



# Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Sunday of the Blind Man

June 9, 2013

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 will honor the elementary and high school graduates on Sunday, June 23. Please be with us for this celebration.

+++ This Thursday is the solemn feast of the Ascension of our Lord, concluding the Resurrection celebration. In anticipation, the Divine Liturgy will be celebrated Wednesday evening at 7: 30 PM. Please join us in prayer and praise.

+++ Please keep the intentions of these members of our parish intercession community in your daily prayers: Anna, Ryan, Betty, Mary, Beth, Ann Helene, Delores, Debra and Michael.

+++ The last All Souls' Commemoration will be celebrated on Saturday, June 22 at 9:00 AM. Please plan on joining us as we pray once again for the repose of our beloved departed souls.

+++ We have left-over Pirohi from last week's sale. If anyone wants them we can provide them as several orders were cancelled and not picked up.

+++ 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: Tithing Offering, \$328.00; Candles, \$18.00; Food Coupons, \$160.00; Pennies from Heaven, \$7.00; Kitchen, \$2904.00, for a total of \$3417.00. 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! The attendance was 44 adults and 13 children last Sunday.

+++ As faithful believers, we intercede and associate ourselves in prayer with the following who have prayed and offered seven day lights for their intentions: Father Lucas, Pani Lucas, Anna Zacharyczuk, Debra Szmaida, Eleanor Korba, Michael Douglas, Robert Gorbich, Maria Garcia and Pani Buletza.

+++ We make a PENNIES FROM HEAVEN Canister available for our faithful to bring in pennies for our altar and its appointments. We are already in receipt of \$1694.00 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 \$5550.00 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.

+++ Please pray the Lord our God grants us an enrichment of our spiritual lives for his glory.

+++ May all glory, adoration and worship be accorded our God in the Holy Trinity by all the faithful of our parish with one mind, one soul and one heart each day of the week!



## Doctrine

*Hear, O children, a fathers instruction, be attentive, that you may gain understanding! Yes, excellent doctrine I give you; my teaching do not forsake Proverbs 4: 1, 2.*

*...you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, reared in the words of faith and the sound doctrine you have faithfully followed 1 Timothy 4: 6.*

*Give ear, O heavens, while I speak, let the earth listen to the words of my mouth! May my doctrine soak in like the rain and my discourse permeate like the dew, like a down pour on the grass, like a shower upon the crops Deuteronomy 32: 1, 2*

*Shall you say, 'My teaching is pure, and I am clean in your sight?' But, oh, that God would speak, and open his lips against you, and tell you that the secrets of wisdom are twice as effective; so you might learn that God will make you answer for your guilt. Can you penetrate the designs of God? Dare you vie with the perfection of the Almighty? It is higher than the heavens; what can you do? It is deeper than the nether world; what can you know?...For he knows the worthlessness of man; will he then ignore it Job 11: 4 - 8, 11?*

*We know the law is good, provided one uses it in the way law is supposed to be used, that is, with the understanding that it is aimed, not at good men, but at the lawless and unruly, the irreligious and the sinful, the wicked and the godless, men who flout sound doctrine that pertains to the glorious gospel of God.... 1 Timothy 1: 8, 9, 11.*

*In his teaching, he must hold fast to the authentic message, so that he will be able both to encourage men to follow sound doctrine and refute those who contradict it Titus 1: 9.*

## ASCENSION THURSDAY



Jesus did not live with his disciples after his resurrection as he had before his death. Filled with the glory of his divinity, he appeared at different times and places to his people, assuring them that it was he, truly alive in his risen and glorified body.

To them he presented himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days, and speaking of the Kingdom of God (Acts 1:3).

It should be noted that the time span of forty days is used many times in the Bible and signifies a temporal period of completeness and sufficiency (Gen 7:17; Ex 16:35, 24:18; Judg 3:11; 1 Sam 17:16; 1 Kg 19:8; Jon 3:4; Mt 4:2). On the fortieth day after his passover, Jesus ascended into heaven to be glorified on the right hand of God (Acts 1:9-11; Mk 16:19; Lk 24:51). The ascension of Christ is his final physical departure from this world after the resurrection. It is the formal completion of his mission in this world as the Messianic Savior. It is his glorious return to the Father who had sent him into the world to accomplish the work that he had given him to do (Jn 17:4-5).

... and lifting his hands he blessed them. While blessing them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And they returned to Jerusalem with great joy. ... (Lk 24:51-52).

The Church's celebration of the Ascension, as all such festal celebrations, is not merely the remembrance of an event in Christ's life. Indeed, the ascension itself is not to be understood as though it were simply the supernatural event of a man floating up and away into the skies. The holy scripture stresses Christ's physical departure and his glorification with God the Father, together with the great joy which his disciples had as they received the promise of the Holy Spirit who was to come to assure the Lord's presence with them, enabling them to be his witnesses to the ends of earth (Lk 24:48-53; Acts 1:8-11; Mt 28:20; Mk 16:16-14).

In the Church the believers in Christ celebrate these very same realities with the conviction that it is for them and for all men that Christ's departure from this world has

taken place. The Lord leaves in order to be glorified with God the Father and to glorify us with himself. He goes in order to "prepare a place" for and to take us also into the blessedness of God's presence. He goes to open the way for all flesh into the "heavenly sanctuary ... the Holy Place not made by hands" (see Hebrews 8-10). He goes in order to send the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father to bear witness to him and his gospel in the world, making him powerfully present in the lives of disciples.

The liturgical hymns of the feast of the Ascension sing of all of these things. The antiphonal verses of the Divine Liturgy are taken from Psalms 47, 48, and 49. The Troparion of the feast, which is sung at the small entrance, is also used as the post communion hymn.

You ascended in glory, O Christ our God; \* You 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) When You fulfilled the plan of salvation for us \* and united all things on earth to those in heaven, O 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)



### **Inspired by Christ's Presence In Our Soul**

**I am convinced that my life belongs to the whole community.  
As long as I live, it is my privilege to do for it what I can,  
for the harder I work, the more I live.  
Life is not a brief candle for me.  
It is a sort of splendid torch,  
which I am privileged to have gotten hold of  
for a moment and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible  
before turning it over to the next generation.**

**George Bernard Shaw**

## ONE GOD

The Syrian theologian known as Dionysius begins his treatise, *On Mystical Theology*, with an invocation of the Holy Trinity. "Trinity! Higher than any being, any divinity, any goodness! Guide of Christians in the wisdom of heaven!"

"Salvation is from the Jews," our Lord taught us, (John 4: 22, and Christians, in their heritage believe in one God. Faith in the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – does not weaken that fundamental faith, but instead strengthens it. In the Triune God, we see that God is truly relationship, and that it is through the Trinity that we can become one in God, united with him and with one another as an essential part of our being.

That is the meaning of Jesus' prayer for his followers, "Holy Father, keep them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one just as we are one" John 17: 11.

If God is not Trinity, then we remain alone, lonely individual units, and relationship with one another is a sign of separation from God. To know God as Trinity, however, is not natural to us; it can be grasped only through heavenly revelation. It was revealed to us by Christ because it is an essential part of our salvation through deification. The Father is the Father of the Son and the Spirit proceeds from him. It could not be otherwise, or even thought otherwise, for God simply is, and Jesus instructs Phillip, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father...I am in the Father and the Father is in me" John 14: 9, 10. As God is, so is reality.

In his prayer, for us just before his arrest, Jesus prays in the name of God. Jesus equates his name with God, "...until now you have not asked anything in my name; ask and you shall receive, so that your joy may be complete" John 16: 24.

When the Church celebrates the Resurrection, there is a prayer at Matins that rejoices in the name of God. "Having beheld the Resurrection of Christ...we call on you by name." Yet the name of God is a part of his never-ending mystery.

Dionysius begins his work, *The Divine Names*, "Mind beyond mind, word beyond speech, it, the Supreme Being is gathered up by no discourse, by no intuition, by no name...we must not dare to apply words or conceptions to this hidden transcendent God. We can only use what Scripture has disclosed."

When God appeared to Moses, the prophet was concerned with God's identity. He said, "When I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' if they ask me 'What is his name, what am I to tell them?' God replied 'I am who am,'" Exodus 3: 13.

This mysterious encounter is both revealing and beyond human understanding. God does not respond with and give Moses a name such as creatures have, and affirms instead his true being as the incomprehensible ground of all that is. The Israelites took it as the name of God and revered it to the point of never saying it, but replacing it with "Lord" – "*Adonai*" wherever it appears in their prayer of Scripture.

This is one aspect of the mystery as St. John affirms, "No one has ever seen God," adding, "The only Son, God, who is at the Father's side, has revealed him" John 1: 18; 1 John 4: 12.

The Christian believer, dares to speak the name of God. In the Divine Liturgy, we begin the Anaphora of St. Basil the Great, by invoking God's Name revealed to Moses, "the one who is." At the end of Vespers and Matins, we also call Christ by the Name of God, "Blessed is Christ our God, the "one who is."

The prayer at Matins after the gospel lesson says, "...we call you by name." A relationship of intimacy with God is a part of faith in Christ, through whom the one God has revealed himself as Trinity. "As proof that you are children, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father'" Galatians 4: 6.

God's name indicates that he is the Creator, the source of all being, that in him, "...we live and move and have our being" Acts of the Apostles 17: 28.

As we are made in God's image, we also have names, but these are individual, not universal as is the name of God. God also calls us by name, since he is at the very center of our being. He is closer to us that we are to ourselves, and he knows us better than we know ourselves.

The kind of society in which we live puts the accent on our individuality. Because in the one God, we find relationship and community and unity with him and one another, the world cannot understand God. The result is that it tries to make God comprehensible to its most limited superficial self as one person among others, or if there is no faith in a personal God, one object among others.

This can be seen in how the media handles stories of God. In one of the Star-Trek movies (V: the Final Frontier), the characters believe that God may possibly be found in the center of the Galaxy as if he had an address in the universe, somewhat like when the Russian cosmonauts decades ago entered space



and proudly proclaimed, they could not see or discover God there. Of course the being was not God, but any theologian could have saved them the trip and light-headed speculation.

In another instance of George Burns as God movies series, God is again depicted as one individual among others, many others, who wants humans to act on their own and enjoys being with animals more than humans. In a more recent portrayal of God, the movie, "Bruce Almighty," God transfers his powers to a human being, as if he is another individual. Consequently, present day man has entirely no understanding of who God is, nor that He is entirely unique and beyond human comprehension and understanding. Because man today does not feel comfortable unless he grasps entirely, or thinks he grasps entirely the essence of God, we often reduce him to our own limited misunderstanding.

For our culture today, it is as if we could make line-up and put God as one individual among others: George Bush for the Hollywood enamored, Roger Clemens for the sports-minded, Mother Teresa for those with somewhat of a spiritual disposition, God himself, Brad Pitt, for the hedonists, Mom, for the respectable, the priest Robert, for those who would really like to know the Creator as one of themselves, and many others. This is "bogus" thinking because our God is not one among others, but God is one, uniquely and entirely all His own, not like anything or anyone else in the world or out of it.

Therefore, when we profess "I believe in one God," we mean that God is the Uncreated One in whom all creatures are brought into being. He is totally present to us and without him we would have no existence, as St. John affirms for us, "All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be" John 1: 3.

He has revealed himself to us and has spoken to us. He is completely other (holy) and completely present (immanent) and beyond our ability to understand and grasp (incomprehensible).

Our faith is in the one God. Through revelation we come to a deeper knowledge of who God is and any knowledge of God cannot remain simply theoretical, for every contact with God not only transforms, but elevates us.



## God First

The practice of our precious faith is possible only if we are committed to the Lord above all else. If He is not our sole Objective and Goal in life, we struggle by serving two masters, serving neither in the end. "No man can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other or be attentive to one and despise the other" Matthew 6: 24. Before there can be genuine faith commitment to Christ, the believer must recognize himself as separated from the values of the enticing world. That is why the Lord teaches, "Do not suppose my mission on earth is to spread peace. My mission is to spread, not peace, but division. I have come to set a man at odds with his father, a daughter with her mother, a daughter-in-law with her mother-in-law, in short, to make a man's enemies those of his own household. Whoever loves father or mother, son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. He who seeks only himself brings himself to ruin" Matthew 10: 34 - 39. This describes a man named Sam who did some good for the Lord even though he wasn't conscious of it. He would not do anything for God on his own, so God used him as the unwitting instrument, the sword which as the Russian author puts it, separated dead souls, faithless people, from the believing community so followers of Christ would not be contaminated. When his evil work was done, the parish priest acknowledged his necessary contribution to the faith community and dismissed him from the parish.

There are people in the church with their own agendas which are contrary to the teaching of Christ. Fulfilling their deluded political fantasies is far more important to them than salvation of their soul. Instead of heaven, the Lord grants them their wishes, "They already have their reward." Matthew 6: 2. "Even now the ax is laid to the root of the tree. Every tree not fruitful is cut down and thrown in the fire" Matthew 3: 10. "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and live it" Luke 8: 21.

"...they came across a Jewish magician named Bar Jésus who posed as a prophet...Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit; he stared at him and exclaimed: 'You are an imposter and a thoroughgoing fraud, you son of Satan and enemy of all that is right! Will you never stop trying to make crooked the straight paths of the Lord? The Lord's hand is upon you now! For a time you shall be blind, unable so much as to see the sun'" Acts of the Apostles 13: 6, 9 - 11.

"Do you still not see or comprehend? Are your minds completely blinded? Have you eyes but no sight? Ears, but no hearing?...He said to them again, 'Do you still not understand?'" Mark 8: 17, 18, 21.

"The time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine, but following their own desires, will surround themselves with teachers who tickle their ears. They will stop listening to the truth and will wander off to fables." 2 Timothy 4: 3, 4.

# Did You Know That ...

...it is only the very guilty who insist no one should judge their behavior?

...our society is telling conservative folks they are of lesser mind and do not count?

...there are some among us who are determined to spread a false vision of America and its people, to our detriment?

...some fools think because they can say something negative about others, they should do it?

...short of coercion it is literally impossible for the government or any outside force to change dysfunctional behavior or make good choices for individuals?

...the willingness to hold some in society to a lower standard itself smacks of discrimination?

...the condescension of accepting lower standards for some signifies their assumed inferiority?

...those who support the idea of free speech except when it gets in the way of something considered even more sacred?

...there is not much of a future for civil liberties when progressive students at elite colleges display an ignorance of basic American values that you might expect from junior high school kids who have never had a civics course?

...the person who chooses not to read is just as ignorant but far more unfortunate the one who cannot read?

...the danger of higher education sometimes encourages idiocy which poisons both the mind and soul of many impressionable young students?

...as good guys do not always do the right thing, so fools do not always do bad or evil things?

...many public figures in our country have made the world safe for emotion masquerading as profound thought?

...if we are intellectually honest and morally consistent, when genuine intolerance rears its ugly head, we should call it what it is?

## AN "ICON" IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS

**J**ust like a picture, an icon can capture the essence of a moment with greater clarity than the written word. It can teach a story instantly. Today we turn our attention to the icon of the FEAST DAY OF THE ASCENSION. If we look at the Book of Acts 1:1-12, we see that the iconic depiction of the holy day carefully follows this scriptural account. The main focus of the icon is Christ Himself, Who was taken up into heaven as His Apostles watched. He is shown in such a way that it is impossible to determine whether He is LEAVING the earth or RETURNING to it, giving credence to the words spoken by the angels that appeared soon after He ascended: "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus Who was taken up from you into heaven will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven." (Acts 1:11) The Mother of God is also shown prominently in the Ascension icon. Church Tradition tells us that she was present for this joyous event, as well as for the Feast Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles. While the Apostles seem to be confused and perplexed by what they have just witnessed, the Theotokos wears an expression of peace on her face, fully comprehending the deep mysteries of her Son's Birth, Death, Resurrection and Ascension. Unlike the Apostles, she is not looking upward into the sky, but rather towards us in prayerful serenity. Note also that the Apostles are depicted without halos, a further symbol of their continued lack of understanding of the moment.

The icon of the Ascension certainly expresses the concept of Christ reigning over His Church as His followers embark on His Command to "go and teach all nations."