faith in the one God in Trinity, "And I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ..."

This is our blessed faith for always. When we come to the Divine Liturgy, we are to be appropriately spiritually disposed and prepared to receive Holy Communion, the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sin and life everlasting. For us to touch Jesus now is to transform our lives. We are made an entirely new people, both as individuals and as communicants and members of the faith community, truly as communicants of the grace of God, the Church which is the Body of Christ, which St. Paul identifies, "He has put all things under Christ's feet and has made him, thus exalted, head of the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills the universe in all its parts" Ephesians 1: 22, 23.

Before receiving Communion, we profess our faith by recitation of the Creed and in the hymns sung just before Communion, based on St. Paul's profession, "One is holy, one is Lord, Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father, Amen" Philippians 2: 11.

This does not and cannot remain simply a matter of verbal words or expression, for we are to depart from the parish church "...in the name of the Lord," and as a people alive in Christ the Giver of life, are now to treat one another as loved by God

and created in the image of God. This revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments...I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you should also love one another" John 14: 15; 13: 34.

The second portion of the Symbol of faith proclaims we believe in Jesus Christ as our Lord and inspires us to recall the historical circumstances in which the Creed was written and composed. The coming of Jesus into the world had a shattering and transforming impact on every one He encountered. Our lives were washed away, and those who acknowledged Jesus became a new people, as St. Peter's epistle expresses it, "...a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own" 1 Peter 2: 9. No one could come into Christ's presence and not be changed. Like St. Thomas, who touched the wounds of the risen and triumphant Christ, we have to confess before Christ, "My Lord and my God" John 20: 28.

To refuse to respond in full faith commitment means that Jesus had to be rejected completely and entirely and so the leaders of the people who could not accept this challenge to their authority, had him executed. Yet his very death shattered the gates of death, and won a cosmic victory over sin and dreaded death.

At first this faith spread slowly among a minority like the mustard seeds mentioned in the gospels. By the year 200, there may have been some 200,000 Christians in an empire of 60 million people. The gospel, however, spreading by word of mouth, by a people who had been transformed and ardently believed, suddenly reached a crucial point and grew exponentially. By the time of the Council of Nicea, there were more than six million Christians.

At this crucial point in time, the Emperor himself, Constantine, found faith in Christ. The situation of the Christian Church changed dramatically. All along, St. Thomas' profession, Jesus as "Lord and God," had been alive in the minds and souls, on the lips and in the mouths of believers, but now, 300 years after his life, a challenge was raised against this belief. A priest in Egypt named Arius began to teach that Jesus was not equal to the Father and was created by him who is the one true God.

In the year 325, the Church met in a general Council in the city of Nicea to consider this teaching and its implications for our faith. The central decision of the Council

was clearly expressed that Jesus is the Lord; He is equal to the Father and one in essence with him. As a result of this Council, Arius himself was branded as arch-heretic, the divider of the faith of the Church, the man of false faith who misrepresented Jesus our Lord.

Christians always experienced the presence of Jesus as both God and man, but this experience was not easy to express in words. The teaching of Nicea continued to be under discussion and about a hundred and twenty five years later, another general Council, in the city of Chalcedon in the year 451, more clearly explained, "We all with one voice teach the confession of one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, the same truly God and truly man, of a rational soul and body, one in essence with the Father as regards his divinity and the same one in essence with us as regards his humanity; like us in all respects except sin."

Even then the Council of Chalcedon did not achieve the desired unity, though perhaps more for political reasons than for reasons of genuine faith.

We must understand, therefore, that the Creed is of fundamental importance to our spiritual life. It tells us who Jesus is, and only in true faith is it possible to be united with him for our salvation.

In this world, as human beings, we live within the limits of space and time. We confess Jesus as our God, but the divine nature in itself is beyond our power of comprehension. We know God only insofar as He reveals himself to us, as St. John wrote in his gospel, "No one has ever seen God. The only Son, God, who is at the side of the Father, has revealed him" John 1: 18.

This, indeed, is how we believe in Jesus, who is the Messiah, the Christ: He is God revealing himself to us. In Jesus, we see the infinite mercy and love of God for us; his creatures. We catch a glimpse of him in whose image we have been made, and who is deifying us, making us like himself. When we accept Jesus as Lord and God, then the mystery of the Holy Trinity is revealed to us. We affirm with the tradition of the Church from the beginning, that there is one and only one God, and one and only one divine nature, but we now see that He is three persons, in a mystery beyond our understanding, for we can never grasp the nature of God.

Christ, as God, is Son of God by nature, while we become children of God by grace, by his action of adoption, possible only because He has made us in his image. Moreover, even though the Son and Word of God took and assumed human nature, the divine nature remains unchanged because God cannot change in any sense that we can conceive, and unmixed or unconfused with human nature. These are the words the Church uses in its teaching. The Son and Word of God is always "true God from true God" beyond our power of understanding these truly inexplicable eternal values.

The Creed presents us with this faith, which powerfully transforms our lives. We also profess Jesus to be truly human like us in every way, but without human sinfulness. This means that He lacks nothing of what it means to be truly human except that He reveals to us perfect humanity, complete in the image and likeness of God, as the Creator has intended from the very beginning.

We affirm likewise that Jesus is one person. By becoming a human being, He does not split into two persons, for this would destroy the unity of the Incarnation and would mean that God still did not touch us and reach us entirely. As a human being, however He has a human soul, a human will, a human body, and all attributes that make us human, as the Council of Chalcedon says, "On in essence with us as regards our humanity." Assuming our nature completely, He deifies it, makes it God-like and saves it completely and totally by elevating it to himself.

This mystery is difficult for us to comprehend. Jesus is our brother in humanity, not the divine nature rattling around in a human body, which is the heresy of Apollinarius. As we continue to prayerfully explore the Creed we must always be mindful of this balance that Jesus is perfectly divine as He is perfectly human and unity of his natures is not added to or detracted from by the other.

Indeed, as we express our faith in worship, particularly in the morning office of Matins, when we sing, exalt and extol in the words of the poetic Psalms, "The Lord is God and has revealed himself to us" Psalms 117: 28.

WISDOM! BE ATTENTIVE

Angelic powers descended to your grave, and the guards fell down and appeared dead. Mary came to the grave seeking your most pure body. You conquered and despoiled the Abyss without being touched by it. You, the Giver of Life, met the Virgin, O Lord, risen from the dead; glory to You! Troparion, Sunday of the Fathers of the First Council.

You ascended in glory, O Christ, our God, and delighted the disciples with the promise of the Holy Spirit. Through this blessing, they were assured that you are the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world Troparion, Feast of the Ascension of our Lord.

O Christ, God, You are above all praise, for you established our fathers O Christ our God. You delighted the disciples as lights to all on earth. You led us all to true faith through them. O most bountiful Lord, glory to you! Troparion, Sunday of the Fathers of the First Council.

The preaching of the apostles and the decisions of the fathers have established the true faith of the Church which she wears as the garment of truth fashioned from the theology from on high; she justly governs and glorifies the great mystery of worship Kontakion, Sunday of the Fathers of the First Council.

When you fulfilled the plan of salvation for us and united all things on earth to those in heaven, Christ our God, you ascended in glory, never leaving us, but remaining ever-present. For you proclaimed to those who love you: 'I am with you, and no one else has power over you' Kontakion, Feast of the Ascension of our Lord.

Blessed are you, and praiseworthy, O Lord, God of our fathers; glorious forever is your name! Prokimenon, Sunday of the Fathers of the First Council.

Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise him in the highest. Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia! Communion Hymn, Sunday of the Fathers of the First Council.

Sunday of the Holy Fathers

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. By their fruits you will know them Matthew 7: 15, 16.

Concluding this Resurrection celebratory cycle, just prior to the Descent of the Holy Spirit, our blessed Church calls to mind for us the Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council because they established the norm, they organized the thinking and spiritual life of the Body of Christ, they gave form to the vehicle of salvation; they established its parameters and give witness to its holiness and divine inspiration. They showed the presence of the Holy Spirit in its life and identified it as a hierarchal and consiliar body.

On the contrary, however, and using the metaphor of a *wolf in sheep's clothing*, it is easy to conceive what ravages such a wild beast could inflict on a flock of innocent sheep. In applying the metaphor to false prophets, our Lord called them ravenous wolves who can by deception insinuate themselves into the trust of an unsuspecting audience.

Our Lord does not give us the criterion by which we may distinguish the true teaching, true doctrine from the false by the character of the teacher. The character of the person is not necessarily reflected in the true doctrine he preaches. This would make the divine element of the Church dependent on the human nature of man. There are priests who teach the truth while interiorly they are scoundrels. On the other hand, a preacher maybe blameless in his personal life and teach outright heresy. The history of our blessed Church makes sad reading with the scandals of those who are appointed to lead it.

The Fathers of the first Council provided a good example for leaders in the Church to emulate because they repudiated false teaching which is heresy. Heresy is the formal denial or doubt of any revealed truth of Christian faith. All the councils of the Church, ecumenical and local, were assembled to expunge and repudiate many major heresies and abuses that some attempted to introduce into Christianity by false prophets. They maintained by their sincere witness the pristine purity of the faith of Christ. Kooks out of the shadows appeared to offer personal insights and interpretation that included the denial of the very nature of God himself. People today, such as the weird Mormons believe in Almighty God, a Father who is so much like us that he even has a wife which they do not care to talk too much about

because it is not that important in our relationship with him. What quaint grandmotherly tales some like to tell and accept as divine truth!

Being religious is necessary and vital, but its practice is only a means to an end. The end is ordained for the sanctification of the nature of man. If this religious profession and living is not effective, it is only because of the interior disposition of the person. "Every good tree bears good fruit," our Lord teaches, "but the bad tree bears bad fruit" Matthew 7: 17, 18. The nature of the fruit certifies the nature of the tree. The thornbush bears only thorns and thistles. The analogy is that the real moral nature of a person is not manifested by the routine observance of religious profession, but by the interior attitude and disposition which forms the basis of God's judgment.

Today all people nowadays claim they can believe whatever they wish about religion and its expression and practice, it is false to assert there is no difference between religious truth and falsehood. Our Christian faith is a revealed truth which is given us by Christ and confided to the care of his Body and Bride, our beloved Church. Jesus commissioned the Church to continue teaching his divine message of good news to the world of every age. "He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned" Mark 16: 16.

Obviously it is not true our heavenly Father does not care what people believe or disbelieve, accept or renounce. This is because God himself is infinite truth. Without the Church and her divinely guaranteed teaching authority, no person could have certitude about what he or she must believe and live in order to be saved. Religious profession and belief can never degenerate to a matter of mere personal opinion, based on one's personal whims, limitations and prejudices as well as distortions. This in this nation because of the onslaught of Islam and Communism abroad in so many of our homelands has degenerated true expression of our faith. The superficiality of so much we do and faithfully believe to be authentic is a big waste of time while the actual truth is disregarded and repudiated by our lifestyle practice. There is such a great disparity between the purity of Orthodox theory and the repugnance of Orthodox practice in this country that great confusion is the result to the great satisfaction of the devil, of course.

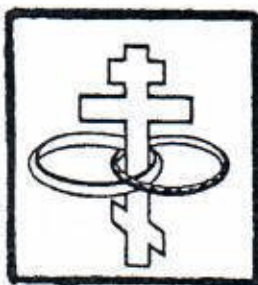
So, the death knell of American Protestantism is sounded by its ignominious approach to Christ which resembles so much the plague that wished to overcome the early Church, Gnosticism. It was fed on and propelled by an inner understanding that God speaks directly to particular individuals and provides them an insight about himself which most others cannot grasp nor understand. They consider themselves spiritually and intellectually elite, chosen by the Almighty. This kind of thinking later led Presbyterians to espouse the nutty theory of predestination.

Nowhere in revelation does our heavenly Father specify each individual is free to be his own judge of revealed truth. We have here in America over two thousand different sects, all claiming to be Christian, to base their teaching on the Bible, each differing from the others in important matters. Christ could never have intended such a mismosh of nonsense. Even in the beginning, St. Peter warned of the unreliability of private and individual interpretation of God's revelation to us in Scripture. "There are certain things that are difficult to understand, which the unlearned and the unstable distort, just as they do the rest of Scripture also, to their own destruction" Peter 3: 16.

Does an Orthodox Christian have a right to dissent from the teaching of the Church? Absolutely not in faith and morals. We must accept, believe and live what bishops in council explained to be the truth. Christ does not force anyone or coerce anyone to follow him, but no one has the power to formulate his own brand of religious faith because this is a prerogative that belongs to God alone. The role of the church and its bishops, priests and deacons is to defend the integrity of the faith and sadly in this country we are not doing our job. We are faithful to the liturgical tradition in most instances, but we are not teaching nor preaching the truth of Christ because in so many instances our parishioners have come to believe nonsensical protestant sectarianism about the sacramental Mysteries and we do not challenge them to leave behind their cherished delusions and follow after Christ. The very idea of a parish faith community has been abandoned because the idea of a secular ethnic club has greater appeal. It is not that we are afflicted with false prophets so much, but our bishops, priests and deacons have no backbone, no genuine and zealous faith to war with parish politicians and count on the grace of the Holy Spirit to overcome the sadly bemused people in the pews.

So, today we are called upon to pray and witness, to translate our faith to rich daily living because we will all be accountable to the Lord. Individual members of the Church, bishops, priests, deacons, individually believers, are all human beings, capable of sin and error. The same was true even of the twelve apostles. Judas was one of them and he betrayed the Master. St. Peter denied him three times. St. Thomas was looking for signs in his time. Nonetheless, on the foundation of these frail apostles Christ established his Church, shared with it authority to teach in his name and promised it would endure and last "even to the consummation of the world" Matthew 28: 20.





WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

The Byzantine Fathers of the Church were wont to emphasize how ancient and how venerable marriage is in the sight of our God because it was established yet in paradise before the fall of Adam and Eve and brought to blessed perfection by Christ in Cana of Galilee. Its grace survived the sin of our first parents and it remains a sign of the presence of the Holy Trinity in our midst. It is a living symbol of the deep and abiding love between Christ and His Bride, our blessed Church. It is characterized in the liturgical life of the Church as a happy martyrdom. And it is precisely for this reason the sacramental Mystery of Marriage is such a joyous event. On the third Sunday of this month, we honor those of our good parishioners who observe their marriage anniversaries this month. They are specially remembered in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy and subsequently receive an individual and personal blessing of the Lord at its conclusion. Celebrating this month are:

JUNE 13 Father Robert E & Pani Marlene Lucas

We gratefully give thanks to the Blessed Trinity for having guided and strengthened the marriages of these believers, and their cooperation with sacramental grace to remain faithful to one another over the years. Like all who are faithful to Christ, they recognize the presence and necessity of the Holy Spirit not only in the marriage, but in subsequent family life as well. As we praise our God for their witness in our midst, let us also join them with our prayers and thanksgiving before the throne of the Lord. May they continue to praise His Holy Name by their love and devotion to one another for

Many and Blessed Years



Birthday
Wishes!

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 gather together and offer thanks 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 this month:

June 4 Alexander Lucas Choti

June 5 Mary Demyan

June 15 Miguel Garcia

June 18 Sophia Rose Choti

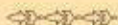
June 22 Kyle Pasquino

June 26 Nadya Alexandra Choti

June 29 Angeliki Tsokris

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 personal 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 resounds that the Lord our God will continue to bless them for

Many and Blessed Years!



GONE . . . BUT NOT DEPARTED



Now is the time our Holy Church celebrates the FINAL event in our Lord's earthly journey: HIS ASCENSION INTO HEAVEN. The Gospels paint a simple, but beautiful picture of this miraculous happening. However, it does leave us yearning for an answer to one question: WHY DID THE LORD LEAVE? Why didn't He remain with His disciples?

1) Jesus ascended because His work on earth had been completed. He had come to save the lost. That work of salvation was done. Just as a worker completing his shift returns home, so now Christ, His work of saving mankind having been accomplished, returned home to His Father.

2) Christ ascended so that He could send the Holy Spirit. The Lord did not leave the Church orphaned. The Holy Spirit soon came to take up His dwelling within those who believed in the Resurrected Savior. It was foretold at the Last Supper.

3) The Lord ascended to prepare a place

for us. The night before giving up His Life, Jesus said to His followers: "I go to prepare a place for you. And I will come again and will take you to Myself, so that where I am you may also be."

4) Christ ascended to take His place at the Right Hand of the Father. The symbolic language in our Creed proclaims that the Lord is in a position to intercede for us before the Father.

5) Jesus ascended into Heaven to prepare for His glorious return on the Last Day of reckoning. Once again, our Creed puts it quite succinctly: "And He shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead." Once He came in all humility -- now He shall come in all His glory.

As we relive the Ascension once more, may we join with the Apostles and rejoice at the "HOME-GOING" of our Lord. May God grant that, one day, we may be united with Him there.