



WE CELEBRATE  
OUR GRADUATES



# Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Descent of the Holy Spirit

June 23, 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 honor the elementary and high school graduates today in prayer for their intentions and our good example. We pray the Lord continues to bless them in their adult lives with good health, with health of soul for Many and Blessed Years ! Happy and blessed celebration with your beloved families, dear graduates!

+++ Today we have festal anointing on the occasion of this glorious feast of the Descent of the Holy Spirit. The customary greeting is "Christ Is Among Us!" to which we respond, "He Is And Shall Be!"

+++ Tomorrow is the simple feast of the Holy Spirit. The Divine Liturgy will be celebrated at 7: 30 PM. Please come and join us in prayer and praise.

+++ Due to the glorious Descent of the Holy Spirit, the Church celebrates triumphantly and there is no fasting this coming week!

+++ This Saturday is the solemn feast of the Prime Apostles, SS. Peter & Paul. The vesperal Divine Liturgy will be celebrated Friday evening at 7: 30 PM. Please come and join us in prayer on our parish patronal feast.

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

+++ 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.

+++ Next Sunday at 9:15 AM we will celebrate a Memorial Service for the repose of the soul of one of our past spiritual shepherds, +Father Charles Lehman who recently entered eternity. We pray our gracious Lord will comfort his family in their loss and grant blessed repose and create for him Eternal Memory!

+++ 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, \$199.00; Candles, \$11.00; Kitchen, \$14.00; Flowers, \$41.00, for a total of \$266.00. 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.

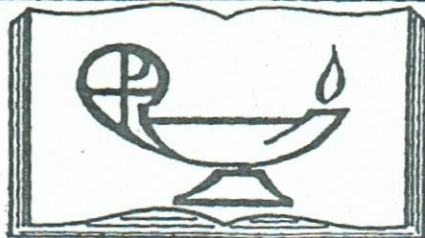
+++ As faithful believers, we intercede and associate ourselves in prayer with the following who have prayed and offered seven day lights for their intentions: Father Lucas, Pani Lucas, Anna Zacharyczuk, Debra Szmaida, Eleanor Korba, Michael Douglas, Robert Gorbich, Maria Garcia and Pani Buletza.

+++ 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.

LORD



TEACH  
US

## The Spirit of God

*He came to the temple inspired by the Spirit... Luke 2: 27.*

*“When you see the Spirit descend and rest on someone, it is he who is to baptize with the Holy Spirit. Now I have seen for myself and have testified, ‘This is God’s chosen One.’ John 1: 31.*

*For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God; he does not ration this gift of the spirit John 3: 34.*

*Yet and hour is coming, and is already here, when authentic worshippers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth. Indeed it is just such worshippers the Father seeks. God is Spirit and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and truth John 4: 23, 24.*

*All were filled with the Holy Spirit. They began to express themselves in foreign tongues, and make bold proclamations as the Spirit prompted them Acts of the Apostles 2: 4.*

*Peter was still pondering the vision when the Spirit said to him... Acts of the Apostles 10: 19.*

*...but was made Son of God in power, according to the Spirit of holiness Romans 1: 4.*

*There is no condemnation now for those who are in Christ Jesus. The law of the spirit, the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed you from the law of sin and death...so that the just demands of the law might be fulfilled in us who live, not according to the flesh, but according to the spirit Romans 8: 1 – 3.*

## Pentecost and All Saints Sunday

On the great day of Pentecost we celebrate the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles. At that time we are given an understanding of how the Lord enabled His followers to preach the Gospel and carry out their mission of making "disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that (Christ) commanded..." (Matthew 28:19-20)



Pentecost was an actual historical event - the last of those accomplished for our salvation. The Church has always been very much aware of its history and reminds the faithful constantly of its past. It does not live in the past, however, as is often said. As a matter of fact, it might be said in some sense, that the historical element of any liturgical celebration is the least important. What is most significant is the impact on our lives and on the life of the world, here and now, of the event remembered. Furthermore, it is crucial to recall that everything done for us by Christ and with the Spirit's descent led to God's Kingdom being initiated now, in the course of human history, before the end of that history. In light of that Kingdom revealed the Gospel tells us that all are called to "repent," orienting their lives toward the "the one thing needful."

Looking back generally and upon their own past, Christians affirm that God Himself came into this world breaking through the long succession of events called history. One might say that He interrupted the course of history. God revealed Himself to man in a close and intimate way, by living with him. He taught man about Himself and the meaning of human existence. Those who accepted His teachings and became His followers were called out into a special community known as the Church. St. Peter, referring to this call wrote, "*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. Once you were no people but now you are God's people;...*" (1 Peter 2:9-10)

The Church is both the witness to the Truth that was revealed by Christ, and also the experience, in every generation, of God's people living the life of the Kingdom of Heaven - living it imperfectly sometimes, to be sure, because we are not totally and finally integrated into that Kingdom, and because the kingdom of this world still places before us many and diverse temptations. Yet we are called to live in this world, primarily as citizens of God's Kingdom, to

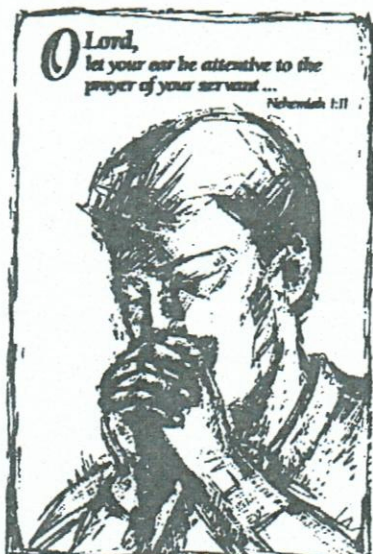
go about our daily routine, not as anyone else might, but as the people of God. We have been transformed by our Baptism, by our personal Pentecost (the descent of the Holy Spirit at our Chrismation), and we are totally and completely united with Christ each time we receive Him in the Holy Eucharist. This is our experience of the Kingdom of God by anticipation, right now, before the end of time. Thus, when we go back into the world, having "seen the True Light," we go back refreshed, strengthened, with a renewed vision, prepared to approach this world with more wisdom and understanding. We go back ready to stand out as Christ's disciples in a world that does not generally accept or follow Him.

All of us would agree that what has been outlined above is that which is expected of any Christian. We are to live in constant remembrance of Christ; we are to remember His teachings and commandments, being thankful for these and for all that He has done for us; and we are to live as our Lord showed us, bearing witness in our lives to God's power and presence and to the revelation of His Kingdom in the Church. Those who have done this are called Saints. The Saints were those whose lives were so permeated with the remembrance and love of God that they were transformed and were able to transform those with whom they came in contact. Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, Confessors, Monks, Nuns, Hierarchs, Laymen - holy men and women within these categories of Saints are remembered throughout the year on the Church's calendar, but all together on the Sunday after Pentecost dedicated to All Saints. The exact placement of this one, comprehensive commemoration is understandable. All Saints Sunday is the fulfillment of Pentecost. Through the lives of the Saints the Holy Spirit's operation in the world is evident. The Sunday after Pentecost is a reminder, indeed a declaration, that people from all walks of life, baptized and sealed with the Spirit, have a common vocation or call to holiness. They are all beckoned to confess Christ before the world through their words and by the sanctity of their lives.

Possibly one of the worst indictments against present-day Christians is that many of us do not consciously recognize our having undergone a personal Pentecost. There are those within our ranks who would prefer to live in the past, making the Church into a museum of antiquities, rather than looking ahead to the possibilities that await those who are "called to be saints." In fact, the Eastern Christian's chief sin in our times is cynicism - we doubt our vocation, we doubt the vocation of others - we talk about callings and vocations and are still skeptical about whether those goals are even attainable - denying in the process the real sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit. We can thank our Lord for the gift of recently canonized American Saints who demonstrate that even in our twentieth century society sainthood is possible.

In our gatherings every year to celebrate the Sunday of All Saints, let us remember that it is holiness and perfection to which we are ultimately called. The Apostle Peter writes, "...but as He who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." (1 Peter 15-16) And Christ said, "You, therefore, must be perfect, as your Heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). Let us neither doubt nor run from our common vocation. Rather, let us rejoice in the opportunity to share in all that belongs properly to our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ and to help impart that to others.

## Psalm 46



God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

Therefore we will not fear though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult.

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God will help her right early.

The nations rage, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts.

The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.

Come, behold the works of the LORD, how he has wrought desolations in the earth; he makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear, he burns the chariots with fire!

“Be still, and know that I am God. I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth!”

The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.



## Praying through Bad Times

Most of the prayers found in prayer books are taken from the service books the Church uses for public worship, so that even when a Christian is praying *alone*, he is praying *with the Church*. According to Fr. George Florovsky, "Personal prayer is possible only in the context of the community. Nobody is a Christian by himself, but only as a member of the Body [of Christ]. Even in solitude, 'in the chamber,' a Christian prays as a member of the redeemed community, of the Church." (Bishop Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, p. 303)

Below are some personal prayers that are especially good for "praying through" bad times – during illness, crisis, stress, or doubt. You may want to add them to your morning and evening prayers when needed.

### A Prayer for the Sick

O Christ, You alone are prompt to defend us; quickly visit Your suffering servant, (name), and through the prayers of the Theotokos, deliver (him, her) from sickness and bitter pain. Heal (him, her) so that (he, she) may sing to You and always praise You – for You alone love mankind.

### A Prayer in Times of Despair

O Lord, it is so easy to walk with you when things go well and nothing seems wrong. Yet, now I feel as Peter must have felt as he saw You walk toward him on the open sea. He tried to come to You and then lost hope and began to sink. When I am down, come to me as you came to Peter. Help me, even though my faith seems weak.

### Prayers for an Increase of Faith

Help me, O Lord, to hear the words You spoke to Jarius, whose daughter was cured: "Do not be afraid; only have faith." Help me to hear them, to understand them, to believe them, even though I say with the father of the possessed boy, "I do not have faith! Help me where my faith falls short!"

Help me, O Lord, to believe that Your promise is true, that Your words, unlike so many of mine, are not empty. You have said, "Let there be light," and there was light. You also said, "Everyone who looks upon the Son and believes in Him shall have eternal life." Help me, O Lord, to believe and to abide in your presence right now, that in the moments ahead I may dwell in your house forever. Amen. ✕

# THE MYSTERY AND IMAGES OF THE CHURCH

Any study of the Church of Jesus Christ begins its discussion and starts with the recognition of her origin in the plan of the Holy Trinity and her progressive realization in history.

Perhaps the best way to describe the unfolding of God's plan is to point out that the eternal Father so loved us that He sent his Son to redeem us. Jesus so loved us that He died and rose again for the sake of our salvation. He selected Apostles upon whom He would build the vehicle of salvation, His Body, the Church, that has as its responsibility the task of carrying out and completing the redemptive work He began. The Church then shares in the very life of the risen Lord. Its members, those baptized into the Church, form a body with Christ as its head. It is in and through this Church that women and men are saved by coming to know Jesus Christ and through him are united in grace to the Father through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

The Church is not an abstraction; it is certainly nor merely a group of officials in important positions nor a gathering of individuals who determine what they will believe and how the Church will be constituted in popular interpretation. The new Body of Christ is made up of all the members of the family of faith who are blessed with the gifts of the Spirit and are united as one body around the Apostles and their successors with Christ as their head.

Communicants of every degree and vocation, all gathered together in Christ, are the Church. We are God's people, the people of God eager to be leaven which transforms and returns the world to servanthood in Christ. Though each person has some specific call, a particular mission with its own responsibilities and functions, still all, together in Christ make up a single, united people. All receive the same Spirit in baptism. All are nourished with the one Eucharist. All share the same hope of our calling. The fundamental equality in the new dignity of children of God is the basic note of the people of God.

The Church, the Body of Christ, is structured, visible and identifiable. Jesus Christ endowed his community of faith with a form that will remain until the kingdom is fully achieved. He willfully chose the Twelve as the foundation stones of the "the new Jerusalem" Matthew 19: 28. The apostles and other disciples share in Christ's mission and his power precisely to lead and serve his new body so that together through works of faith and love the kingdom of God may become plainly manifest in our world.

The Church and the kingdom of God are not precisely synonymous. The Church is the realization on earth of God's kingdom whose final fulfillment is in eternity. The Gospels tell us that Jesus "...went about all Galilee...preaching the gospel of the kingdom" Matthew 4: 23. He taught a reality that was a real part of the messianic hopes of the Jewish people. These hopes for some people centered on the glorious kingdom that the Messiah would establish. Yet when Christ spoke of the kingdom of God, He was careful to free the idea of the "kingdom" from the nationalistic, chauvinistic hopes and aspirations of the people among whom He lived. To accomplish this He often emphasized the heavenly aspect of the kingdom and its interior spiritual, mystical, purely religious character.

Aware of the intimate bond between kingdom of God on earth and the Church, we need to look at what Jesus taught about this kingdom. Like the reign of God, the kingdom is spiritual and will be perfected, completed in the last days. It is not a political kingdom: "My kingdom is not of this world" John 18: 36. Yet Christ's kingdom is rooted in this world as it exists here and its citizenry is derived from this world, but not of it. Christ shows it to us as something visible, a community called together by him and of which He is the Good Shepherd, the true and lasting head.

between Christ and his Church. Not only is she gathered around him; she is united in him, in his body. The Body of Christ is one; Christ is head of the body. The faithful are the members of the living Body alive in the Holy Spirit.

Perhaps no work on the Creed today is as much misunderstood as our profession in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. All around us we see mishappen clusters of people who claim to be the Church. People are wont to speak of being born again in Christ, of finding Christ, of living in Christ and yet they would fashion and construct their own teaching, step aside from the 2,000 year continuity of Christ's living Church, minimize life in the sacramental Mysteries made available to us in the Body of Christ and reject the apostolic leadership of the Church as if it were not a part of Christ's will for his only one true Church.

The true Church, the one Church, the only vehicle of salvation founded by Christ is not of our making or the result of our imagination, nor can it and its teaching be interpreted by us according to a majority vote. What we believe is divinely revealed; no argument, however skillfully advanced or worded, can alter what God expects of us. The Church of Christ, the Body of Christ in the world today, is the visible, structured, hierarchical manifestation of the risen triumphant Lord at work, completing the task assigned him by the eternal Father which is to bring all mankind together into one family, anointed by the Holy Spirit, made holy only through the presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

The faith of this Body is to be translated into works of love that will transform the world and make it here and now the manifestation and realization of the kingdom of God. We have a long way to go. But the beginnings of that kingdom, the presence of God's Holy Spirit, the saving power of the sacramental Mysteries, are found in our world and are at work in our lives in the Orthodox Church that we in the Creed profess to be the vital and important object of our faith.



## Seeking the Kingdom

*...the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed or delivered up to another people; rather it shall break in pieces all those kingdoms and put an end to them, and it shall stand forever*

Daniel 2: 44.

How eager our heavenly Father is to afford us the protection of his grace! Long before it actually occurred on Pentecost Sunday with Descent of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples, Daniel the chosen prophet creates the vision of anticipation. The Church of Jesus Christ will be the vehicle of salvation, the kingdom of God on earth. Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream causes us to consider how blessed communicants of the Church actually are because we belong to the kingdom. Our God has provided for us!

Indeed, in contrast to God's provision, how many times have we attempted to create an individual kingdom made up of personal treasures and like, Nebuchadnezzar, allowed them to come between our God and us? For how many, sharing whatever they have, be it time, talent or food, is not on their agenda. We have two and three coats and others have none. We have plenty to eat and others do not. We have an opportunity to be fed on the Word of God, but forego it. Christ's Body and Blood can nourish us, but other things are more important. We have idle time and others long for a visit from someone who cares. The Church has so much work to be done and no one to do it. We have shelter in our church while others literally live on the street outside the possible redemption of our God. A car can take us comfortably to church and we use it to drive instead into the devil's embrace.

How long does it take for a confused believer to get it right? When will we finally discover we have everything backward? Nothing anyone has belongs to them; it is all a gift from God! So when will we begin to give back to our heavenly Father? Is visiting shut-ins too much to ask? What about sharing more at the food pantry? Offering a ride to a needy soul or volunteering to strengthen the local faith community?

Reorienting our lives with these simple acts opens our eyes to the joys of sharing and interacting with others so that we are assured by God's grace it is his love we profess and participate in. If we seek first the kingdom, we will focus our attention and eagerness and energy on our Creator instead of on the things of this earth. "...on this rock I will build my Church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it" Matthew 16: 18.

# **I BELIEVE**

**I am here for a  
special purpose,  
and that our heavenly Father has given me  
all I need to carry out  
his plan for me.**

# **I BELIEVE**

**That Jesus is always with me,  
showing me the way of love,  
the truth of the gospel  
and life everlasting.**

# **I BELIEVE**

**In the Spirit of God,  
working in me, with me,  
through me, and for me,  
to fulfill his divine will.**

PRAYER TO GOD THE FATHER  
BY ST. MACARIUS

**O** ETERNAL God and Ruler of all creation :  
You have allowed me to reach this hour.  
Forgive the sins I committed today by word,  
deed, or in thought. Purify me, O Lord, from  
every spiritual and physical stain. Grant that  
I may rise from this sleep to glorify You by my  
deeds throughout my entire lifetime, and that  
I be victorious over every spiritual and physical  
enemy. Deliver me, O Lord, from all vain  
thoughts and evil desires, for yours is the  
kingdom and the power and the glory, Father †,  
Son, and Holy Spirit, now and ever, and forever.  
Amen.

PRAYER TO GOD THE SON  
BY ST. ANTIOCHUS

**O** NLY-BEGOTTEN Word of the Father,  
Jesus Christ who alone are perfect :  
according to the greatness of your mercy, do not  
abandon me, your servant, but ever rest in my  
heart. O Sweet Jesus, Good Shepherd of your  
flock, deliver me from the attacks of the devil.  
Do not allow me to become the prey of Satan's  
evil intention, even though I have within me the  
seed of eternal damnation. Instead, O Lord Jesus  
Christ, adorable God, holy King, while I sleep,  
protect me by your Holy Spirit through whom  
You sanctified your disciples. Enlighten my  
mind by the light of the Holy Gospel, my soul  
by the love of your cross, my heart by the purity  
of your teaching. Protect my body by your  
sacred passion, my senses by your humility, and  
awaken me in due time for your glorification.  
For You, above all, are adorable, together with  
your eternal Father † and Holy Spirit, now  
and ever, and forever. Amen.

PRAYER TO THE HOLY SPIRIT  
BY ST. ANTIOCHUS

**O** HOLY Spirit, most merciful Comforter :  
You proceed from the Father in a manner  
beyond our understanding. Come, I beseech  
You, and take up your abode in my heart.  
Purify and cleanse me from all sin, and sanctify  
my soul. Cleanse it from every impurity, water  
its dryness, melt its coldness, and save it from  
sinful ways. Make me truly humble and resigned,  
that I may be pleasing to You, and that You  
abide with me forever. Most blessed Light, most  
amiable Light, enlighten me. O rapturous Joy  
of Paradise, Fount of purest delight, my God,  
give yourself to me, and kindle in my innermost  
soul the fire of your love. My Lord, instruct,  
direct, and defend me in all things. Give me  
strength against all immoderate fears and against  
despondency. Bestow upon me a true faith, a  
firm hope, and a sincere and perfect love. Grant  
that I always do your most gracious will. Amen.

## True Success Is...

NOT HOW MUCH MONEY YOU CAN COUNT,

BUT how many *Friends*

YOU CAN COUNT ON.

NOT HOW WELL-TO- DO YOU ARE,

BUT How Much *Good* you do.

NOT LOTS OF LOVELY POSSESSIONS,

BUT POSSESSING LOTS OF **LOVE**.

NOT WHETHER YOU MAKE A FORTUNE,

BUT WHETHER YOU MAKE A

**DIFFERENCE.**



## Solemn Holyday Greetings

As we jubilantly celebrate the birthday and conception of the Body of Christ in our midst, we are overwhelmed our loving God has established for the sake of our salvation this glorious vehicle of redemption, to lift us, to elevate us, to sanctify us and restore us to our rightful dignity by delivering us to the portals of eternity holy and forgiven and reconciled.

How particularly fortunate and specially blessed is the man who is baptized, chrismated and sustained on Eucharistic nourishment to be a communicant of this Body of the Saviour. What heavenly joy is already experienced in the soul of him who is called by grace to salvation in sanctity by the Saviour by membership in the embracing and affirming Church of Jesus Christ.

As we celebrate the Descent of the Holy Spirit on the disciples transforming them from learners/students into ambassadors/apostles of the Son of God, we recognize our own inherent dignity because ours is an identical vocation. We too are invited and commanded to go forth and preach the gospel by our lifestyle, by our actions and our sustained commitment to Christ.

In celebrating the birth and inception of the Church, we also celebrate our ongoing baptismal Christian lifestyle made possible only by the grace of the Holy Spirit. "Come, Holy Spirit," we pray. "Lead us, guide us, strengthen and affirm us," we beseech the third Person of the Trinity. "Thank You for coming among us!" we never tire of saying. As new life is apportioned in nature to all that was seemingly resting and apparently dead, so we ask for similar grace for our souls that so oftentimes dead to sin, they are restored to living radiance by the flaming tongues of fire which set upon the heads of the disciples. Burn away within us the misery of separation from the Father which sin produces so that Christ's Resurrection will have eternal value for us. Help us appropriate the grace of Christ's victory for ourselves that we may enjoy God's glory for all eternity. Take us to yourself, O Holy Spirit of God that we live and reign together with Christ the Saviour and the Eternal Father. Because of your infused, shared and sustained grace, may we partake of heavenly joy with the Blessed Mother of God, all the saints and the bodiless powers. May our loved ones be joined to us in eternal beatitude to sing forever the glories of our God.

This is our ardent, sincere and devoted prayer for each communicant of our parish as we celebrate the Birthday of our blessed Church and witness the awesome Descent of the Holy Spirit for renewal of life and regeneration of faith and salvation of souls.

## PENTECOST



In the Old Testament Pentecost was the feast which occurred fifty days after Passover. As the Passover feast celebrated the exodus of the Israelites from the slavery of Egypt, so Pentecost celebrated God's gift of the Ten Commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai.

In the new covenant of the Messiah, the Passover event takes on its new meaning as the celebration of Christ's death and resurrection, the "exodus" of men from this sinful world to the Kingdom of God. And in the New Testament as well, the Pentecostal feast is fulfilled and made new by the coming of the "new law," **the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples of Christ.**

When the day of Pentecost had come they were all together in one place. And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed as resting upon each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit ... (Acts 2:1-4).

The Holy Spirit that Christ had promised to his disciples came on the day of Pentecost (Jn 14:26, 15:26; Lk 24:49; Acts 1:5). The apostles received "the power from on high," and they began to preach and bear witness to Jesus as the risen Christ, the King and the Lord. This moment has traditionally been called the birthday of the Church.

In the liturgical services of the feast of Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit is celebrated together with the full revelation of the divine Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The fullness of the Godhead is manifested with the Spirit's coming to man, and the Church hymns celebrate this manifestation as the final act of God's self-disclosure and self-donation to the world of His creation. For this reason Pentecost Sunday is also called **Trinity Day** in the Eastern tradition. Often on this day the icon of the **Holy Trinity** -- particularly that of the three angelic figures who appeared to Abraham, the forefather of the Christian faith - is placed in the center of the church. This icon is used with the traditional **Pentecostal icon** which shows the tongues of fire hovering over Mary and the Twelve Apostles, the original prototype of the Church, who are themselves sitting in unity surrounding a symbolic image of "cosmos," the world.

On Pentecost we have the final fulfillment of the mission of Jesus Christ and the first beginning of the messianic age of the Kingdom of God mystically present in this world in the Church of the Messiah. For this reason the **fiftieth day** stands as the beginning of the era which is beyond the limitations of this world, fifty being that number which stands for eternal and heavenly fulfillment in Jewish and Christian mystical piety: seven times seven, plus one. Thus, Pentecost is called an **apocalyptic day**, which means the day of **final revelation**. It is also called an **eschatological day**, which means the day of the **final and perfect end** (in Greek *eschaton* means the end).

For when the Messiah comes and the Lord's Day is at hand, the "last days" are inaugurated in which "God declares: ... I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." This is the ancient prophecy to which the Apostle Peter refers in the first sermon of the Christian Church which was preached on the first Sunday of Pentecost (Acts 2: 17; Joel 2: 28-32).



Once again it must be noted that the feast of Pentecost is not simply the celebration of an event which took place centuries ago. It is the celebration of what must happen and does happen to us in the Church today. We all have died and risen with the Messiah-King, and we all have received his Most Holy Spirit. We are the "temples of the Holy Spirit." God's Spirit dwells in us (Rom 8; 1 Cor 2-3, 12; 2 Cor 3; Gal 5; Eph 2-3). We, by our own membership in the Church, have received "the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit" in the sacrament of Chrismation. Pentecost has happened to us.

The **Divine Liturgy of Pentecost** recalls our baptism into Christ with the verse from Galatians again replacing the Thrice-Holy Hymn. Special verses from the psalms also replace the usual antiphonal psalms of the liturgy. The epistle and gospel readings tell of the Spirit's coming to men. The Kontakion sings of the reversal of Babel as God unites the nations into the unity of his Spirit. The Troparion proclaims the gathering of the whole universe into God's net through the work of the inspired apostles. The hymns *O Heavenly King* and *We have seen the True Light* are sung calling the Holy Spirit to "come and abide in us", and proclaiming that "we have received the heavenly Spirit." The church building is decorated with flowers and the green leaves of the summer to show that God's divine Breath comes to renew all creation as the "life-creating Spirit." In Hebrew the word for Spirit, breath and wind is the same word, *ruah*.

***Blessed are You, O Christ our God. \* You filled the fisherman with wisdom, \* sending down upon them the Holy Spirit. \* Through them You have caught the whole world in Your net. \* O Lover of mankind, glory be to You. (Troparion).***

***When the Most High came down and confused the tongues \* He scattered the people. But when he distributed the tongues of fire, \* He called all to unity. Therefore, with one voice, we glorify the All-Holy Spirit! (Kontakion)***

The Great Vespers of Pentecost evening features three long prayers at which the faithful kneel for the first time since the Resurrection. The Monday after Pentecost is the feast of the Holy Spirit and the Sunday after Pentecost is the Feast of All Saints. This the logical liturgical sequence since the coming and Descent of the Holy Spirit is fulfilled in men by their becoming saints, and this the very purpose of the creation and salvation of the world. "Thus says the lord; 'Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I your God am holy'" Leviticus 11: 44, 45; 1 Peter 21: 15, 16.

## CHURCH PRACTICE IN THE HOME

Every educator knows that in order for learning to occur it must be continuous. Teachers and parents do not, for instance, teach their children reading, writing, and arithmetic lessons only once, nor do they prepare them to receive Holy Communion once or twice a year and expect them to grow learning and discerning what our Lord's Body and Blood is — a lesson taught once a year teaches nothing. So that maximum learning can take place, lessons must be continuous, even repetitive. The Church's customs and practices are repetitive.

Perhaps nowhere else is continuity more important than in the Eastern Christian home. Every day, especially Sunday, takes on its own special significance and rhythm from a certain day in the life of the liturgical calendar to another. Take the Feast of Pentecost for instance. On this day the church begins its movement towards Great Fast, which moves towards Pascha, which, in turn, leads once more to Ascension and then 10 days later to Pentecost. If it appears to be cyclical, that is only because it is and should "forever" remain that way. Sad to say, however, this movement, this continual progression, is neither seen nor lived in its fullness in the home.

The liturgical year of the Church is not limited to solely Pascha and the Nativity of the Lord in the flesh. These days take on an added significance when they are celebrated in proper context, within the liturgical life of the Church.

The Orthodox Church has an incredibly meaningful liturgical life. This is best illustrated in its beautiful Festal cycle, the celebration of the Church's Twelve Great Feast Days, eight of which commemorate an event from the life of Christ, while the remaining four bring to mind a past event in the life of the Theotokos. Unfortunately, the proper understanding of what these days are is certainly not what it should be. Slowly but surely, it seems as if these feast days — and please, let's not refer to them as 'holidays' any longer — are being lost. The empty churches indicate as much. We pastors and parents cannot allow this to happen any longer. It is imperative that these festivals be restored to the home and the Church.

Primarily by reading the liturgical texts, along with the Gospel and Epistle reading for the day, and, of course, by partaking of the Eucharist, their meanings can be better and more fully appreciated. Parents should ask their parish priest where the proper liturgical books which contain the Vesperal stikhera and apostikha verses, in addition to the

troparion and kontakion, can be located. Because of the limited time church school programs allow for, the restoration of the feasts' true meaning can be uncovered best in the home. And with it, hopefully, continuity will bind the Christian family more closely together.

In order for Orthodox children to become aware of these feasts, a couple of practical suggestions are in order:

1) If possible, an icon of the respective feast day should be placed in the icon corner, the place in the Christian home where the votive light is hung and the family gathers for prayer. The festal icon remains there during the normal eight-day post-feast. There are a few exceptions. Two come immediately to mind: a) the icon of the Resurrection is kept in the icon corner for 40 days, being replaced on the Wednesday evening before the Feast of the Ascension and b) the Feast of the Annunciation (March 25). Because it normally falls during Great Fast, at a time where there is no feasting, only fasting, the Annunciation icon is replaced after the one-day celebration of this feast. Paper icons of the Twelve Feasts are available at a modest price; just check with your parish priest for a place to buy them.

2) The liturgical texts, especially the troparion and kontakion, should be read before the icon on the eve and on the morning of the feast.

3) On the feast day itself, and during the post-feast, the troparion should replace 'Our Father . . .' before all meals, while the kontakion should be sung in place of the customary thanksgiving prayers, after meals.

What is vitally important for parents to keep firmly in mind is the need for their children to be directly involved in as many of these activities as possible. It should be the children — and not the parents — who replace the festal icons; it should be the child who carefully lights the candle; and it should be the children, and again not the parents, who read and even find the proper texts and associate them with people, places, and events of the icon. It is a well known fact that children have a much higher retention level when they discover the information on their own as opposed to having it told to them. Studies have shown the retention ratio to be about 50-10 percent.

Another way in which this continuity in the home can possibly become even tighter is to use the sanctoral cycle, the daily commemoration of the saints, as a teaching tool. For instance, when a child's patron saint's day is approaching, reading material should be made available. The child can then report to the rest of the family what he or she

learned. The child should even be encouraged, but not forced, to chant/sing/say the troparion before dinner on that particular day. Of course, the person whose name's day it is, should, if not possible on the exact day because of school but certainly on the closest Sunday thereafter, attend Divine Liturgy and receive the Sacraments of Confession and Holy Communion. Again, your parish priest should be more than willing to help provide the proper information, along with suggesting family activities during the Nativity Fast which can be found in many Christian educational publications.

In a further effort to maintain continuity, full advantage of the secular holidays should be taken. For instance, a good talk on Labor Day is to present the Biblical view on earthly possessions or stewardship. We Christians are merely stewards. We owe to God everything we have and must share it.

Every American history class praises the honesty of Abraham Lincoln. When his birthday falls in February, a family discussion on this virtue along with that of trust can take place. We must find heroes whenever we can. There are too few. A good occasion for these talks to take place is while eating dinner. The evangelist Luke recorded many instances in which Christ taught his disciples 'at table.'

On Mother's and Father's Days, children can perhaps be made to recall an incident in which they didn't love their parents, along with examples when they did. On Memorial Day, those who died in battle are remembered. A practical connection with the Orthodox practice of All Souls' Saturdays during the Great Fast can certainly be made. The opportunity to teach children about memorial prayers for the dead should not be overlooked either. Again, good family practice for Thanksgiving is to have each family member say aloud what he is thankful for. Every person can find something for which to thank God.

As is easily seen, many topics can be chosen. Many themes can be developed. In short, many things can be done and should be done in order to insure continuous learning. Simply put, the Church calendar must be lived. Not to take full advantage of the days the Church gives us, in fact, will surely prevent, if not quite possibly destroy Christian continuity in the home. Choose what you and your family can do and stay with it. There is enough to choose from!



## *Avoiding Idle Talk*

Shun the gossip of men as much as possible, for discussion of worldly affairs, even though sincere, is a great distraction inasmuch as we are quickly ensnared and captivated by vanity.

Many a time I wish that I had held my peace and had not associated with men. Why, indeed, do we converse and gossip among ourselves when we so seldom part without a troubled conscience? We do so because we seek comfort from one another's conversation and wish to ease the mind wearied by diverse thoughts. Hence, we talk and think quite fondly of things we like very much or of things we dislike intensely. But, sad to say, we often talk vainly and to no purpose; for this external pleasure effectively bars inward and divine consolation.

Therefore we must watch and pray lest time pass idly. When the right and opportune moment comes for speaking, say something that will edify.

Bad habits and indifference to spiritual progress do much to remove the guard from the tongue. Devout conversation on spiritual matters, on the contrary, is a great aid to spiritual progress, especially when persons of the same mind and spirit associate together in God.

## *Praying With Tears*

*First, pray for the gift of tears, so that through sorrowing you may tame what is savage in your soul. And having confessed your transgressions to the Lord, you will obtain forgiveness from Him.*

*Pray with tears and all you ask will be heard. For the Lord rejoices greatly when you pray with tears.*

*If you do shed tears during your prayer, do not exalt yourself, thinking you are better than others. For your prayer has received help so that you can confess your sins readily and make your peace with the Lord through your tears. Therefore, do not turn the remedy for passions into a passion, and so again provoke to anger Him who has given you this grace.*

*Evagrios the Solitary, The Philokalia*

# WISDOM! BE ATTENTIVE

*Heavenly King, Comforter, Spirit of Truth: You are everywhere present and fill all things. Treasury of blessings and Giver of life, come and dwell within us, cleanse us of all stain, and save our souls, O gracious Lord! Hymn to the Holy Spirit.*

*Blessed are You, O Christ God. You filled the fishermen with wisdom, sending down upon them the Holy Spirit. Through them, You have caught the whole world in Your net. O Lover of mankind, glory be to You! Troparion of Pentecost.*

*When the Most High came down and confused tongues, He scattered the nations; but when He distributed the tongues of fire, He called all men to unity. Therefore, with one voice, let us praise the Holy Spirit. Kontakion, Feast of Pentecost.*

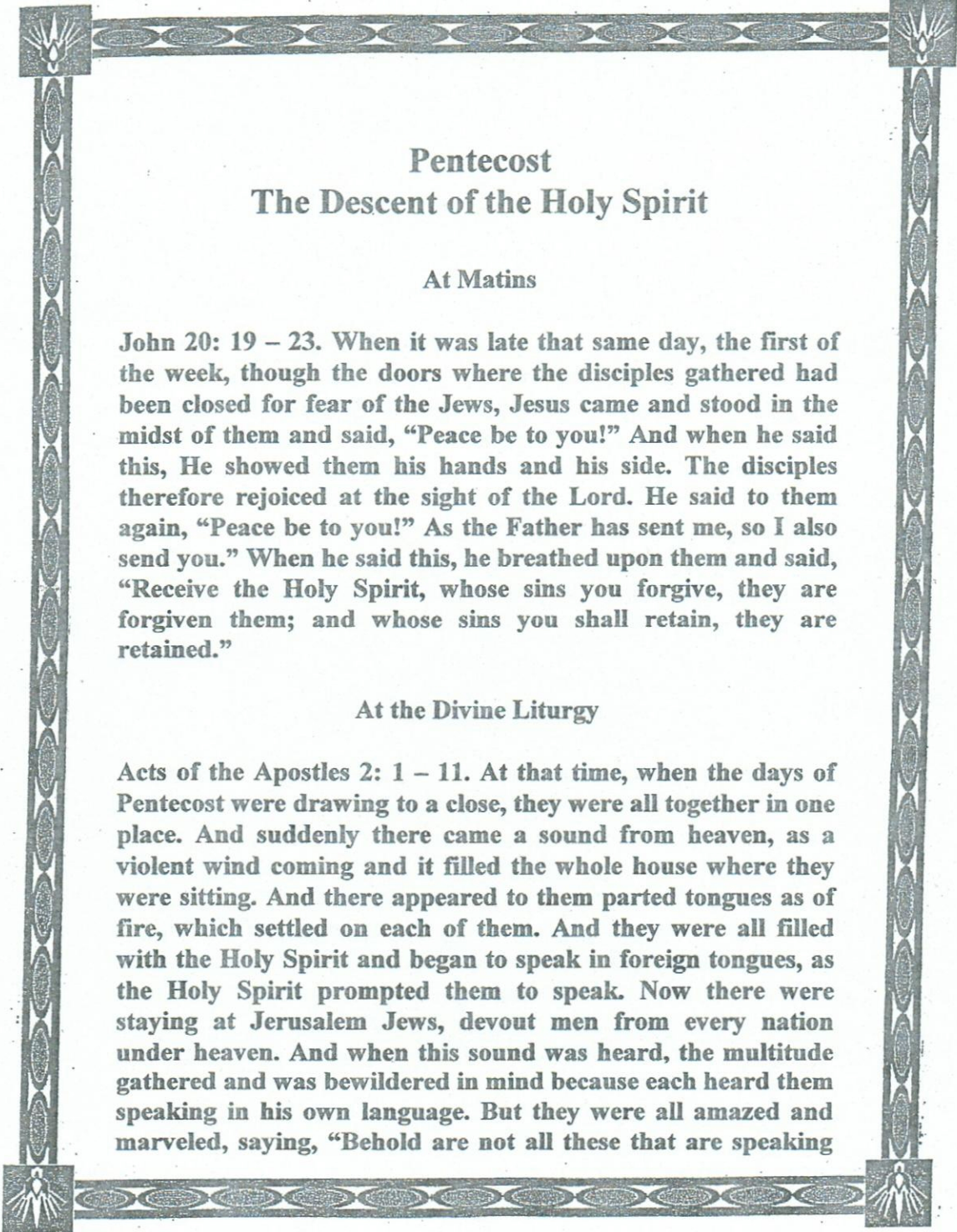
*Through all the world their voice resounds, their message reaches to the ends of the earth. Prokimenon, Feast of Pentecost.*

*O my soul, extol the One God in three divine persons. Hail, O Queen, glory of virgins and mothers; to adequately praise you is beyond the eloquence of the most cultured tongue. The wonderful manner in which you gave birth to Christ amazes all intelligence. Therefore, with one accord, we the faithful extol you. Hymn instead of 'It is truly proper,' Feast of Pentecost.*

*Your good Spirit shall lead me into the land of righteousness. Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia! Communion Hymn, Feast of Pentecost.*

*All the people have seen wonders today in the city of David, when the Holy Spirit descended in tongues of fire, as told by the God-inspired Luke, who said: "The disciples were gathered together; there was a sound like a mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And they began to speak in foreign tongues, teaching the doctrine of the Holy Trinity." Matins Hymn, Feast of Pentecost.*





## Pentecost

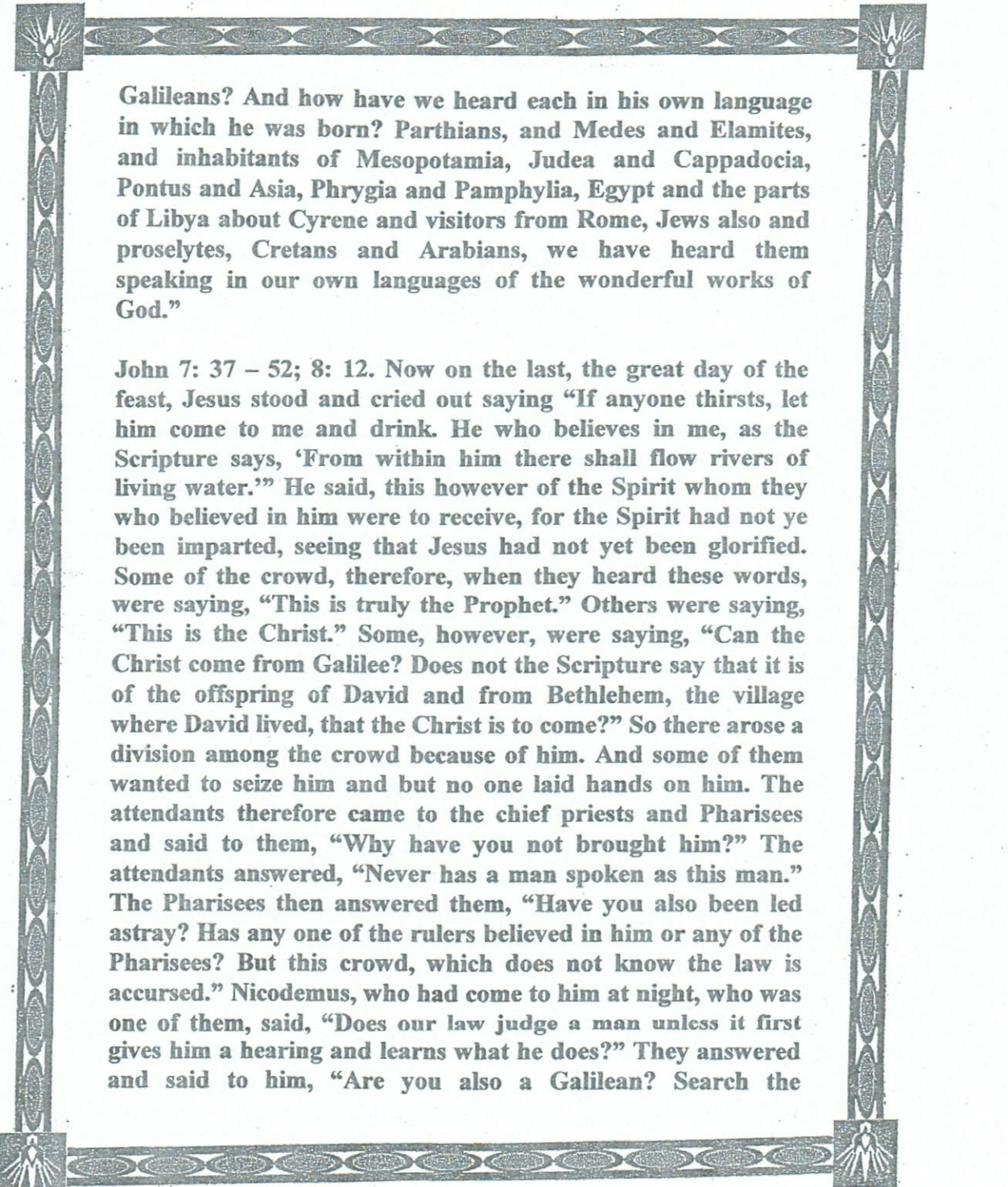
### The Descent of the Holy Spirit

#### At Matins

John 20: 19 – 23. When it was late that same day, the first of the week, though the doors where the disciples gathered had been closed for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst of them and said, "Peace be to you!" And when he said this, He showed them his hands and his side. The disciples therefore rejoiced at the sight of the Lord. He said to them again, "Peace be to you!" As the Father has sent me, so I also send you." When he said this, he breathed upon them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit, whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained."

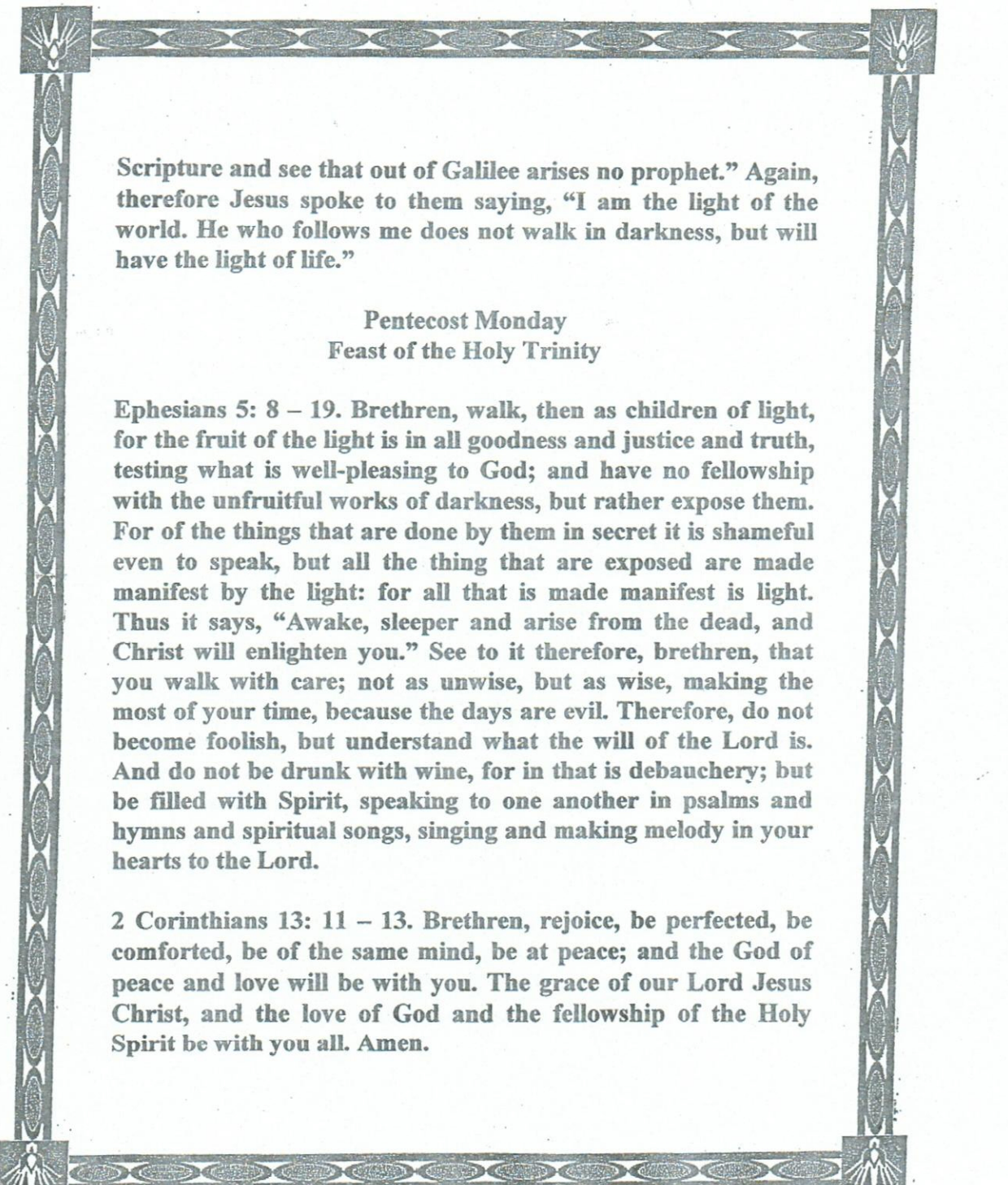
#### At the Divine Liturgy

Acts of the Apostles 2: 1 – 11. At that time, when the days of Pentecost were drawing to a close, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as a violent wind coming and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them parted tongues as of fire, which settled on each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in foreign tongues, as the Holy Spirit prompted them to speak. Now there were staying at Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. And when this sound was heard, the multitude gathered and was bewildered in mind because each heard them speaking in his own language. But they were all amazed and marveled, saying, "Behold are not all these that are speaking



Galileans? And how have we heard each in his own language in which he was born? Parthians, and Medes and Elamites, and inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya about Cyrene and visitors from Rome, Jews also and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians, we have heard them speaking in our own languages of the wonderful works of God."

John 7: 37 – 52; 8: 12. Now on the last, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out saying "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the Scripture says, 'From within him there shall flow rivers of living water.'" He said, this however of the Spirit whom they who believed in him were to receive, for the Spirit had not yet been imparted, seeing that Jesus had not yet been glorified. Some of the crowd, therefore, when they heard these words, were saying, "This is truly the Prophet." Others were saying, "This is the Christ." Some, however, were saying, "Can the Christ come from Galilee? Does not the Scripture say that it is of the offspring of David and from Bethlehem, the village where David lived, that the Christ is to come?" So there arose a division among the crowd because of him. And some of them wanted to seize him and but no one laid hands on him. The attendants therefore came to the chief priests and Pharisees and said to them, "Why have you not brought him?" The attendants answered, "Never has a man spoken as this man." The Pharisees then answered them, "Have you also been led astray? Has any one of the rulers believed in him or any of the Pharisees? But this crowd, which does not know the law is accursed." Nicodemus, who had come to him at night, who was one of them, said, "Does our law judge a man unless it first gives him a hearing and learns what he does?" They answered and said to him, "Are you also a Galilean? Search the

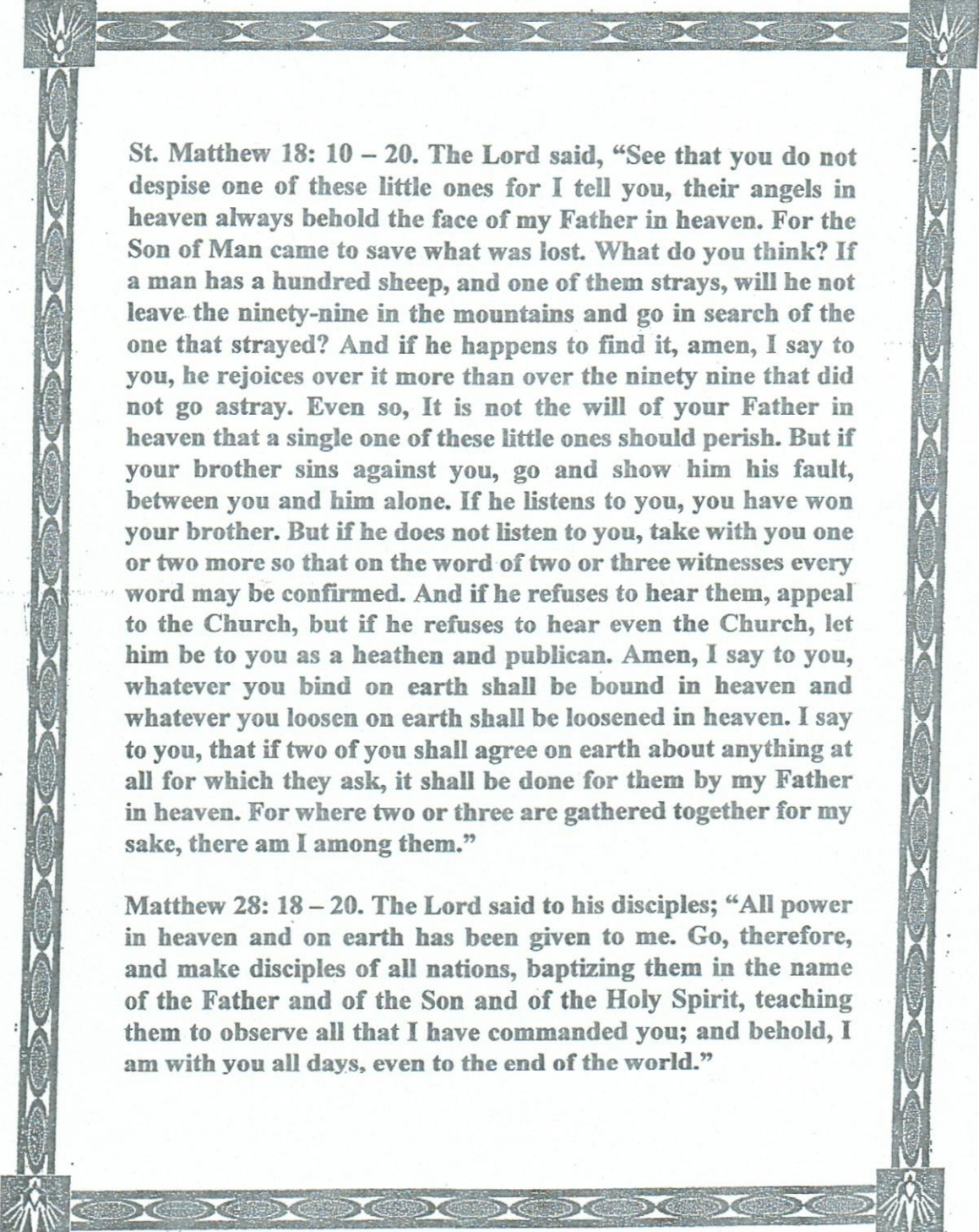


Scripture and see that out of Galilee arises no prophet." Again, therefore Jesus spoke to them saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows me does not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

**Pentecost Monday**  
**Feast of the Holy Trinity**

**Ephesians 5: 8 – 19.** Brethren, walk, then as children of light, for the fruit of the light is in all goodness and justice and truth, testing what is well-pleasing to God; and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For of the things that are done by them in secret it is shameful even to speak, but all the thing that are exposed are made manifest by the light: for all that is made manifest is light. Thus it says, "Awake, sleeper and arise from the dead, and Christ will enlighten you." See to it therefore, brethren, that you walk with care; not as unwise, but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not become foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, for in that is debauchery; but be filled with Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord.

**2 Corinthians 13: 11 – 13.** Brethren, rejoice, be perfected, be comforted, be of the same mind, be at peace; and the God of peace and love will be with you. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.



St. Matthew 18: 10 – 20. The Lord said, “See that you do not despise one of these little ones for I tell you, their angels in heaven always behold the face of my Father in heaven. For the Son of Man came to save what was lost. What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them strays, will he not leave the ninety-nine in the mountains and go in search of the one that strayed? And if he happens to find it, amen, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety nine that did not go astray. Even so, It is not the will of your Father in heaven that a single one of these little ones should perish. But if your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take with you one or two more so that on the word of two or three witnesses every word may be confirmed. And if he refuses to hear them, appeal to the Church, but if he refuses to hear even the Church, let him be to you as a heathen and publican. Amen, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven and whatever you loosen on earth shall be loosened in heaven. I say to you, that if two of you shall agree on earth about anything at all for which they ask, it shall be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together for my sake, there am I among them.”

Matthew 28: 18 – 20. The Lord said to his disciples; “All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and behold, I am with you all days, even to the end of the world.”

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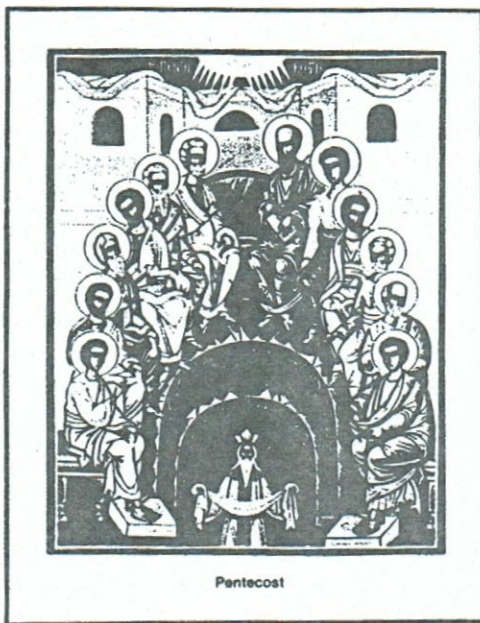
Heavenly King, Comforter, Spirit of Truth,  
You are everywhere present and fill all things,  
Treasury of Blessings and Giver of Life,  
come and dwell within us,  
cleanse us of all stain,  
and save our souls, O gracious Lord.



PENTECOST  
DESCENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

## Pentecost - The Birthday of the Church

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



### APOSTLES

- Jesus instructed His Apostles and followers to remain in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit came.

### BAPTIZE BIRTHDAY CHURCH DESCENT

- On Pentecost Sunday, 3000 people were baptized.
- Pentecost is the birthday of the Christian Church.
- Same as "Birthday".
- The Holy Spirit descended (came down) upon the Apostles and followers of Christ.

### FIFTY FIRE FRESHNESS

- Pentecost comes every year, fifty days after Easter.
- Fire is a marvelous symbol of the Holy Spirit.
- The Holy Spirit gave a new, fresh, fearless life to the followers of Christ on Pentecost Sunday.

### GREEN HOLY SPIRIT JERUSALEM JOY ORDINATION

- Green is the symbol of new life.
- The Holy Spirit came from heaven upon the faithful followers of Christ.
- Where the Apostles waited.
- When they received the Holy Spirit, the Apostles were filled with joy.
- When Jesus sent the Holy Spirit upon His Apostles, He established the Sacrament of Ordination.

### PENTECOST POWER

- The birthday of the Church.
- The Apostles received power from heaven to preach the Gospel in many languages from the Holy Spirit.
- Same as "Power".

### PREACH TEN REDEMPTION

- Pentecost comes ten days after the Ascension.
- That Jesus delivered mankind from the bondage of sin was preached by the Apostles on the first Pentecost.

### TEN THOUSANDS TONGUES

- Pentecost comes ten days after the Ascension.
- Peter the Apostle baptized 3000 people on Pentecost Sunday.
- The fire that came upon the Apostles is called tongues of fire.



### **COME, HOLY SPIRIT.**

Lead me through  
my unknown tomorrows.  
When the journey seems too long,  
when I get tired  
or don't know which way to go,  
Give me your strength.

### **COME, HOLY SPIRIT.**

Inspire me to serve my Savior.  
When confusion or pain  
makes life seem hopeless,  
When I face intimidation  
or anger or fear,  
Give me your courage.



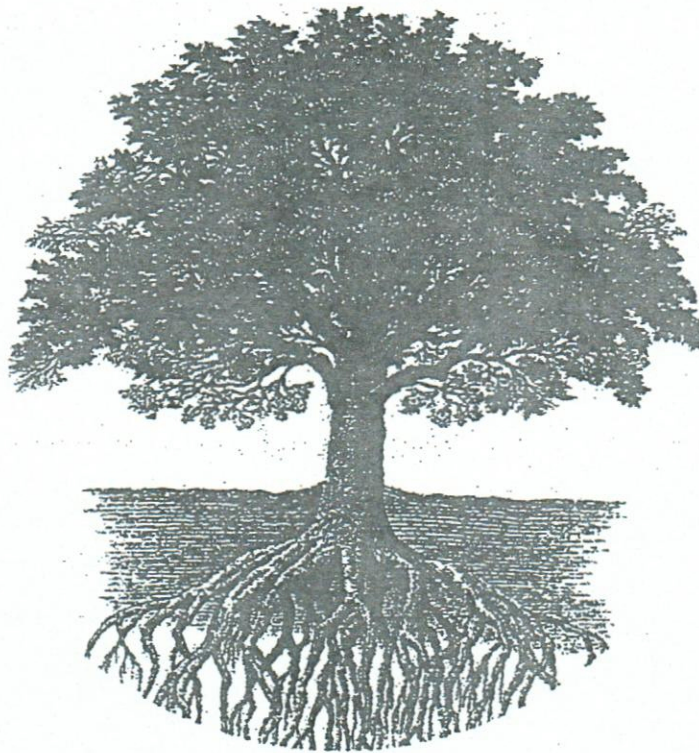
### **COME, HOLY SPIRIT.**

Come as the wind to stir my heart,  
Come as the rain to refresh my soul,  
Come as the fire to light my being;  
Give me your wisdom.









## Commencement

In St. John's gospel, our Lord emphasizes a particular truth for us. He reminds us, "I came that they might have life and that they might have it abundantly" John 10: 10. The abundant life: life full of joy, fulfillment, happiness, totality and completion. There is not a person here today that is not seeking the abundant life.

The word "abundant" implies fullness or completeness. It means life full of dimension, depth and length and breadth. There is much talk in our day about dimension. We go to a movie and behold a vast dimensional screen. There are three dimensional cameras and projectors. There is such a thing as dimensional sound. American business has taken this term and used it extensively in advertising.

But our task is to apply dimension to the field of living. Does human life have dimension? The words of our Lord certainly imply so. If we carefully examine the matter with care, we find that life, indeed, has three essential dimensions.

The first and most obvious dimension to life is LENGTH. This is measured in terms of time. We grow older every minute of every day. Even if we have stopped counting birthdays, still they keep occurring and piling up the years of our lives. There is no halting time; it waits for no man. Sometimes in moments of sweet joy the hands of the clock move swiftly; at other times, in moment of pain and sorrow, the movement is slow and agonizing. Yet, time marches on. There is length to life.

But life lived in this dimension alone is very unsatisfactory. It is not the abundant life. There are indeed people living in this one dimension; you see them in every community, men and women of education and talent who are sitting out their days. They have nothing but existence. These are people who prefer a life of total ease, but this is not joyful, fulfilling or radiant life.

In one church school class, the children came across the name of Methuselah. When one boy heard that he lived 969 years, he exclaimed, "My what a great man he must have been!" But later that same boy was disappointed when all he could find out about Methuselah was that he lived so many years and then died. His life, as far as we know, was a life of one dimension: he had length, absolutely nothing else! imagine, 969 years of wasted unproductive life!

The second dimension we have in life we call GROWTH. This is not necessarily physical growth, for most people stop growing physically by the time they are out of high school. We speak here of mental growth, growth in knowledge, in experience, in interest, in useful activity in an ever expanding field of service. Whether formal education is continued or not, this dimension can expand. The learning experience should continue all through life, despite age, or even health.

As soon as parents bring a child home from the hospital, they weigh it carefully, and the next day they put their loved one on the scale again to make certain it is growing physically. They watch for signs of growth: the first month, the first word, the first step, the first outgrown pair of shoes. But if growth is stunted, if the child ceases to grow physically and mentally, there is great sorrow.

Surely we must also watch for mental growth, for advancement and development of the powers of the soul, for spiritual growth. Maturation is not achieved until both the mind and the soul have nobly advanced to accept the responsibilities of life as adult believers in Christ.

Of course, living in this dimension is happier and fuller than living in the dimension of time alone because it can advance man's eternal expectations as well. But this too,

can fall short of man's capacity and capability. Many who live in this dimension alone sooner or later achieve a great emptiness of life if living vibrant faith is not a vital part of life. If we are going to live, let us live for something; and if we are going to die, as indeed we shall, let us die for something worthwhile, for Christ himself.

In photography and sound, the third dimension is called DEPTH. Thus, also in human life, there must be a depth in our living; it cannot be a mere superficial, surface existence. One simple word describes this third dimension. It is faith; faith in God, faith in ourselves and faith in our fellow man. This is an entirely spiritual dimension because it cannot be seen; only its results are manifested plainly by lifestyle. Its importance is as profound as the roots of a tree. Looking at a handsome tree in the spring of the year, we see but the visible portion, the upper or apparent part. The most vital part of the tree is not seen, because its roots are sunk deeply into the earth, nourishing the entire upper growth from the depth of our planet. The tree has a hidden life and when storms arise, seize the tree and churn the branches, bend the trunk and try desperately to uproot it; the final outcome depends on one factor only: will the roots hold?

This is the root of life: our beliefs, our ideals, our standards, our convictions, our trust in our heavenly Father are absolutely vital. Storms in life come and go, despair, disease, death of loved ones, loss of employment, anxiety and worry adversely affect us. But if we are anchored in real faith, if we seriously live in this third dimension in life, we can withstand all the storms and emerge even stronger than before because we permit the challenges of life to exercise and strengthen us.

Although faith is invisible, it reveals itself visibly. While it is hidden and inward, it shows outwardly in service, in good deeds. Scripture teaches us faith is dead unless revealed in good works. There is depth of actual living in the lives of the heroes of Scripture, in the human life of our Lord, in the lives of all the saints. Look at the example of Abraham, of David, of Moses, of Peter & Paul. Be inspired by the values they espoused which God's grace augments and increased for their success. The martyrs and missionaries of the Church inspire us.

As you begin a new portion of your life; that of being totally responsible for your own activity, always give thanks for all you have received and with which you have been blessed and gifted. Always first seek guidance from the Lord. Ask our God to grant you the strength to persevere when problems arise and seem insurmountable so they are overcome. Seek from Christ the grace to be what you are destined to be, what our heavenly Father expects you to be because of your unique combination of natural talent, native intellect, special gifts and insights that only you possess to be

magnified and enlarged that you be a benefit for all those around you. Use all that God has endowed you with to become the best person you can become. Appropriate everything God makes available to help you. Know that we will accompany you in life's journey with our prayers, our good wishes, our heartiest support. Know you always have a special place in our hearts and remember this inspirational story.

An elderly man, in the final days of life, is lying in bed alone. He briefly awakens to see a large group of people clustered around him. Their faces are concerned and loving, but forlorn and sad. Confused, the old man smiles weakly and whispers, "You must be my childhood friends, come to say good-bye. I am so grateful."

Moving closer, the tallest figure gently grasps the old man's hand and replies, "Yes, we are your best and oldest friends, but long ago, you abandoned us, for we are the unfulfilled promises of your youth. We are the unrealized hopes, dreams, aspirations and plans that you once felt deeply in your heart, *but never nurtured or pursued*. We are the unique talents that you never refined, the special gifts you never discovered. Old friend, because you never gave us an opportunity for expression, we have come not to comfort you, but to die with you."

In concluding, we offer our congratulations to each of you, beloved sons and daughter in Christ, on your achievements and assure you of continued and on-going help as you progress toward your life goals. May Almighty God grant you his choicest and richest blessing, good health of body and soul and frequent reality checks for Many and Blessed Years!

# You Are Not An Accident

*Thus says the Lord who made you, your help, who formed you from the womb:  
Fear not, O Jacob my servant, the darling whom I have chosen*

*Isaiah 44: 2.*

You are not an accident. Our God and heavenly Father does not play dice.

Your birth was no mistake or mishap, and your life is not a fluke of nature. Your parents may not have planned you, but our heavenly Father certainly did. He was not at all surprised at your birth. In fact, He expected it because He wanted you and needed you.

Long before you were conceived by your parents, you were conceived in the mind of God. He thought of you first. It is not fate, nor chance, nor luck, nor coincidence that you are breathing at this very moment. You are alive because our God wanted to create you! He inspired and used your parents to be his instruments of creation. "The Lord will complete what he has done for me; your kindness, O Lord, endures forever; do not forsake the work of your hands" Psalms 138: 8.

Our heavenly Father prescribed every detail of your body, the type of fingernails, the shape of your cranium, size and detail of your nose and ears, along with the color of your eyes. He deliberately chose your race, the color of your skin, your hair and every other particular feature which goes to make the unique and individual you. He custom made your body just the way He wanted it and He also determined your natural talents that would be possessed by the uniqueness of your personality "I give thanks that I am fearfully, wonderfully made, wonderful are your works. My soul also knew you full well; nor was my frame unknown to you when I was made in secret, when I was fashioned in the depths of the earth" Psalms 139: 13 – 15.

Because our loving God made you for a formidable and astounding reason, He also decided when you would be born and how long you would live, even providing the necessary grace for you to call upon for the quality of life you would aspire to seek after. He would even integrate into your life other souls who would affirm and assist you. He planned the days of your life in advance, choosing the exact proper time for your birth and then for your return to him. His revelation in Scripture teaches us: "Your eyes have seen my actions; in your book they are all written; my days were limited before one of them existed. How weighty are your designs O God; how vast the sum of them!" Psalms 139: 16, 17.

Our gracious God decided where you would be born and where you would actually live for his purpose. Your race and nationality and other giftedness are not accidents. He left absolutely no detail to chance. He planned every minute detail of your body and mind for his purpose and your fulfillment and edification. Did He not say, "From one stock he made every nation of mankind to dwell on the face of the earth. It was he who set limits to their epochs and fixed the boundaries of the regions. They were to seek after God, yet, to grope for him and perhaps eventually to find him, though he is not really far from any one of us. 'In him we live and move and have our being,' as some of our own poets have put it, for we, too, are his offspring" Acts of the Apostles 17: 26 – 28. Nothing, down to the minutest and smallest detail is an accident, even to a birthmark in a particular place, is not arbitrary; it is all for a purpose.

Most amazing, our God decided how you would be born. Regardless of the circumstances of your birth or its supposed encompassing details, or who your parents are, God had a plan in creating you and He used your parents to achieve his own purpose. It does not matter if your parents are good, bad or indifferent, God knew that those two individuals possessed *exactly* the right combination and genetic makeup to create the custom *you* He had in mind. They alone possessed the combined DNA that God wanted to use to make you.

While there are illegitimate parents, there are no illegitimate children. Many children are unplanned by their parents, but never is a child born unplanned by God. God's purpose takes into account human error, even sin and overcomes it and sanctifies it and rectifies it.

God acts purposefully and never does anything accidentally and He never makes mistakes. He does not create trash as the common adage has it. He has a reason for every thing He creates. Every plant, every animal was planned and conceived by God and every person was designed with a purpose in mind. God's motive for creating you was motivated by love. He wanted to share it personally and individually with you. His revelation to us says, "Long before he laid down earth's foundations, he had us in mind, had settled on us as the focus of his love" Ephesians 1: 4.

God was thinking of you even before He made the world. In fact that is precisely why He created it. God designed this planet's environment just so we could live in it. We are the focus of his love and most valuable and cherished of all his creation. We are reminded, "God decided to give us life through the word of truth so we might be the

most important of all things he made" James 1: 18. This is how much God loves, honors and values you!

God is not haphazard; He planned all of you with precision. The more physicists, biologists and other scientists learn about the universe, the better we understand how it is uniquely suited for our human life existence, custom made with the exact specifications that make human life possible.

Dr Michael Denton, senior research fellow in human molecular genetics at the University of Otago in New Zealand, has concluded, "All the evidence available in the biological sciences, supports the core proposition...that the cosmos is a specially designed whole with life and mankind as its fundamental goal and purpose, a whole in which all facets of reality have their meaning and explanation in this central fact" *Nature's Destiny: How the Laws of Biology reveal Purpose in the Universe*. Inspired prophets reveal the same truth: "God formed the earth...He did not create it to be empty but formed it to be inhabited" Isaiah 45: 18.

Why did God do all this? Why did He bother to go to all the trouble of creating a universe for us? Because He is a God of love. This kind of love is difficult to fathom, but is fundamentally reliable. You were created as a special object of God's love! God made you so He could love you. This a truth to build your future life on! As a matter of fact we are taught, "God is love" 1 John 4: 8.

Notice this does not say, God has love; He *is* love! Love is the essence of God's character. There is perfect love in the fellowship of the Holy Trinity, so God did not need to create you. He was not lonely. He was not desperate. But He wanted to make you in order to give expression to his love. He speaks to you: "I have carried you since you were born; I have taken care of you from your birth. Even when you are old, I will be the same. Even when your hair has turned gray, I will take care of you. I made you and I will take care of you" Isaiah 46: 3, 4.

If there was no God, perhaps we would all be accidents, the result of an astronomical random chance in the universe. Life would then have no meaning or purpose or significance or depth. There would be no right or wrong and no hope beyond your brief years here on earth.

But there *is* a God who made you for a reason and your life has profound and enduring meaning! We discover that meaning and purpose only when we make God the reference point of our lives. The message paraphrased of St. Paul is, "The only

accurate way to understand ourselves is by what God is and what he does for us"  
Romans 12: 3.

These verses sum it all up:

You are who you are for a reason.  
You are part of an intricate plan.  
You are a precious and perfect unique design,  
called God's special man.

You look like you look for a reason,  
our God made no mistake.  
He knit you together within the womb,  
you are just what He wanted to make.

The parents you had were the ones He chose,  
and no matter how you feel,  
they were custom designed with God's plan in mind,  
and they bear the Master's seal.

No that trauma you faced was not easy,  
and God wept that it hurt you so,  
but it was allowed to shape your heart,  
so that into his likeness you would grow.

You are who you are for a reason,  
You have been formed by the Master's rod.  
You are who you are, beloved,  
Because there is a God!

**Thought to Remember:** *I am not an accident!*

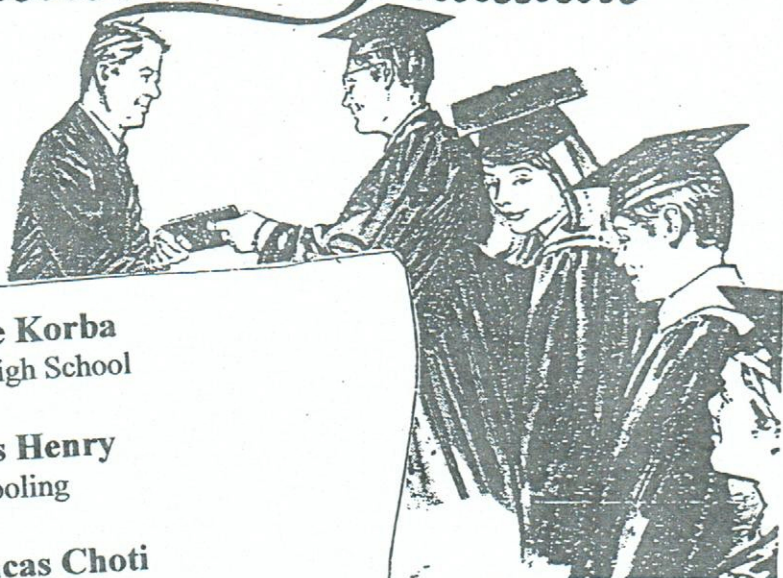
**Verse to Recall:** *I am your Creator;  
You were in my care even before you were born!*  
Isaiah 44: 2.

I am God's unique creation. What areas of my personality, background and physical appearance and functioning am I struggling to accept?



# *Congratulations Graduate*

You've done it, grad !  
A solid foundation for a  
bright future has been  
built with your diploma.  
Congratulations!



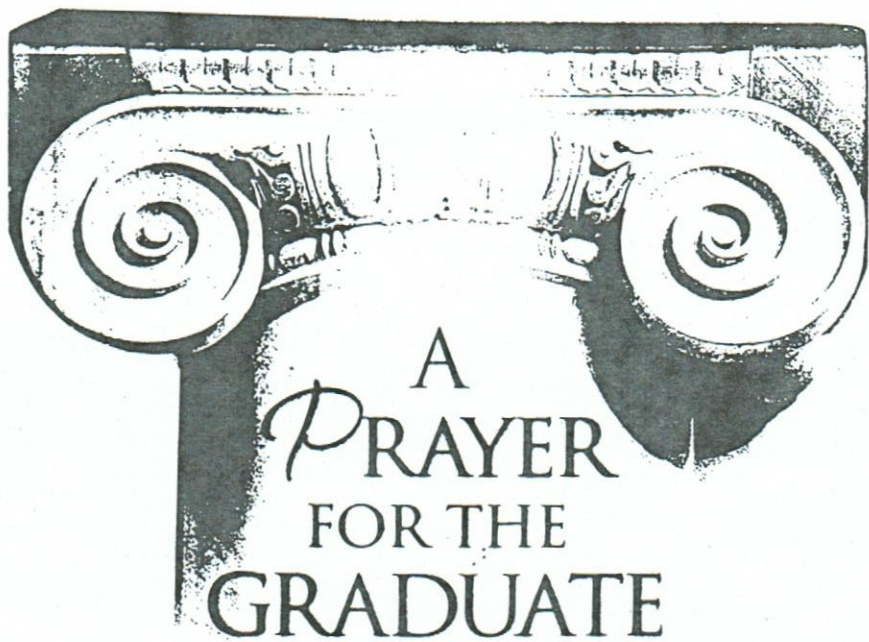
**Rachel Marie Korba**  
Biotechnology High School

**Kevin James Henry**  
Home Schooling

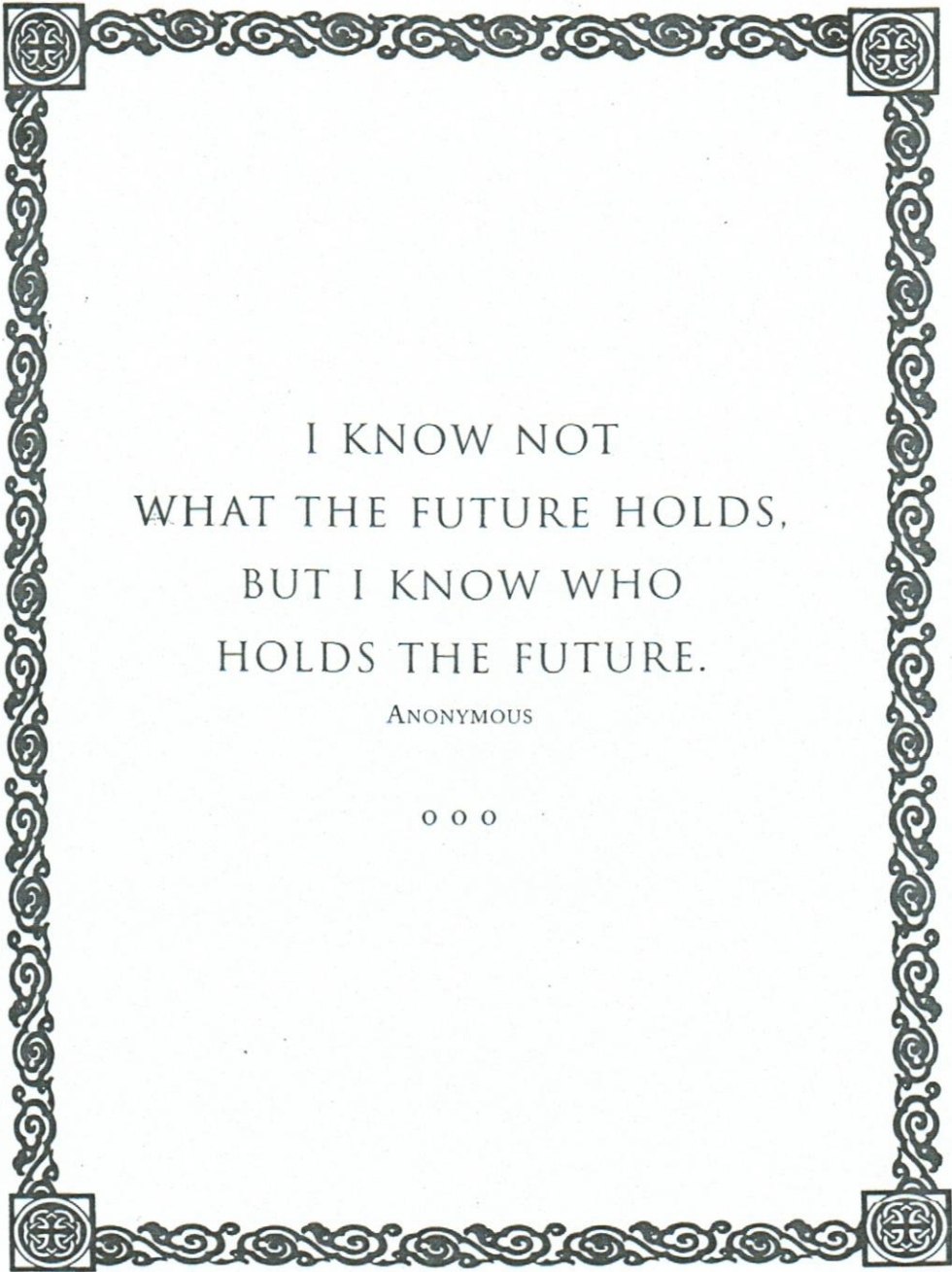
**Alexander Lucas Choti**  
Delaware Township School

**THE BEST OF LUCK**

**God grant you  
Many, Blessed, Happy and Successful Healthy  
Years!**



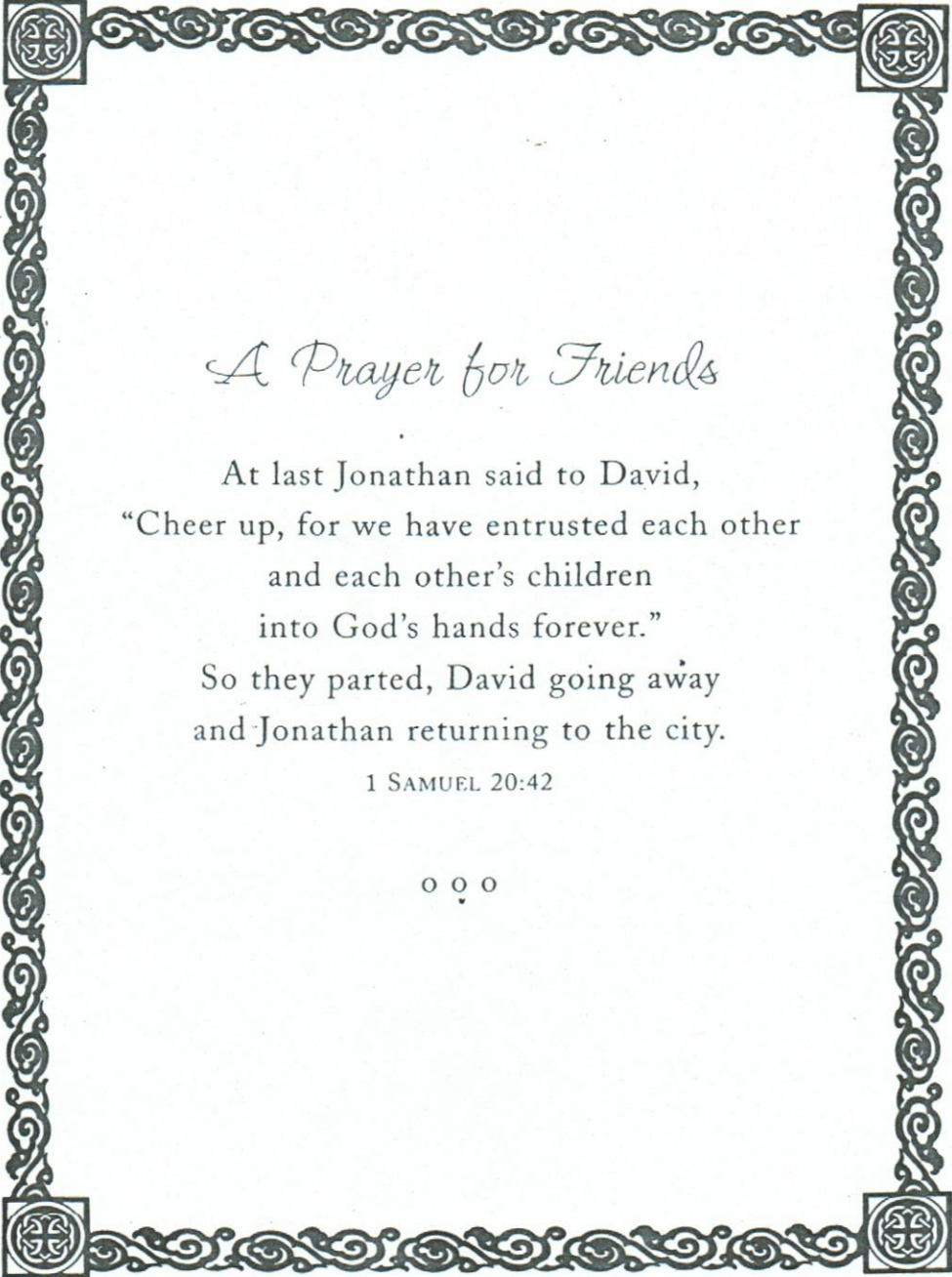
A  
PRAYER  
FOR THE  
GRADUATE



I KNOW NOT  
WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS,  
BUT I KNOW WHO  
HOLDS THE FUTURE.

ANONYMOUS

o o o



*A Prayer for Friends*

At last Jonathan said to David,  
“Cheer up, for we have entrusted each other  
and each other’s children  
into God’s hands forever.”

So they parted, David going away  
and Jonathan returning to the city.

1 SAMUEL 20:42

o o o



## *My Prayer*

It is difficult to have to leave friends whom I have loved and trusted for so many years. Now that I have graduated, my friends and I are going to different colleges or moving on to different places. We are all facing unique situations with so much opportunity.

I wish happiness and the best that life has to offer for all of my friends as we go our separate ways. I pray that we would all make the most of the opportunities given to us. If we stay in God's will for our lives, I believe that when our paths cross again, we will be able to be a blessing to each other in ways we could never have imagined.

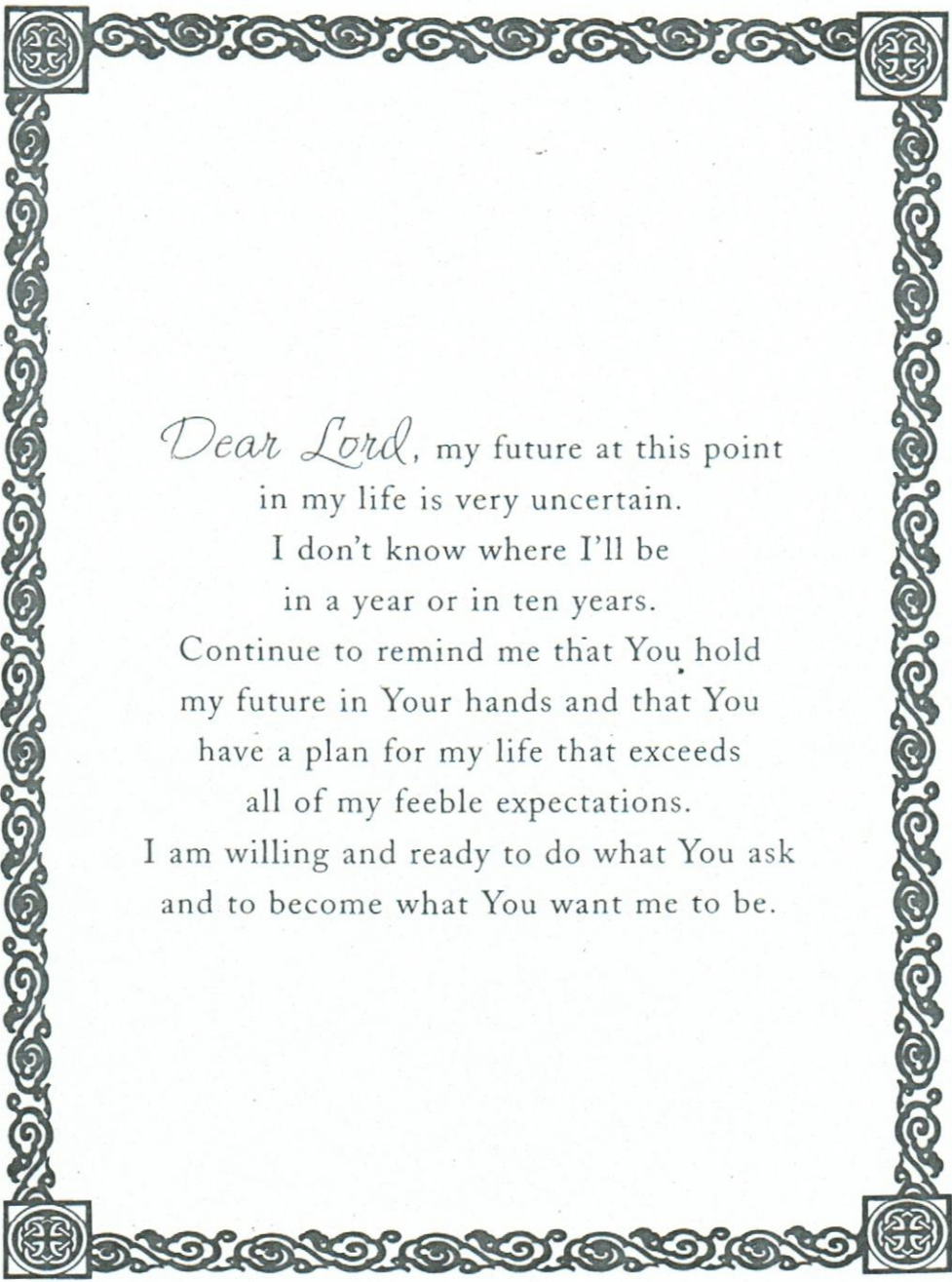
Some people come into our lives and quickly go;  
others stay awhile and leave footprints on our hearts,  
and we are never, ever the same.

AUTHOR UNKNOWN



IF ALL OF MY FRIENDS  
WERE TO JUMP OFF OF A BRIDGE,  
I WOULD BE THE ONE AT THE  
BOTTOM TO CATCH THEM.

AUTHOR UNKNOWN



*Dear Lord*, my future at this point  
in my life is very uncertain.

I don't know where I'll be  
in a year or in ten years.

Continue to remind me that You hold  
my future in Your hands and that You  
have a plan for my life that exceeds  
all of my feeble expectations.

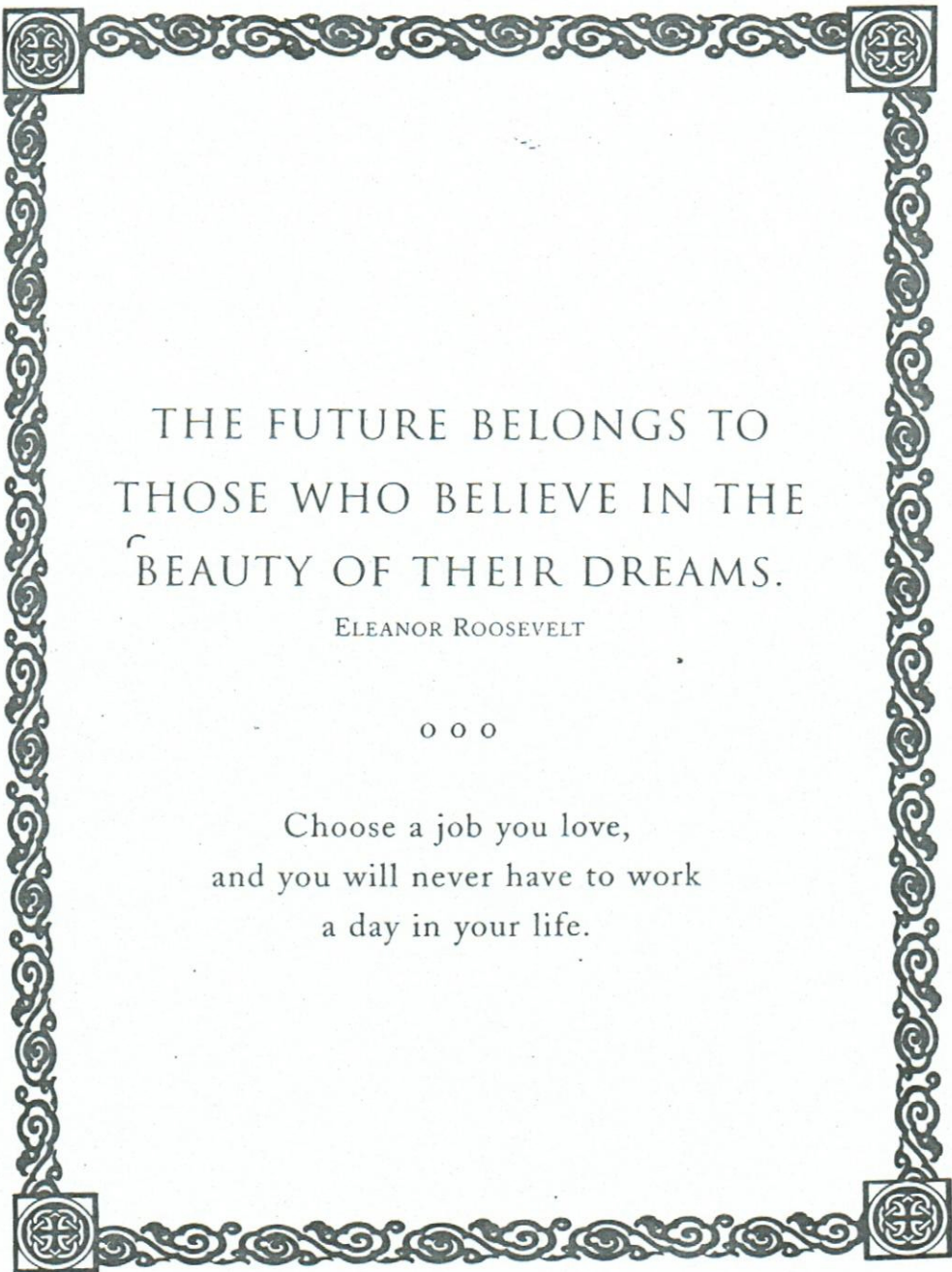
I am willing and ready to do what You ask  
and to become what You want me to be.



## The Healing Power of Prayer

In a peaceful sanctuary  
Removed from worldly care,  
One finds spiritual solace  
In the healing power of prayer.  
Like pure refreshing waters  
We cleanse the heart and soul,  
And wash away the sorrows  
When God is in control.  
Burdens become lighter  
When to Him we pray,  
And the outlook brighter  
To cheer us on our way.



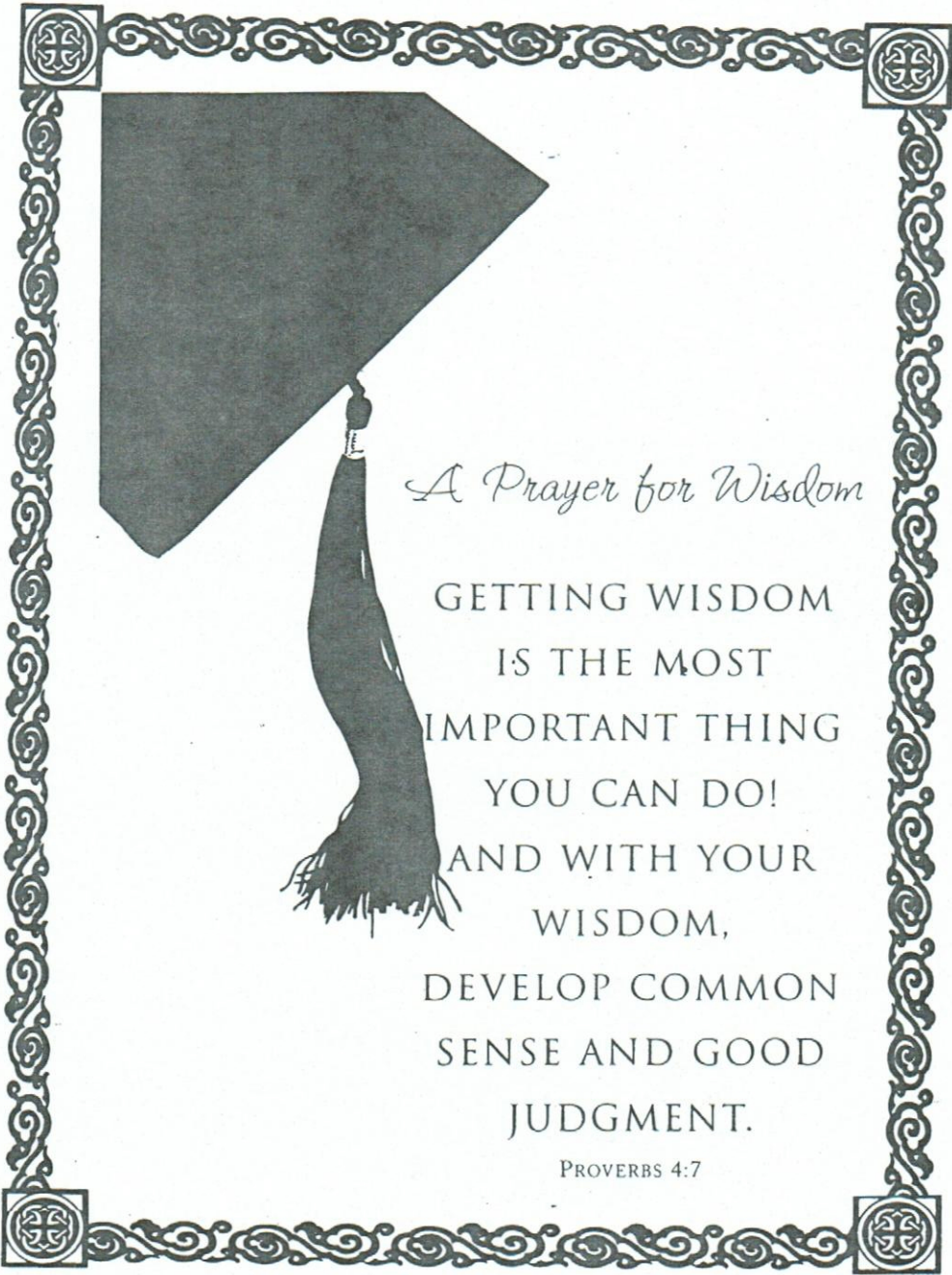


THE FUTURE BELONGS TO  
THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN THE  
BEAUTY OF THEIR DREAMS.

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

o o o

Choose a job you love,  
and you will never have to work  
a day in your life.



*A Prayer for Wisdom*

GETTING WISDOM  
IS THE MOST  
IMPORTANT THING  
YOU CAN DO!  
AND WITH YOUR  
WISDOM,  
DEVELOP COMMON  
SENSE AND GOOD  
JUDGMENT.

PROVERBS 4:7

*A Prayer for the Future*

I AM STILL NOT ALL I SHOULD BE,  
BUT I AM BRINGING ALL MY  
ENERGIES TO BEAR ON THIS ONE  
THING: FORGETTING THE PAST  
AND LOOKING FORWARD TO  
WHAT LIES AHEAD.

PHILIPPIANS 3:13



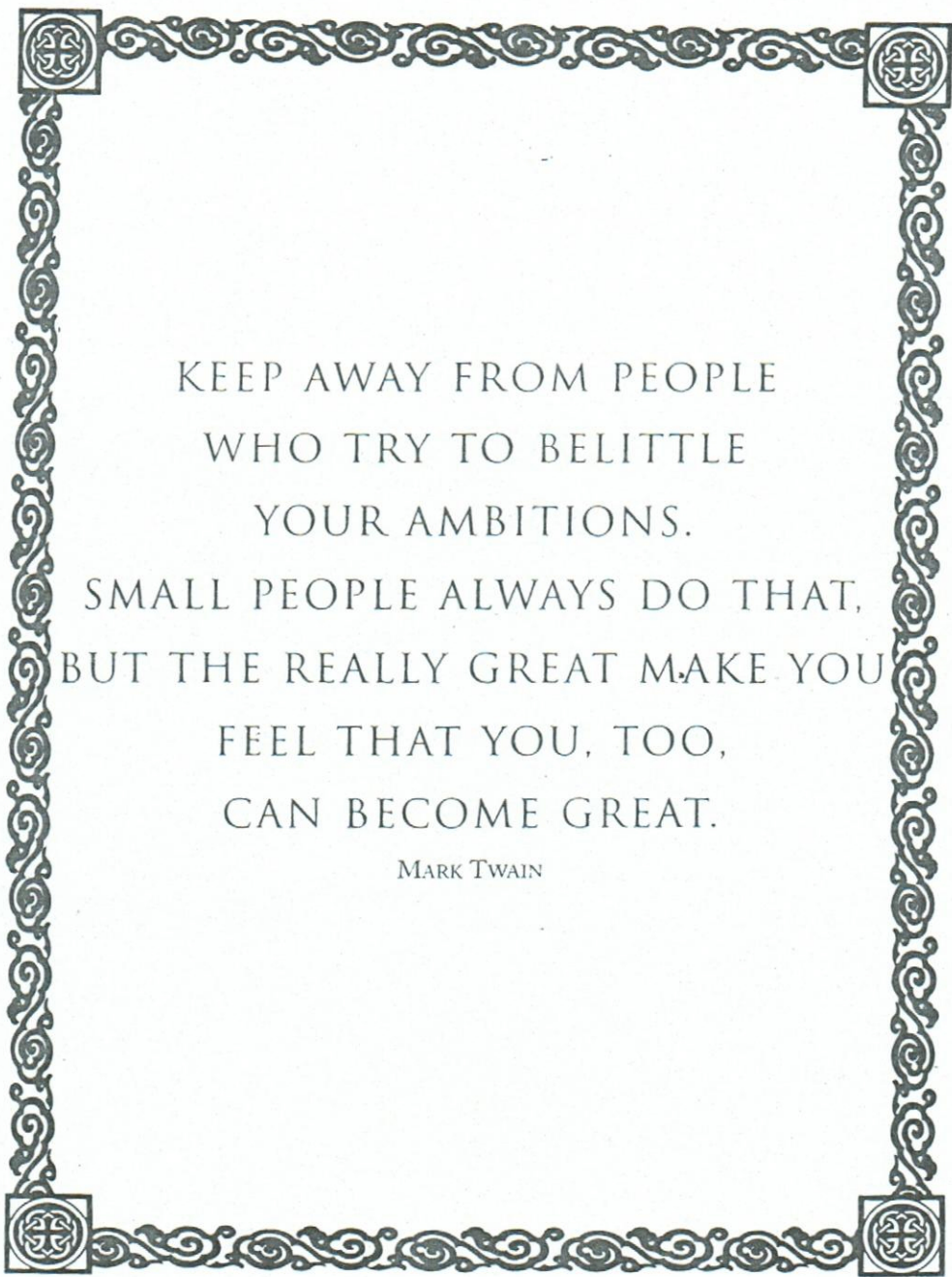
*It is not enough to have a good mind;  
the main thing is to use it well.*

RENÉ DESCARTES



In wisdom gathered over time  
I have found that every experience  
is a form of exploration.

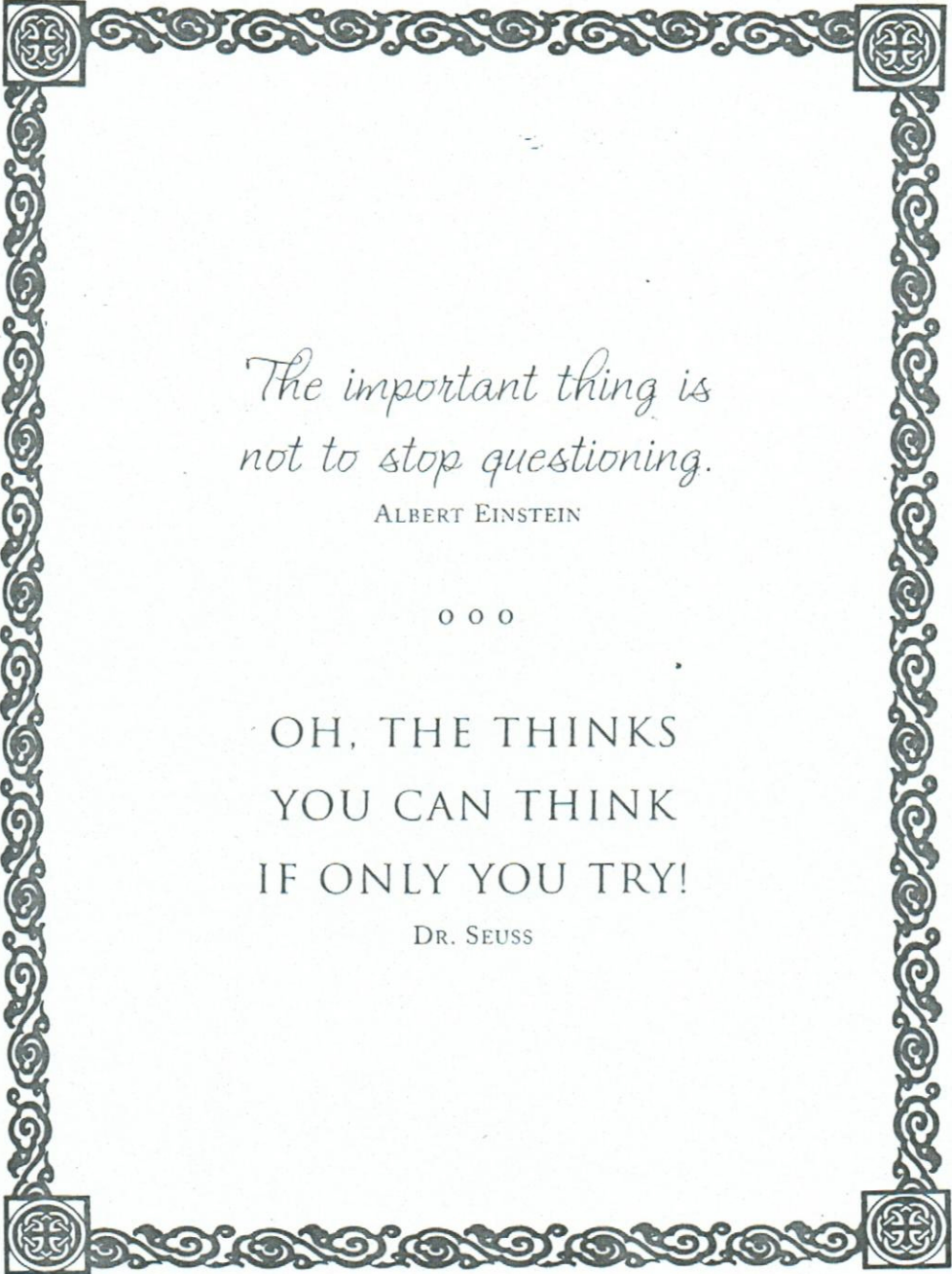
ANSEL ADAMS



KEEP AWAY FROM PEOPLE  
WHO TRY TO BELITTLE  
YOUR AMBITIONS.

SMALL PEOPLE ALWAYS DO THAT,  
BUT THE REALLY GREAT MAKE YOU  
FEEL THAT YOU, TOO,  
CAN BECOME GREAT.

MARK TWAIN




*The important thing is  
not to stop questioning.*

ALBERT EINSTEIN

o o o

OH, THE THINGS  
YOU CAN THINK  
IF ONLY YOU TRY!

DR. SEUSS



*A Prayer for Success*

IN EVERYTHING YOU DO,  
PUT GOD FIRST,  
AND HE WILL DIRECT YOU  
AND CROWN YOUR EFFORTS  
WITH SUCCESS.

PROVERBS 3:6

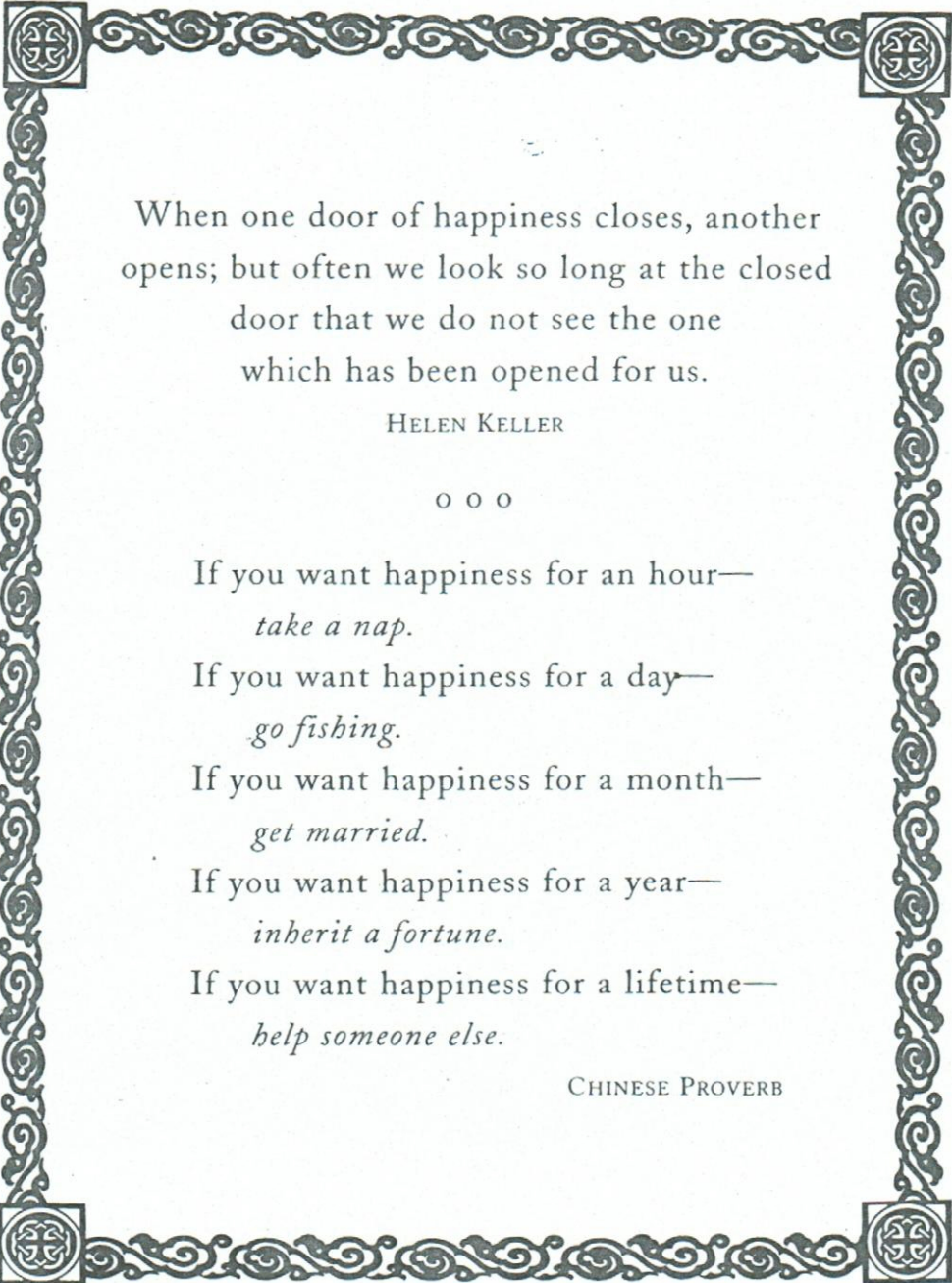


*A Prayer for Courage*

GOD IS OUR REFUGE AND  
STRENGTH, A TESTED HELP  
IN TIMES OF TROUBLE.  
AND SO WE NEED NOT FEAR EVEN  
IF THE WORLD BLOWS UP,  
AND THE MOUNTAINS CRUMBLE  
INTO THE SEA.

PSALM 46:1-2





When one door of happiness closes, another  
opens; but often we look so long at the closed  
door that we do not see the one  
which has been opened for us.

HELEN KELLER

o o o

If you want happiness for an hour—  
*take a nap.*

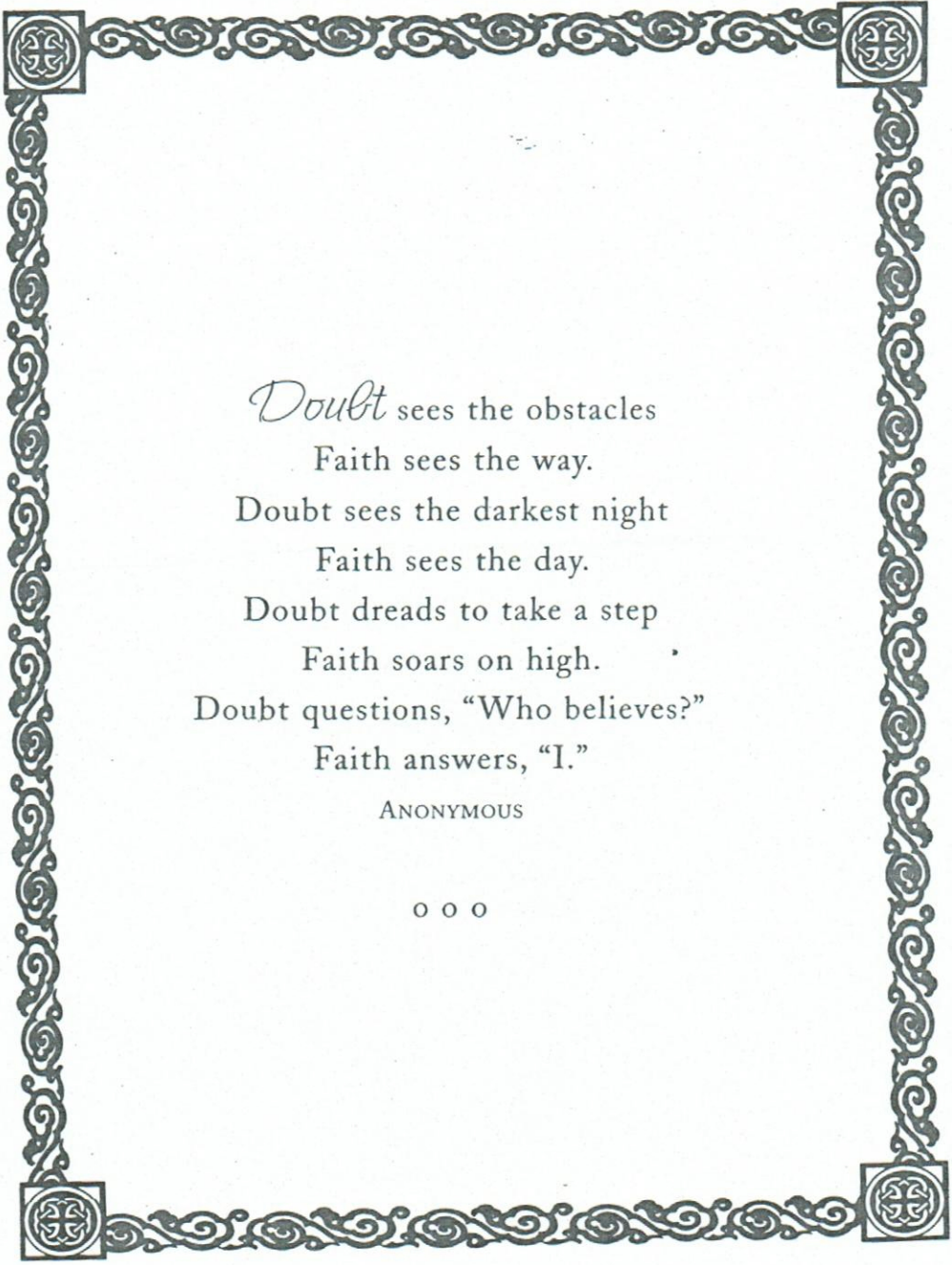
If you want happiness for a day—  
*go fishing.*

If you want happiness for a month—  
*get married.*

If you want happiness for a year—  
*inherit a fortune.*

If you want happiness for a lifetime—  
*help someone else.*

CHINESE PROVERB



*Doubt* sees the obstacles  
Faith sees the way.  
Doubt sees the darkest night  
Faith sees the day.  
Doubt dreads to take a step  
Faith soars on high.  
Doubt questions, "Who believes?"  
Faith answers, "I."

ANONYMOUS

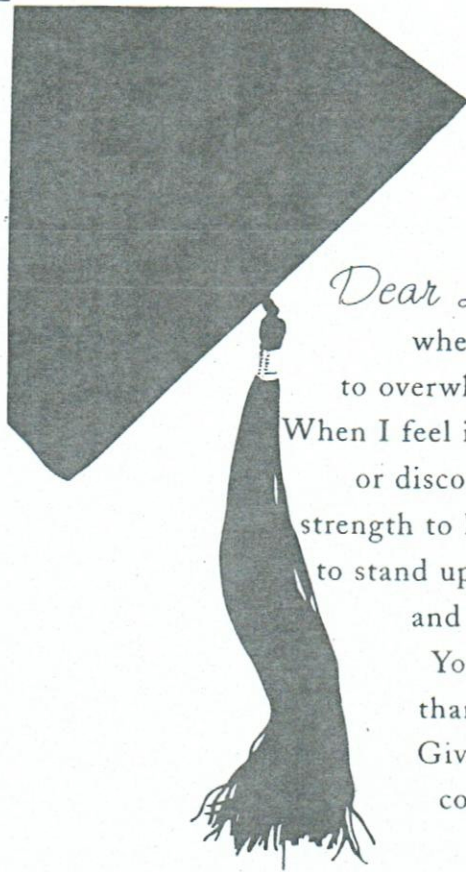
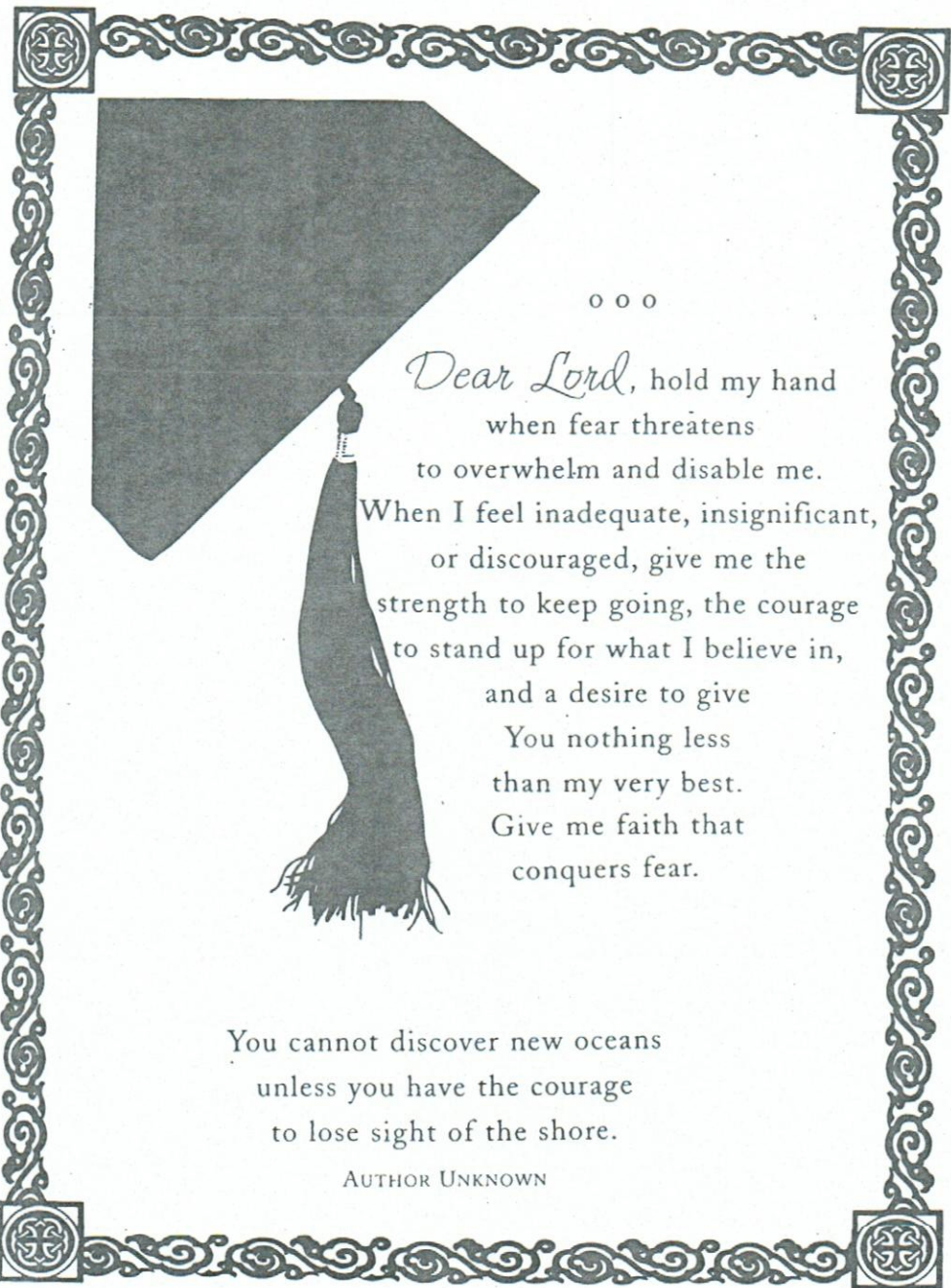
o o o

*A Prayer for Happiness*

DO YOU WANT TO BE  
TRULY RICH? YOU ALREADY  
ARE IF YOU ARE HAPPY.

1 TIMOTHY 6:6



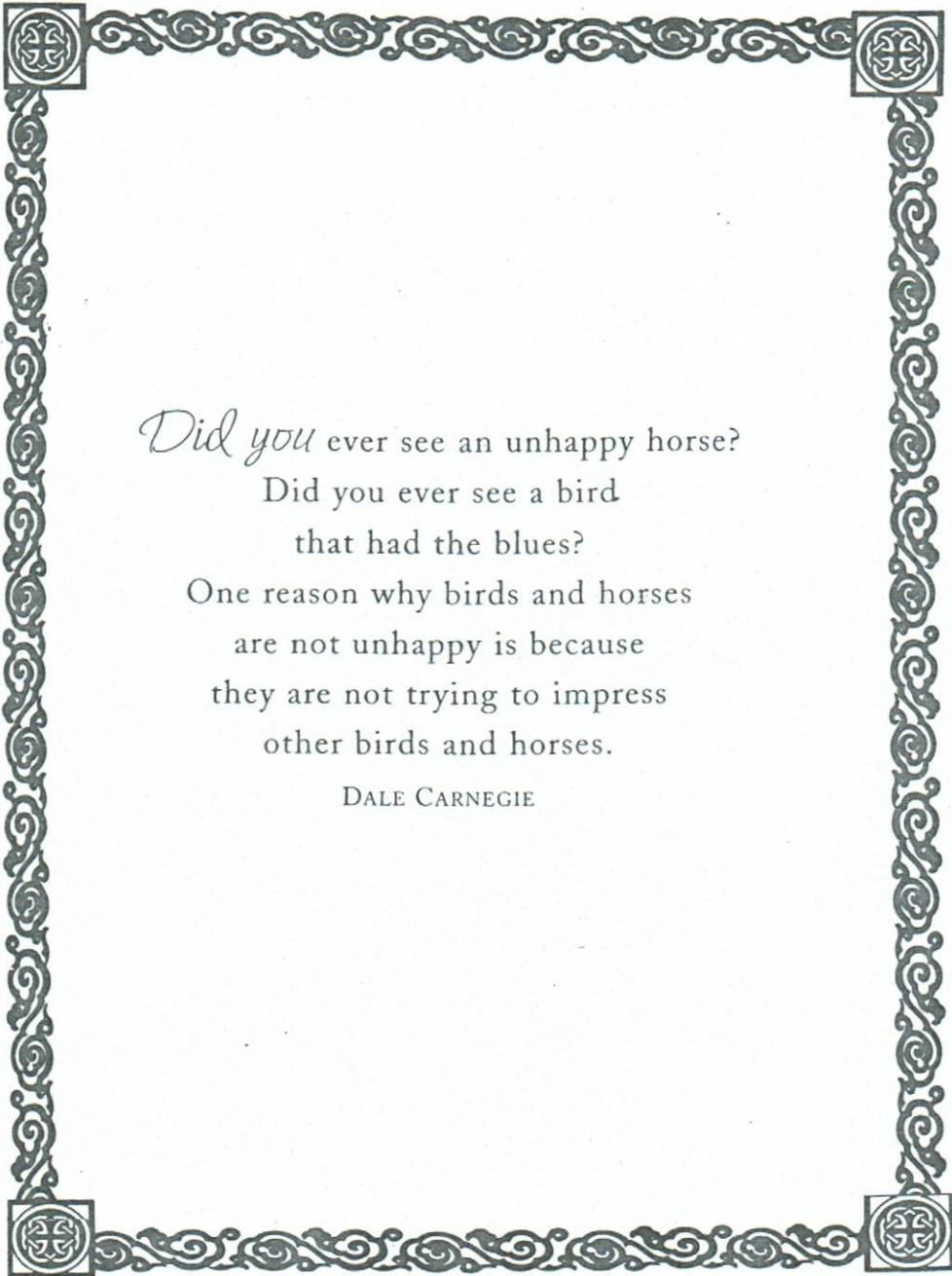


o o o

*Dear Lord*, hold my hand  
when fear threatens  
to overwhelm and disable me.  
When I feel inadequate, insignificant,  
or discouraged, give me the  
strength to keep going, the courage  
to stand up for what I believe in,  
and a desire to give  
You nothing less  
than my very best.  
Give me faith that  
conquers fear.

You cannot discover new oceans  
unless you have the courage  
to lose sight of the shore.

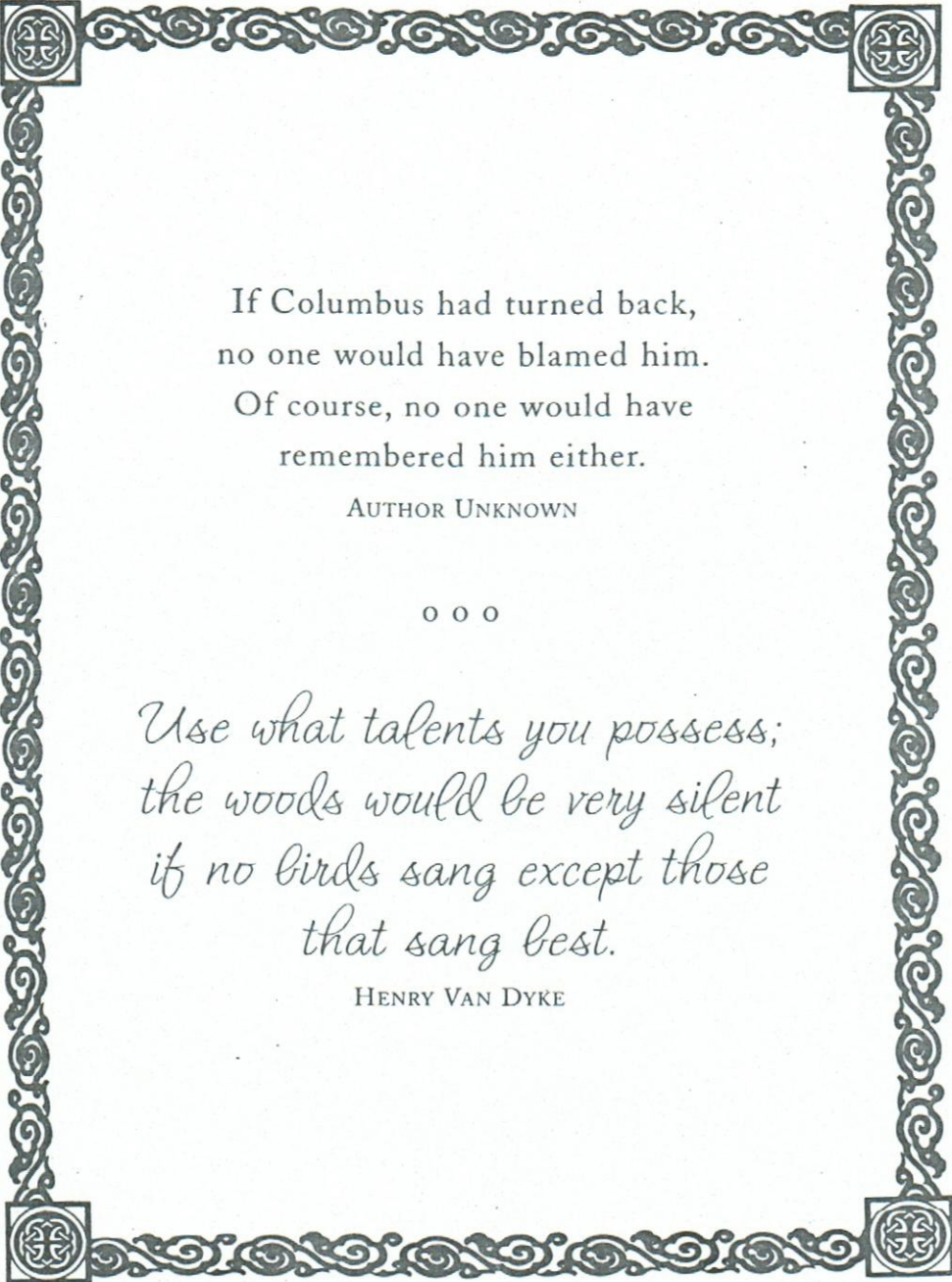
AUTHOR UNKNOWN



*Did you* ever see an unhappy horse?  
Did you ever see a bird  
that had the blues?

One reason why birds and horses  
are not unhappy is because  
they are not trying to impress  
other birds and horses.

DALE CARNEGIE



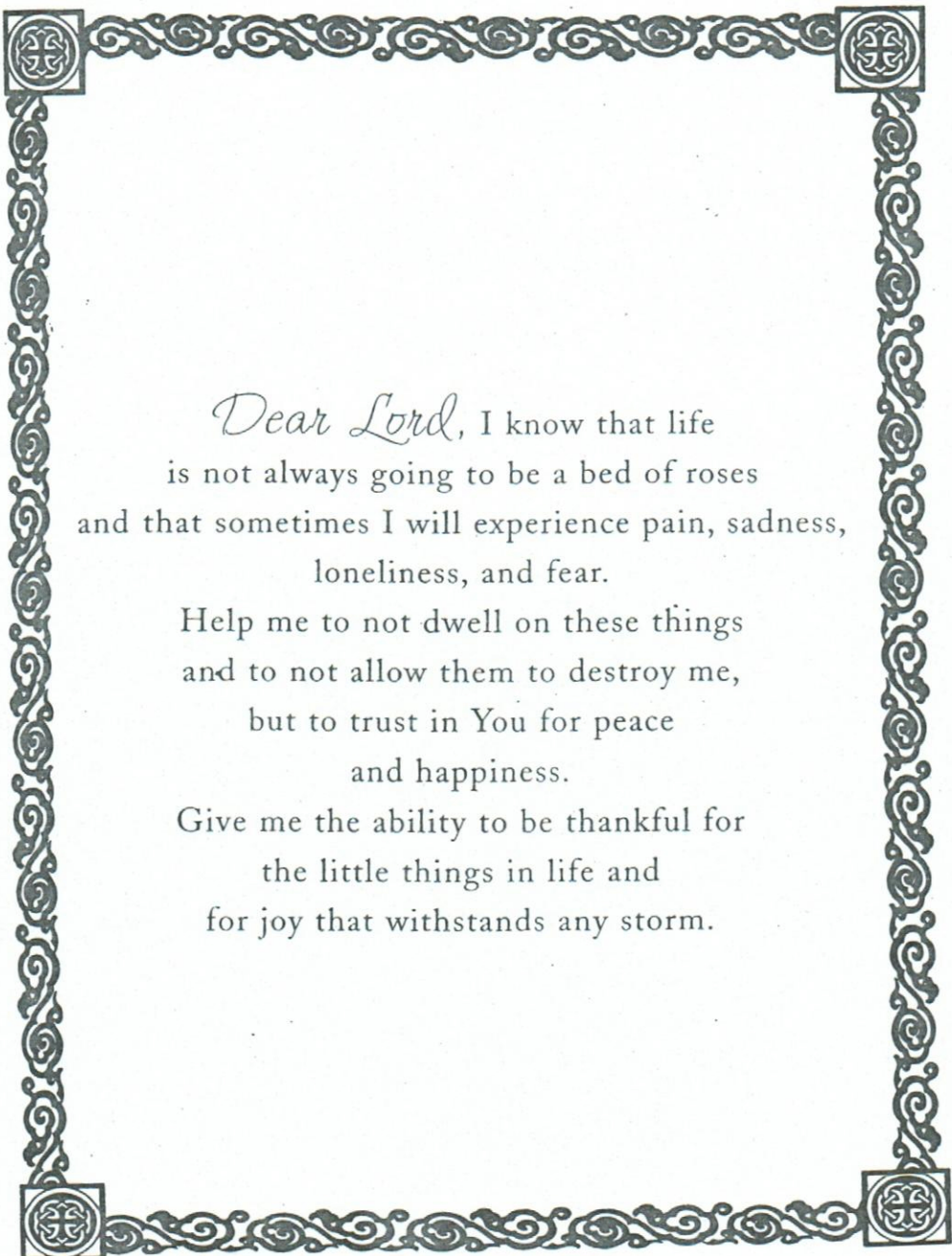
If Columbus had turned back,  
no one would have blamed him.  
Of course, no one would have  
remembered him either.

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

o o o

*Use what talents you possess;  
the woods would be very silent  
if no birds sang except those  
that sang best.*

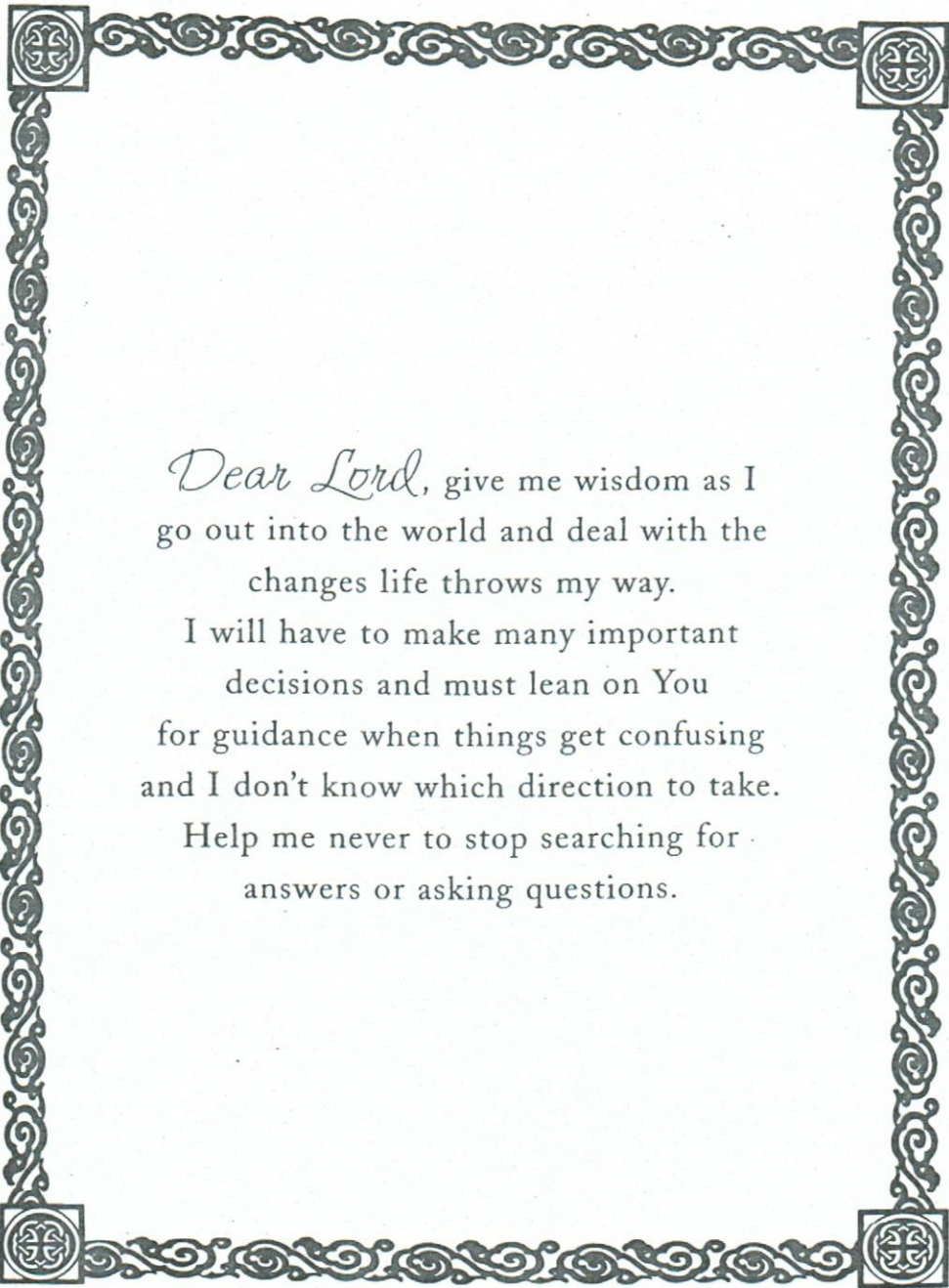
HENRY VAN DYKE



*Dear Lord,* I know that life  
is not always going to be a bed of roses  
and that sometimes I will experience pain, sadness,  
loneliness, and fear.

Help me to not dwell on these things  
and to not allow them to destroy me,  
but to trust in You for peace  
and happiness.

Give me the ability to be thankful for  
the little things in life and  
for joy that withstands any storm.

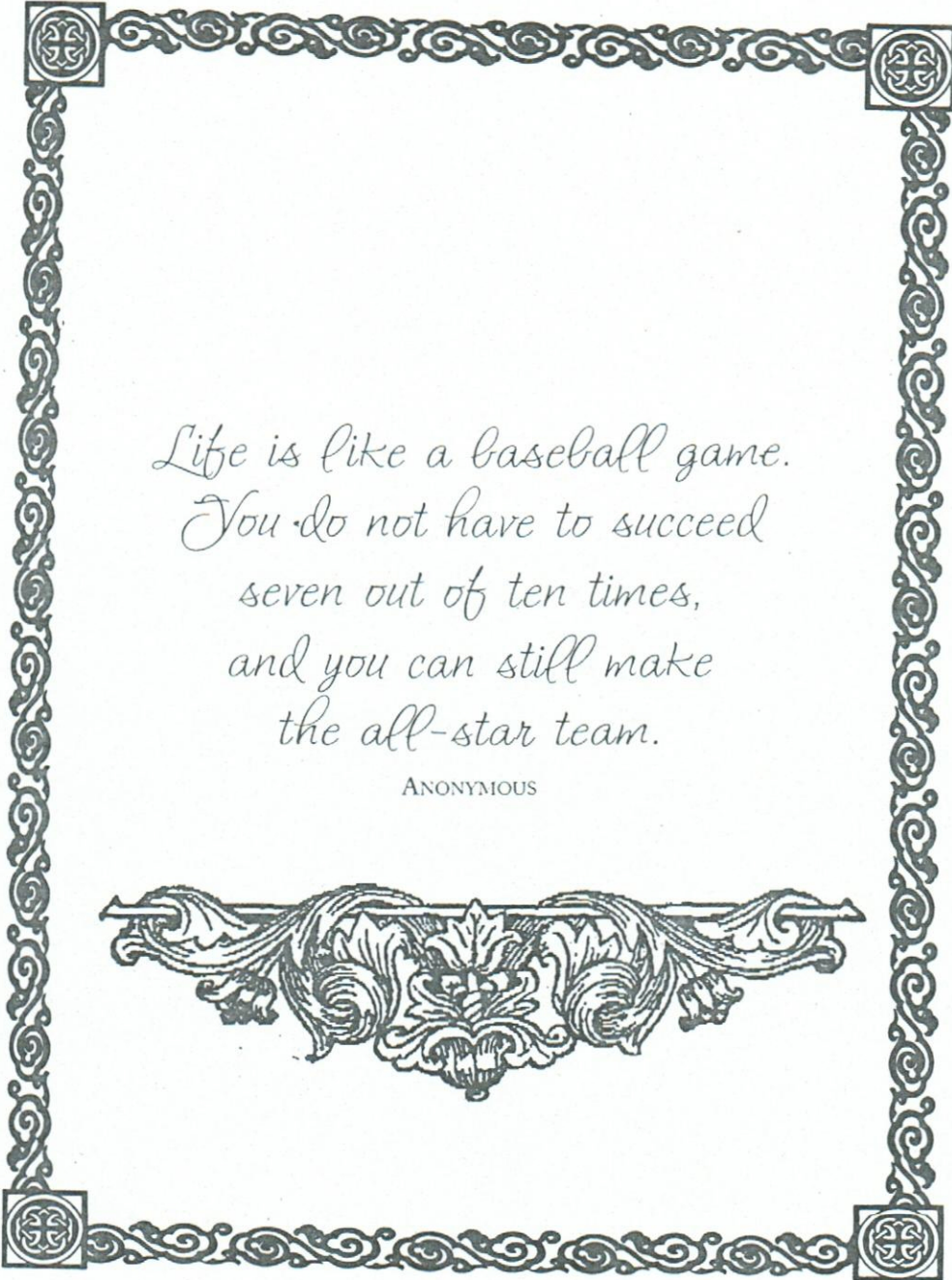


*Dear Lord,* give me wisdom as I  
go out into the world and deal with the  
changes life throws my way.

I will have to make many important  
decisions and must lean on You  
for guidance when things get confusing  
and I don't know which direction to take.

Help me never to stop searching for  
answers or asking questions.





*Life is like a baseball game.  
You do not have to succeed  
seven out of ten times,  
and you can still make  
the all-star team.*

ANONYMOUS





## From Darkness Into Light

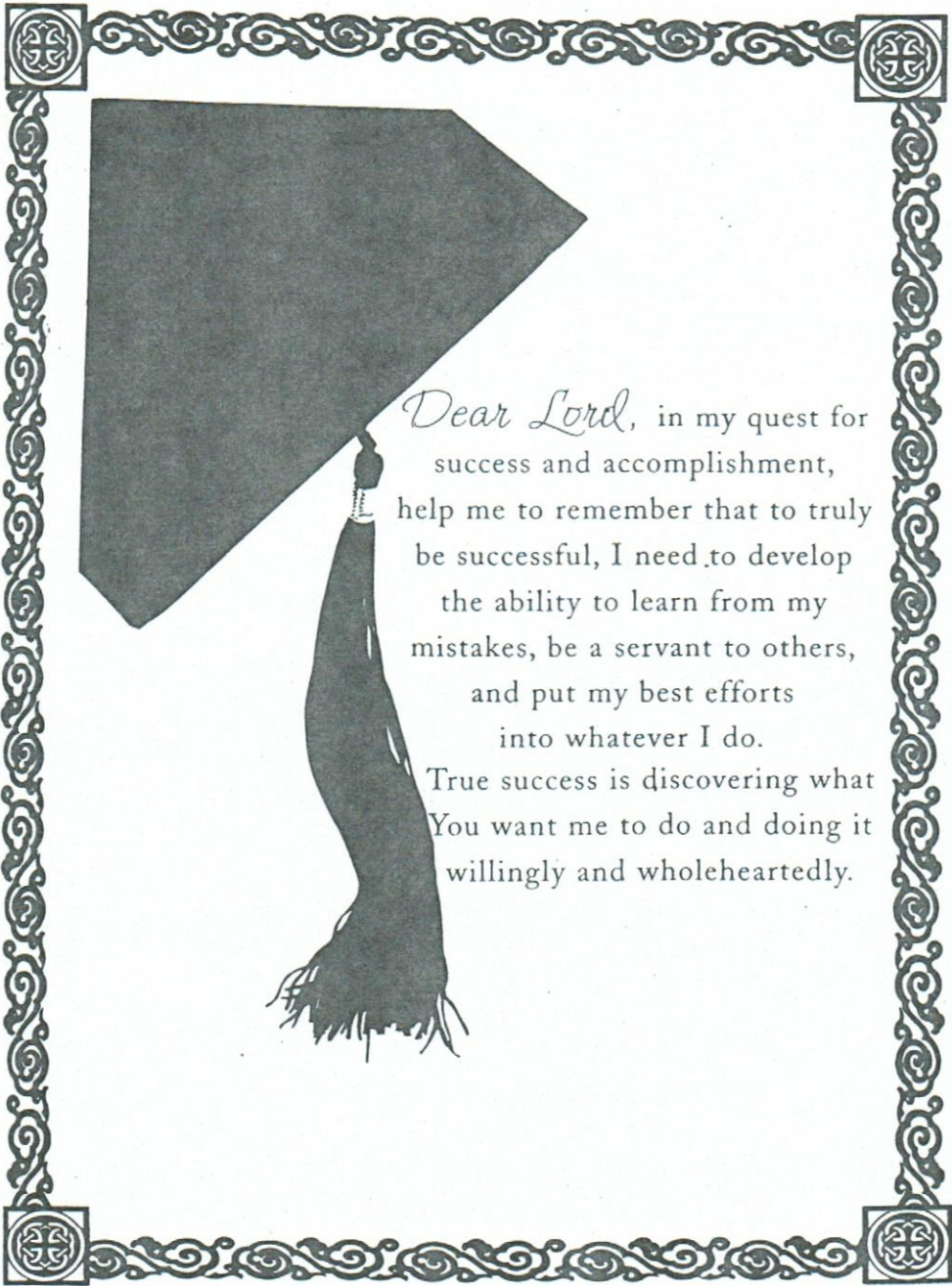
Thank you, Lord, for loving me  
when I didn't love myself,  
Alone, unnoticed like a book  
on a long forgotten shelf.

Thank you, Lord, for showing me  
a new and better way.  
You gave me hope so I could cope  
with problems of the day.

You dried my tears so I could see  
beyond my darkest night  
The shadow of an empty tomb  
aglow in bright sunlight.

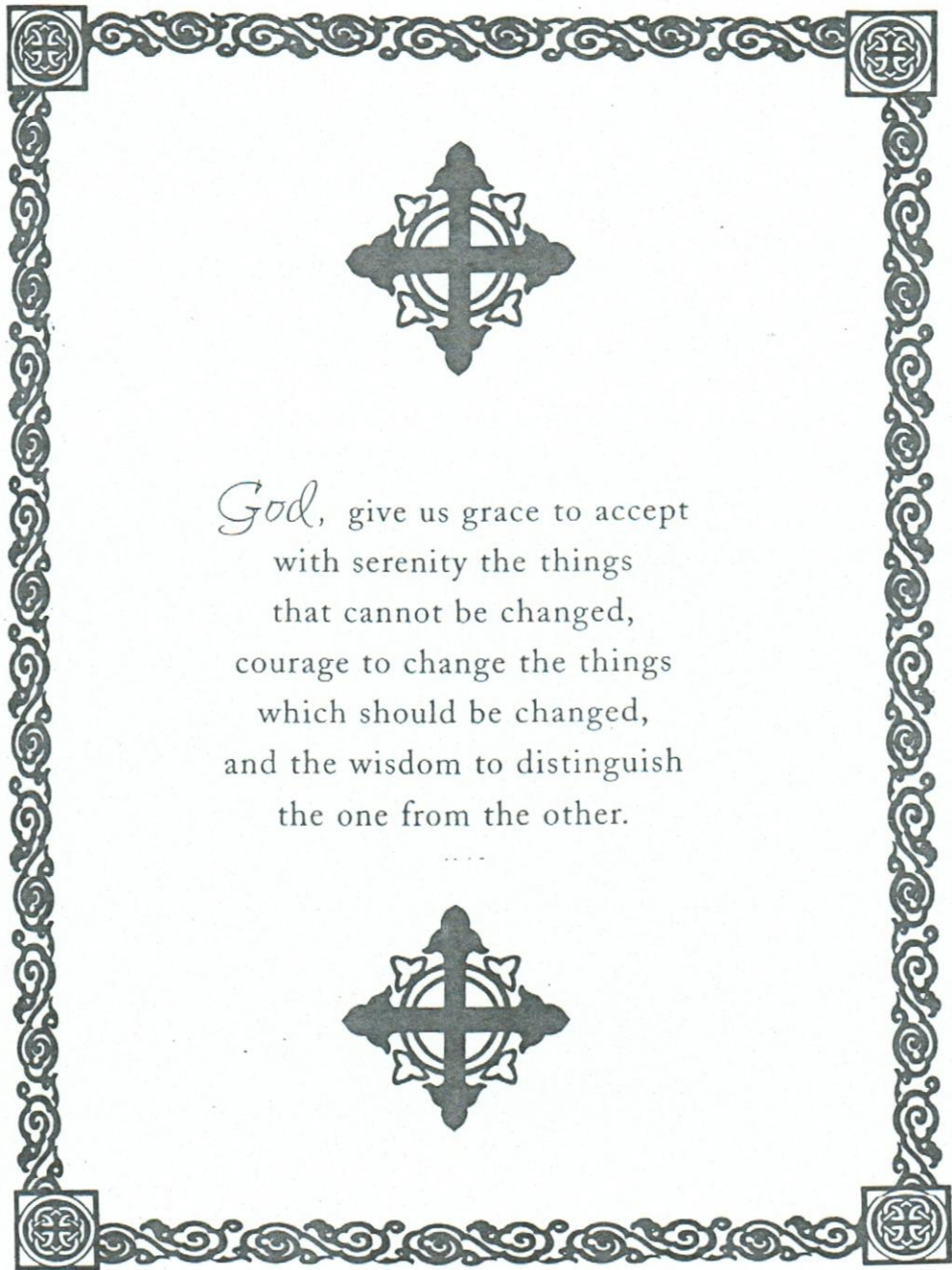
You lifted me when I was down;  
You heard my feeble prayer  
And let me know that I was loved  
and worthy of repair.

Thank you, Lord, for all these things  
so beautiful and bright,  
For taking time to change my life  
from darkness into light.



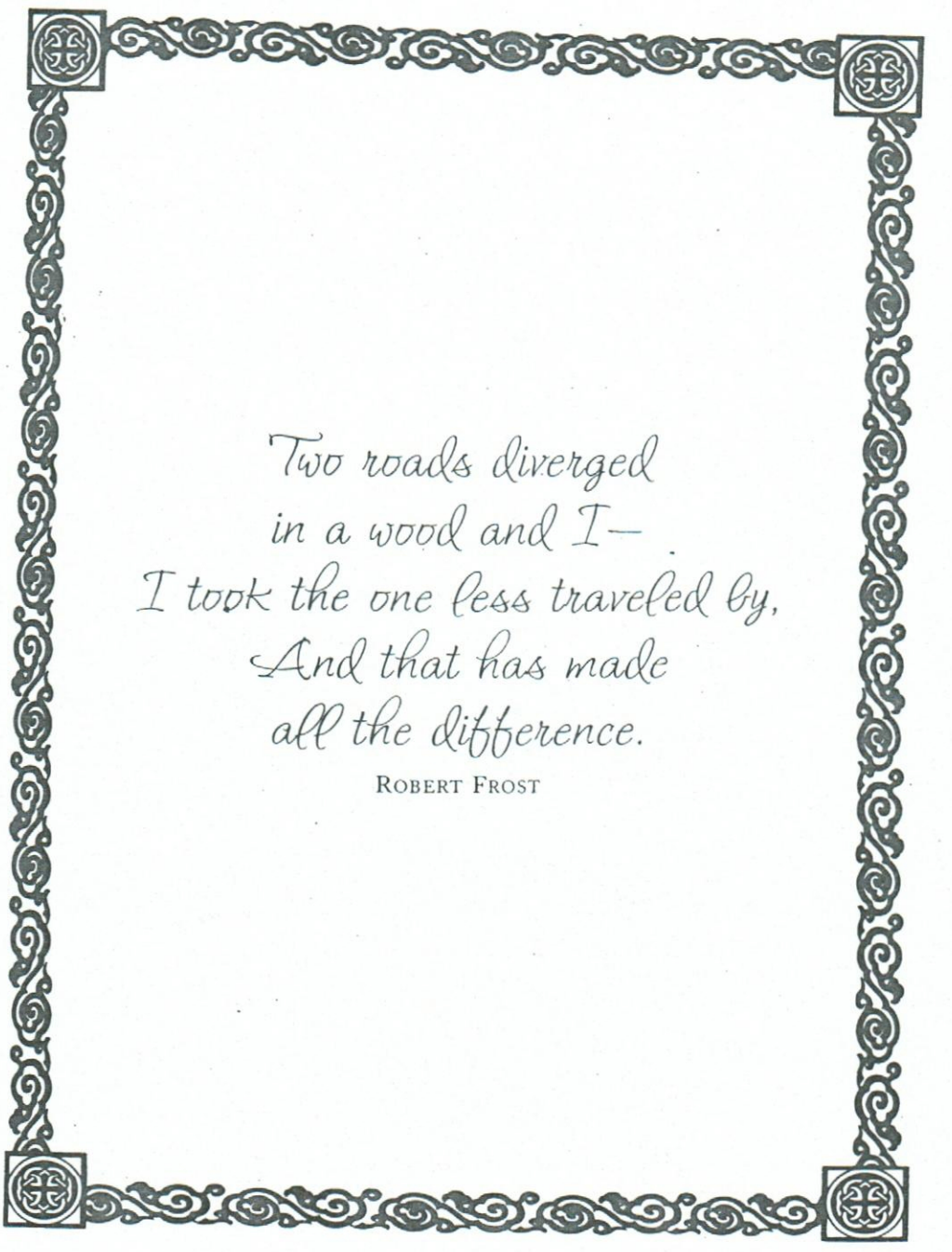
*Dear Lord,* in my quest for  
success and accomplishment,  
help me to remember that to truly  
be successful, I need to develop  
the ability to learn from my  
mistakes, be a servant to others,  
and put my best efforts  
into whatever I do.

True success is discovering what  
You want me to do and doing it  
willingly and wholeheartedly.



*God*, give us grace to accept  
with serenity the things  
that cannot be changed,  
courage to change the things  
which should be changed,  
and the wisdom to distinguish  
the one from the other.

....



*Two roads diverged  
in a wood and I—  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made  
all the difference.*

ROBERT FROST

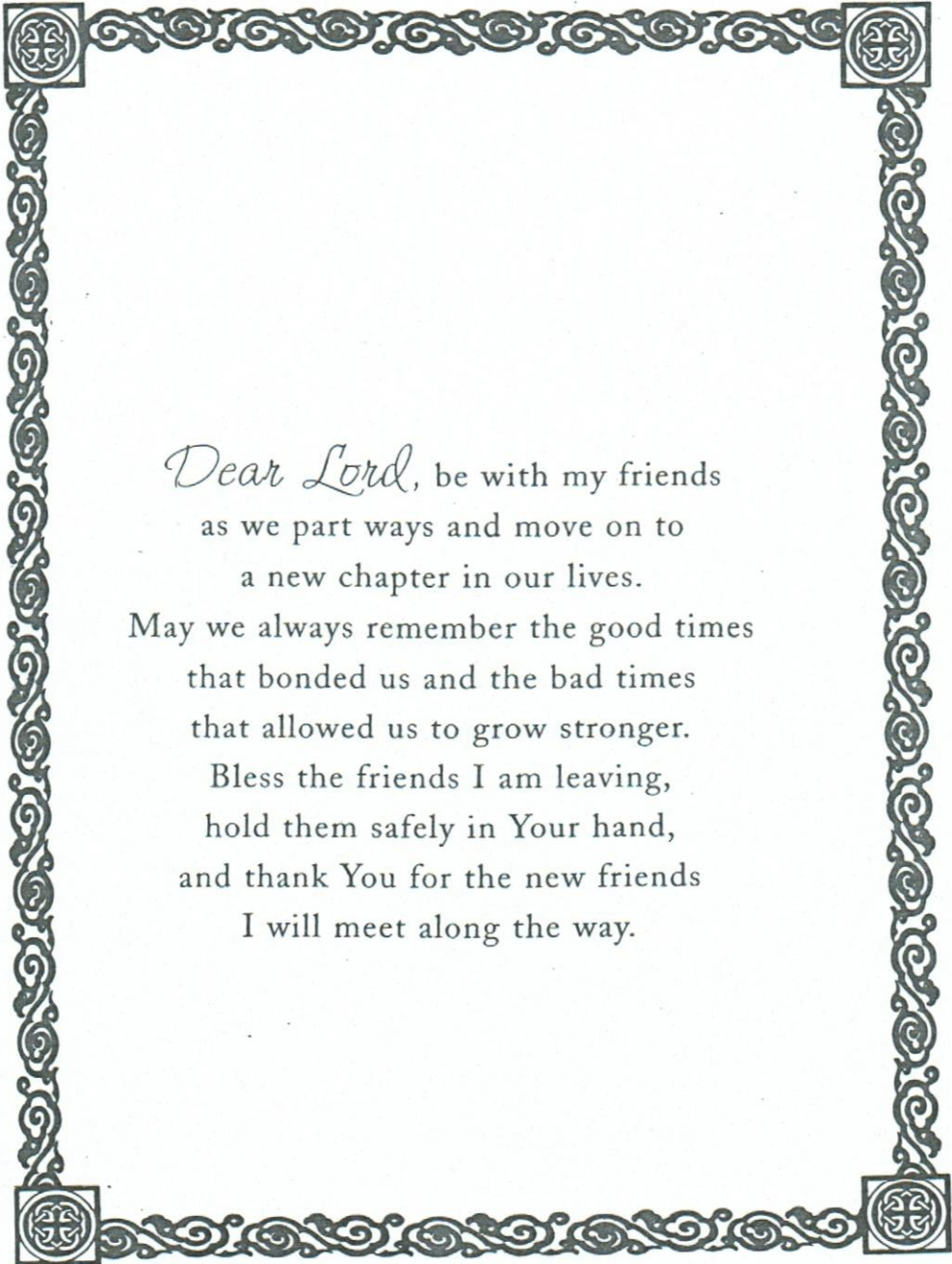


## Life's Pathways

We know life has its moments  
Of heartaches and despair,  
And when we need a helping hand  
We find God always there.

Life, too, is filled with joy and hope  
That thrills us through and through,  
And we should offer thanks to God  
Day after day anew.

Life knows success and happiness,  
Misfortune and distress.  
In times like these with faith in God  
We find true happiness.



*Dear Lord*, be with my friends  
as we part ways and move on to  
a new chapter in our lives.

May we always remember the good times  
that bonded us and the bad times  
that allowed us to grow stronger.

Bless the friends I am leaving,  
hold them safely in Your hand,  
and thank You for the new friends  
I will meet along the way.



*I Prayed for You*

I asked the Lord to bless you  
As I prayed for you today  
To guide you and protect you  
As you go along your way. . .  
His love is always with you  
His promises are true,  
And when we give Him all our cares  
You know He will see us through.  
So when the road you're traveling on  
Seems difficult at best  
Just remember I'm here praying  
And God will do the rest.

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

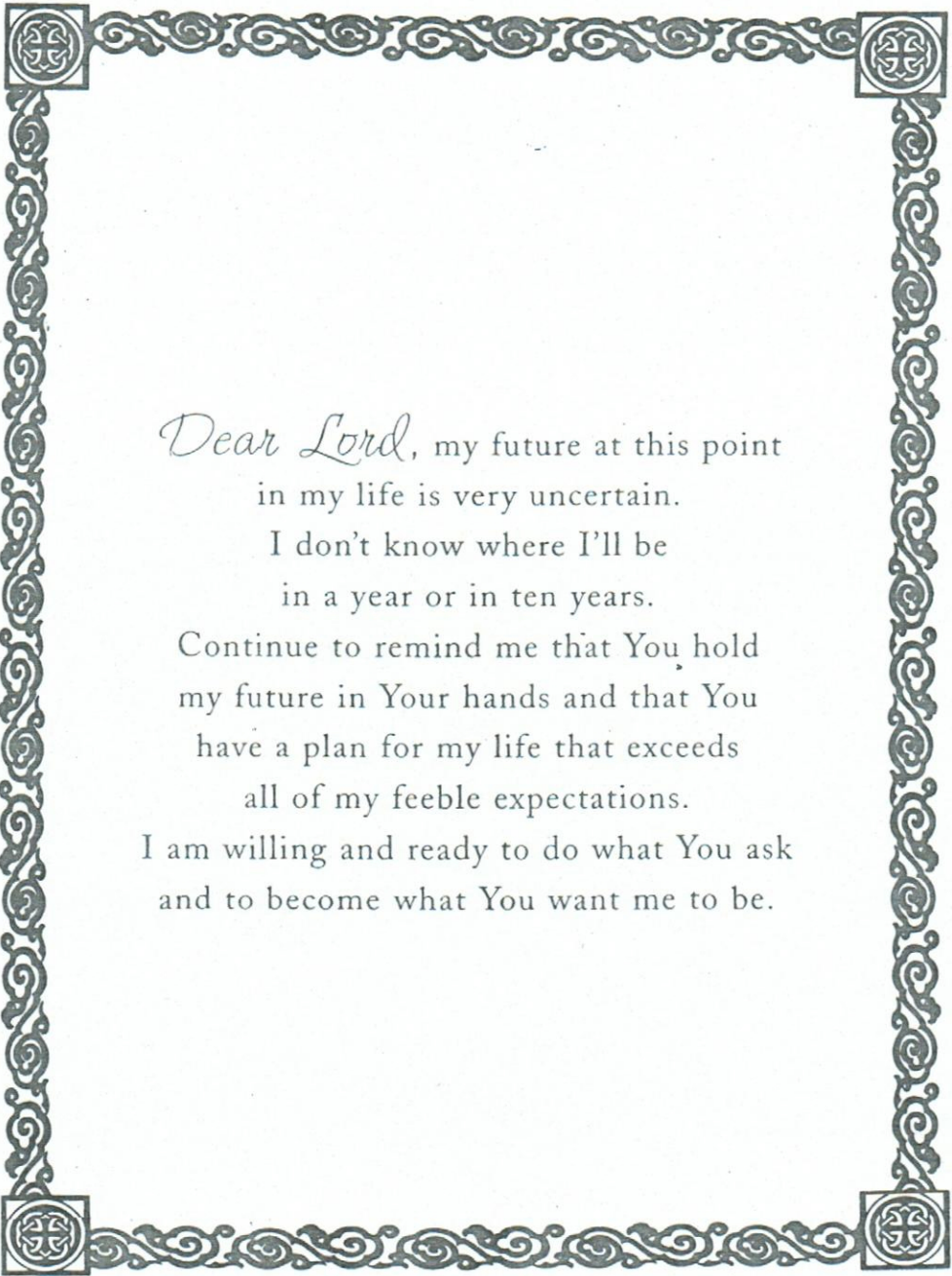




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AUTHOR UNKNOWN



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have a plan for my life that exceeds  
all of my feeble expectations.

I am willing and ready to do what You ask  
and to become what You want me to be.

Some people come into our lives and quickly go;  
others stay awhile and leave footprints on our hearts,  
and we are never, ever the same.

AUTHOR UNKNOWN



IF ALL OF MY FRIENDS  
WERE TO JUMP OFF OF A BRIDGE,  
I WOULD BE THE ONE AT THE  
BOTTOM TO CATCH THEM.

AUTHOR UNKNOWN



## IN GOD'S HANDS

*When* I graduated from high school, anyone who knew me would have said that my future looked incredibly bright. I excelled in writing, art, and music, graduated at the top of my class, and received numerous awards and scholarships. People knew who I was and appreciated my accomplishments. I was looking forward to applying my talents at college and really making something of myself, although I wasn't sure yet just what that would be.

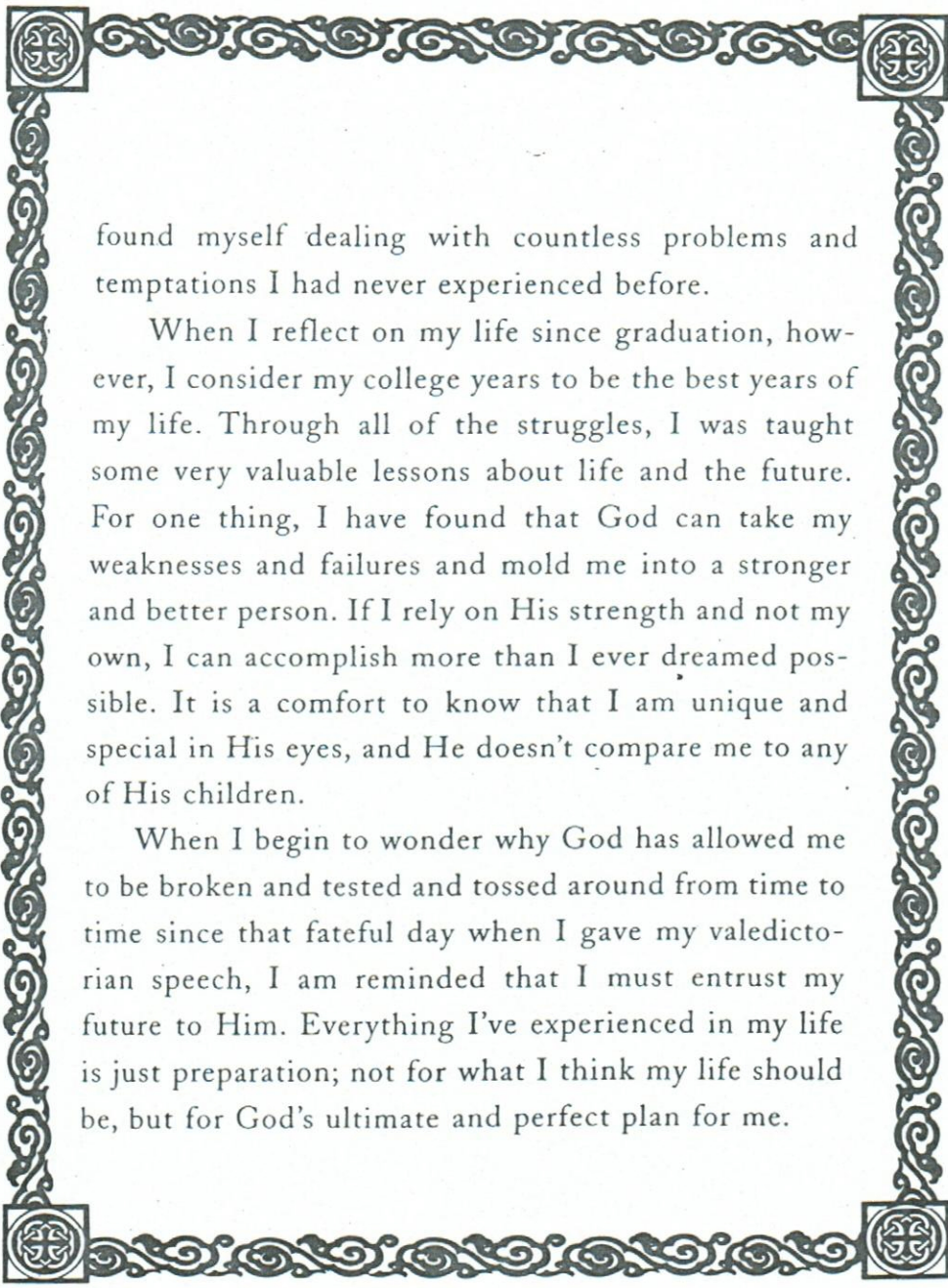
From the first day of orientation, however, reality struck. Not only was I just another unknown face among thousands, but I was brutally reminded that there were hundreds of students who were much more talented and certainly more intelligent than I. It wasn't long before my self-confidence was shattered. I began to compare myself to everyone else and felt that I just didn't measure up. I had always had a fear of failure, but that fear became debilitating. On top of that, I



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found myself dealing with countless problems and temptations I had never experienced before.

When I reflect on my life since graduation, however, I consider my college years to be the best years of my life. Through all of the struggles, I was taught some very valuable lessons about life and the future. For one thing, I have found that God can take my weaknesses and failures and mold me into a stronger and better person. If I rely on His strength and not my own, I can accomplish more than I ever dreamed possible. It is a comfort to know that I am unique and special in His eyes, and He doesn't compare me to any of His children.

When I begin to wonder why God has allowed me to be broken and tested and tossed around from time to time since that fateful day when I gave my valedictorian speech, I am reminded that I must entrust my future to Him. Everything I've experienced in my life is just preparation; not for what I think my life should be, but for God's ultimate and perfect plan for me.



Courage for the future lies in knowing that

**GOD DELIGHTS IN ANSWERING  
THE PRAYERS OF HIS PEOPLE.**

“Let no one look down on you because of your youth, but be a continuing example of love, faith and purity to believers.

Until I arrive, devote yourself to the reading of Scripture,  
to preaching and teaching.

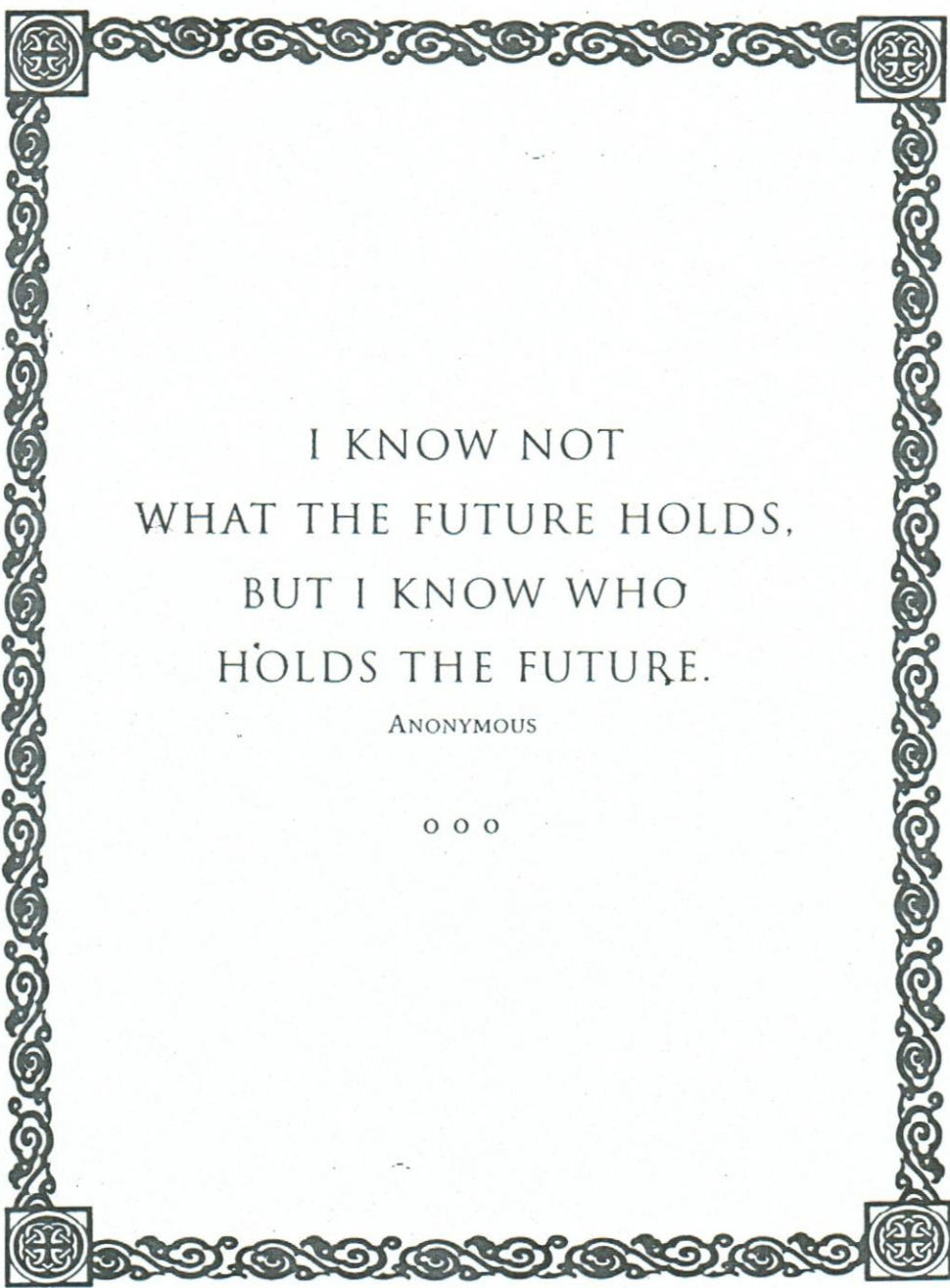
Do not neglect the gift you received when, as a result of prophecy, the presbyters laid their hands on you.

Attend to your duties;  
let them absorb you,  
so that everyone may see your progress.  
Watch yourself and watch your teaching.

Persevere at both tasks.

By doing so you will bring salvation to yourself and to all who hear you”

**1 Timothy 4: 12 – 16.**

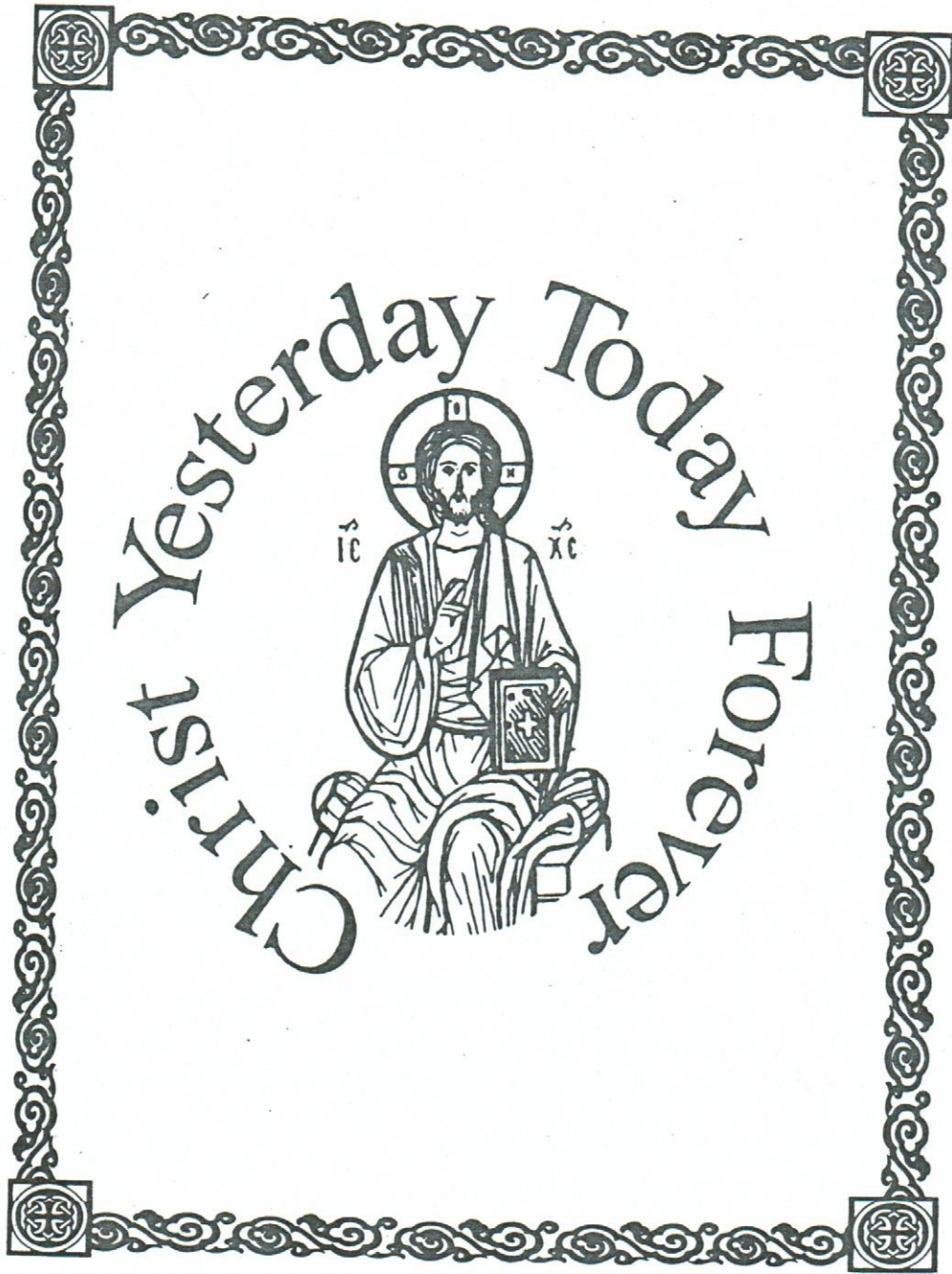


I KNOW NOT  
WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS,  
BUT I KNOW WHO  
HOLDS THE FUTURE.

ANONYMOUS

o o o





Christ Yesterday Today Forever



## WE NEVER OUTGROW GOD!

The time for graduations is now upon us. Many high school graduates will eagerly await the beginning of their college experience; college graduates will be equally excited about entering the work force of their chosen profession.

Graduation has long been synonymous with "growing up," but while the Apostle Paul reminds us that when we do so, we must "put away childish things," we can never forget that we are always children of God. There is a world of difference between being "child-like" and being "childish," and we can never lose sight of the fact that our Lord Himself taught that we must be like little children if we are to inherit the kingdom of heaven. It should also be pointed out that we never outgrow our need for the Church! In fact, the older we get, the more we should realize what a vital, important part of our lives the Church must be.

Graduation marks the beginning of new responsibility and added pressure in our lives. It also marks the beginning of a new lifestyle for many graduates. The temptation to deal with matters in ways that go against the fiber of our Christian upbringing will be great indeed for today's graduates. Once they leave the disciplined, protective atmosphere of their homes, no one will force them to attend Divine Liturgy anymore. No one will insist that they come to the Sacraments of Confession and Holy Communion frequently. No one will stress the necessity of seeking out the counsel of their spiritual father when problems arise. On the contrary, statistics tell us that most young people quickly abandon the principles of their faith when they are initially "on their own." What choices will our children make? Proverbs 22:6 tells us: "*Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.*" We can only hope and pray that we, as parents, have done this with diligence and love.