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Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

July 28, 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

+++ Thursday is the beginning of the Dormition Fast which is concluded on the feast of the Dormition, August 15. Services for this period will be announced next Sunday.

+++ 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.

+++ We offer thanks to the Blessed Trinity for inspiring generosity in the souls of our faithful and the blessing of abundant grace in our midst with the offering received last Sunday: Tithe Offering, \$226.00; Bulletin, \$25.00; Holyday, \$2.00; Food Coupons, \$200.00, for a total of \$453.00. 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, Anna Zacharyczuk, Eleanor Korba, Michael Douglas, Robert Gorbich, Maria Garcia and Pani Buletza.

+++ We make a **PENNIES FROM HEAVEN** Canister available for our faithful to bring in pennies for our altar and its appointments. We are already in receipt of **\$1694.00** from this apostolate. Even your pennies can help and are a blessing to our parish.

+++ Please be certain to see a member of the Parish Council if you would like to help our parish by using **Shop Rite Food Coupons** available in \$20.00 denominations. We invite **ALL** to be caring and supportive and use Grocery Coupons for food shopping as we have gratefully realized \$5550.00 on this project to date!

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

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

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

THE HOLY TRINITY

At Your baptism in the Jordan, O Lord, the worship of the Trinity was revealed, for the Father's voice bore witness to You, calling You His "Beloved Son," and the Spirit in the form of a dove confirmed the truth of these words. O Christ God, Who appeared and enlightened the world, glory be to You!" Troparion, Feast of the Theophany

No one is consistently triumphant in unseen warfare without a profound personal relationship with God. So it is necessary to come to an understanding about God with Whom that relationship must be established and sustained.

There are many "gods" in this world, and there are many people who mistake a false god for the true eternal God. And many who have a false god are genuinely convinced they have the true Christian God. But we know that conviction is not worth much unless it is true, no matter how sincerely people believe it.

So, how can we be certain we believe in and trust the true God? Individual opinion is subject to error so that our consideration of the true God must put aside speculation and personal opinion. The understanding or doctrine of God will focus specifically as it is taught in the historic Orthodox Church, the Mother of all "churches." God certainly is not the "property" of the Orthodox Church. And Orthodox believers are not the only one who love and worship the true God. But historically speaking, it is the Church of Jesus Christ, the Orthodox Church, which, in the face of a barrage of century upon century of error and heresy, novelty and voted on majority theology, hammered out the true doctrine of understanding Who God is.

Why do we need the Church's teaching about God? Why not just read the Bible? Simply because that response is overly simplistic and history shows it doesn't work. Literally thousands of heretics have claimed their teaching was straight from the Bible and they were dead wrong and they often led others into great error and spiritual harm along with themselves. There is absolutely nothing wrong with the Bible, but because of faulty interpreters, basic boundaries must be set by the Church regarding what the Bible teaches about God. Cross over those boundaries and you are in great danger of departing from the true God.

Knowing About God

There are some ground rules for knowing about God. First, knowledge about God does not guarantee any relationship with Him, but without it you have a guarantee your relationship with God will be shallow and superficial at best.

It is frivolous to capitulate to the frivolous notion that anything beyond the most elementary knowledge about God is not for the common every day Orthodox believer, but is only for professional theologians and select super saints. Sincere believers need sound understanding concerning God.

It is common to hear insipid, unsubstantiated pronouncements like, "Doctrine divides and kills; it is our experience of Christ that gives unity and life." Doctrine is not a sinister culprit to be avoided at all costs! Such a notion may be religiously fashionable in pagan America, but it is anything but the universal witness of spiritual warriors and winners over the centuries. Our own church history attests to that! Correct doctrine or teaching about God has never and will never kill anyone, nor will it make us unhealthy.

So, where do such misinformed ideas originate? Laziness, ignorance, lack of faith, confused thinking, and lack of genuine experience with God rank high on the list of possible roots of such reductionism. How absurd it would be for a husband to say, "I do not want to know anything about my wife. All I want is to relate to her as a person. I am totally disinterested in her name, her parents and family, her background, her interests, her education, her likes and dislikes. These will only kill whatever relationship we might have together." Only a complete fool would talk that way, and any potential relationship he might have with his wife would be doomed. How much less will a relationship with God mature if we insist we do not want to know anything about Him? If you desire to know God personally, then desire also to know anything and everything about Him you possibly can.

Our God has made many many things about Himself known to us. Part of that revelation is doctrinal knowledge, and with the help of God, we can understand knowledge revealed about Him. We do not have to be geniuses, nor college graduates. God can be understood as He reveals Himself to us for the sake of our salvation.

What Is God's Name?

One of the very first things a young man wants to know about a woman to whom he is attracted is her name. This is not silly or superfluous; it is politely proper. Likewise, one important place to begin in knowing God is to come to know His name. Actually, God has three names, for God is three Persons, and each of these Persons obviously have a personal name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Some may interject and say, "Don't you really mean 'Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer?'" After all, this is the twentieth century and names like 'Father' and 'Son' are likely to offend those who say such language is sexist and outmoded to describe the reality of Who God is."

Yes, it is entirely true that for some modernists it may be offensive, but the historic doctrine of the Holy Trinity is and never could become irrelevant or outmoded. It represents the very basis for our understanding of God as He intended Himself to be revealed. If we do not know the three Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in the one God, we do not really know God at all. And far from being

“sexist”, this doctrine offers the greatest dignity possible to the members of both sexes: the opportunity to truly know ourselves better in light of and in relationship to our Creator.

An Ancient And Modern Heresy

It is not at all incidental that the most serious doctrinal struggle the Church of Jesus Christ has ever known in all her history was over the question of the Holy Trinity. A brief sketch of church history will show why it was important then and now.

“There was a time when the Son of God was not.” That was the bombshell hurled at the Body of Christ early in the fourth century by one Arius, a prominent Orthodox priest in the Church of Alexandria, Egypt. He insisted the Son of God is not truly God; He is merely the highest of created beings, and in that sense we could call him a *god*. This is virtually identical to the present day Jehovah’s Witness abominable heresy. Old errors, new names.

You can well imagine the uproar this created. The conflict became so great it appeared for awhile the Church would be split apart. Up until then, there were no significant divisions in all of Christendom. People divided up and took hard-line positions on the issue, and at first, no one would budge. There were charges and counter charges of heresy. Accusations and anathemas were hurled about. The confusion in the Empire became so acute, its peace was threatened, and the Emperor Constantine convoked the very first Ecumenical Council of the Church to safeguard the unity of the Church and the civil government.

And so, in 325 AD, the whole Church finally gathered in the city of Nicea near the then capital city of Constantinople. More than three hundred bishops of the church, plus hundreds of priest and deacons deliberated under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Lasting for months, the goal of the discussions was the answer to the questions: “What did Jesus Christ Himself teach about this? What did the Apostles say? What do the Scriptures reveal about this? And finally, what has the Church always taught and believed?” The results of that discussion were consolidated into a concise creedal statement:

We believe in one God the Father all-sovereign, Maker of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, only-begotten, that is, of the substance of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, True God of True God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, through Whom all things were made, things in heaven and things on earth; who for us men and for our salvation came down and was made flesh, and became man, suffered, and rose on the third day, ascended into the heavens, is coming to judge the living and the dead. And in the Holy Spirit. And those that say, “There was when He was not,” and, “Before He was begotten He was not,” or those that allege, that the Son of God is “Of another substance or essence” or “created,” or “changeable,” or “alterable,” these the Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematizes.

This is not a new teaching about God rising out of fourth century Christian Byzantine philosophical speculation, as some have ignorantly, even wistfully asserted. It was Arius who introduced new and novel teaching. The people of God assembled in their bishops at Nicea were specifically committed to *not* inventing a new or novel doctrine about God, or about anything else for that matter. Their singular purpose was to determine what had *always been believed and taught* about God on the basis of what was taught by Christ Himself, His Apostles, the Scriptures and His Church. They agreed this statement, this creed, said nothing more than that and certainly nothing less.

Not only did they immediately successfully settle the question, but they also made it clear there are no options about believing in the Blessed Trinity. Belief in the Holy Trinity became the foundation of belief for Christianity. The Church, then anathematized those who believe falsely about the Trinity. The word *anathema* is one fierce and tough word. It means "to curse." And from where and Whom did the Church of Christ receive authority to make such rigorous decisions? From Christ Himself Whose body she is, and Who gave her the Holy Spirit to lead her in all truth.

Those bishops at Nicea did not come up with a creed that was to gather dust over the centuries to follow. The creed they framed and enunciated under the guidance of the Holy Spirit has been acknowledged as true by virtually every segment of Christendom ever since that time. The Orthodox Church also affirms it, all those of the Roman Rite affirm it; and almost all Protestant denominations confess it. Anyone who is truly serious about considering himself a Christian believes the results of this Council. Even those churches who claim they do not believe in creeds agree they believe and accept what this creed says is true! The Nicene Creed (Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed) is the single most agreed upon doctrinal statement in the history of Christianity. Here were have a pronouncement for all professing Christians for all times.

Undoubtedly, there are some so-called Christians today, among them even a number of professional theologians, who do not believe in this doctrine. But whether they believe in it is quite beside the point when the question is raised as to whether the doctrine of the Trinity is vital and absolute part and parcel of historic Christianity. The historic faith of the Church and belief in the Holy Trinity are inseparable.

Understanding The Holy Trinity

A working definition of two words will be invaluable to our comprehension - both in mind and in heart - of the Holy Trinity. These two words are: *person* and *nature*.

Suppose you walk by a pond one day and see two boys playing with frogs. Such a scene might evoke many questions, but three in particular will help us understand the words person and nature. Question one is, "How do you distinguish the boys from the frogs?"

Contrary to the speculations of some who lack an appreciation for wet, dirty, small boys, it is not all that complicated to differentiate them from frogs. How can you tell? By identifying the nature each possesses. Boys have human nature, frogs have frog nature. It is that simple.

There are certain *essential characteristics* common to humans; the boys have those. And there are certain essential characteristics common to frogs; the frogs have those. Humans have a particular type of hands, feet, eyes, arms, and legs, all arranged in a consistently predictable fashion. Each one also has a soul, that is, a mind, a will, emotions, a heart, and all the rest which makes up the human soul. Frogs have a distinctly different kind of 'hands', feet, eyes, 'arms' and legs, not to mention skin, all arranged in a predictable fashion. They have no soul.

To distinguish between frogs and boys you simply run a spot check of their common sets of essential characteristics according to what you know about frogs and boys. That should quickly settle the question of who is what. And if there is still a doubt, that guttural "r-rivet" is a dead giveaway of frog nature!

The term *nature* refers to *that set of common essential characteristics possessed by a whole group, or type, and which sets that particular group apart from all other groups*, in this case boys from frogs. Then, of course, arises the problem: How do we distinguish one boy from another?

Nature, with its essential characteristics, refers to that which is common to a group, but it does not deal with that which distinguishes subjects within the group. For that we need to look at the *non-essential characteristics*. Humans come with a certain common set of essential characteristics. But there is the potential for an almost infinite number of differences between humans. That is because those common essential characteristics come in an almost infinite variety of sizes, shapes, colors, and capacities, that is non-essential characteristics.

One of the boys, let us assume, is a stubby four feet four inches tall, has soft brown eyes, and is endowed with average intelligence. The other is a lanky six foot three inches tall, has steel blue eyes and is a veritable genius. Each boy has his own "variety pack" of non-essential human characteristics. The variations in those characteristics, both of body and soul, recognized in each "package," mark off one boy from another. They essentially differentiate each. The same, incidentally, is also true of frogs and frog nature, things like size and color. We can tell frogs apart as well as humans. Each package within a kind distinguishes one from another of its kind.

At this point we can be satisfied with our distinctions between one frog and another. But in no way have we finished distinguishing one boy from another, between one human being and another. We would have a limited reality if we confined all that is different between human beings to a different set of non-essential characteristics of human nature. This is not sufficient in explaining all that is different in us humans. Does the fact the boys have two different sets of non-essential characteristics completely establish all that is different about them? To answer that question, we must define *person*.

Of course, the response is a resounding NO. To pinpoint the uniqueness between human beings we need an understanding of the word *person*. Suppose one of the boys has an identical twin at home. Outwardly, the two are 'carbon' copies. But the one twin, Johnny, loves to go into the woods, find a pond, and fool around with frogs, while his brother, Nicholas, loathes even the thought of it, greatly preferring

practicing scales on the piano. Ask the boys' mother if she has trouble telling them apart and she will likely reply with something like, "It is rather easy, they are just two different persons."

Her reply is far more descriptive and correct than it may seem initially. Not only do all of us have our own packages of non-essential characteristics of human nature, but *each of us also has his own unique God-made-by-special-order, God-given person*. That person literally underlies all else there is about us. It is the bottom line of who we are. Two individual humans may be ever so much alike in nature, and yet so utterly opposite in how that nature, even when packaged alike, is personally fleshed out. It is *person* that ultimately accounts for this difference and is responsible for it.

Several things can be said about this matter of person that will help bring the concept into focus. Both person and nature, although definitely distinct, are never separate except as abstract concepts. In flesh and blood reality, the two are necessary to form one complete whole human being. Person is God-made and God-given for each of us directly. Nature we inherit from God through our parents. Your person is the absolutely unique creation of God for you only. There are look-alikes in non-essential characteristics, but none in person. It is your person which allows you to be a free, responsible, moral being. Nature by itself, even with its non-essential distinctives, would be subject to determinism. Person is not. We cannot define the full content of person. None of us knows the full content of our own person, or anyone else's for that matter, precisely because there is a real element of mystery about each individual person.

Person is the foundation element of human uniqueness. There are many things which distinguish you from another human being. But after all other differences between, for example, our twins are taken into account and exhausted, person is *the* bottom line. It underlies all else there is about us. We are going to have to conclude that Johnny is ultimately different from Nicholas in his "Johnnyness" as compared and contrasted to his brother's "Nicholasness." It is in knowing Johnny's "Johnnyness" and Nicholas' "Nicholasness" that person is most clearly grasped and the absolute uniqueness of these two human beings is best understood.

Knowing God as Three Persons

Having come to understand the difference between *person* and *nature*, let us use them to help understand something vital and important about the Holy Trinity. Many difficulties can be cleared up in these words.

Have you ever wondered, for example, who Jesus Christ, being God, prayed to when on the Cross He prayed to God? He obviously did not pray either to Himself or to some impersonal divine nature in the distant sky. The answer is that as a distinct *Person*, the Son, He prayed to another distinct *Person*, God the Father, whose *nature* He fully shares.

God the Father is an actual, distinct Person Who can be known and related to personally by other persons, human as well as divine. Jesus repeatedly claimed He knew the Father. "*I know him because it is from him I come; he sent me*" John 7:29. "*But I know him. Were I to say I do not know him, I would be*

no better than you - a liar! Yes, I know him well, and I keep his word" John 8:55. *"Everything has been given over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son but the Father, and no one know the Father but the Son - and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him"* Matthew 11:27, In His great high-priestly prayer to the Father on the night in which He was betrayed, He made it abundantly clear that not only He knows the Father, *"Just Father, the world has not know you, but I have known you; and these men have known that you sent me"* John 17:25, but that we can also know His Father even as we can know Him. *"And this is eternal life,"* Jesus said to His Father, *"that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent"* John 17:3. That leaves absolutely no room for doubt. The Father and the Son are two distinct Persons and as believers we can know them both.

When we seek understanding about the Holy Trinity we begin with the Father. The Father is the Fountainhead of the Holy Trinity. He is not an unapproachable, vague, ethereal, religious substance far removed from earth in some distant, dark recess of heaven. He is a Person Who is ever present, Who knows and loves, and Who is to be known and loved. This is apparent from Jesus' words, again on the night of the Mystical Supper, *"If anyone loves me, he will keep my word; and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him"* John 14:23.

Many Christians believe the Son of God lives in them personally. And many believe the Holy Spirit also personally dwells within them. It is a great wonder, but the actual truth is the heavenly Father also personally lives in the hearts and souls of His people, loving them with His Son and His Holy Spirit. Granted that we will never in all eternity know everything about the Father because our limited human mind is overwhelmed and cannot grasp such a profound mystery. We may even come to know about what He is by knowing what He is not. Nonetheless, we are called and given the capacity to truly know Him if we consider ourselves believers.

Knowing the Father personally, as a distinct Person, is all important and exceedingly desirable. And as a part of coming to that knowledge, there are some profound things we can know about the Father. The Father is eternal. He has no beginning. He has always been, He is, and He always will be. *"Before the mountains were begotten, and the earth and the world were brought forth, from everlasting to everlasting you are God"* Psalm 90:2.

Since the Father is the Source of everything, we are all accountable to Him. St. Paul writes in letter to the Ephesians, *"For this reason I bow my knees to the Father...from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named"* Ephesians 3:14, 15. Certainly, then, all that is, whether people, angels, or whatever, all are accountable to Him as Father, and He surely has a claim on all. They are His and not their own. They have no existence or being without Him.

Because the Father has an only-begotten Son after His own nature, there never was a time, or an eternity, when He was not the Father of that only-begotten Son. The Son is eternally begotten of Him, fully bearing the nature of the Father. *"This Son is the reflection of the Father's glory, the exact representation of the Father's nature, and he sustains all things by his powerful word"* Hebrews 1:3.

It is this relationship, incidentally between God the Father and God the Son that gives us our basic comprehension of human fatherhood. At the heart of the current breakdown of the human family is the misbegotten attempt by some to understand fatherhood purely from a human or even animalistic standpoint. This failure to determine our definition of fatherhood from the divine model, the Holy Trinity, has become a major source of confusion in sex roles in our society.

The Father is the eternal source of the Holy Spirit, even as He is of the Son. The eternal procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father as a distinct person sharing the Father's divine nature is in a manner different from the generation of the Eternal Son. That the Father is the Source of the Son and the Holy Spirit does not imply there ever was a time when they did not co-exist with the Father or that they are not co-equal in all respects. The One was begotten of the Father before all time in eternity; the Other proceeds from the Father before all time.

The Son Came to Make the Father Known

We must never forget that one of the Saviour's principal objectives was to bring people to His Father as well as to Himself. On the night of the Mystical Supper, He told the disciples, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me*" John 14:6.

It is standard operating procedure in many Christian gatherings in our culture today to express one's personal experience with God by saying, 'I have come to know Jesus Christ personally.' This is good in whatever degree it truly has happened. But strikingly, that very statement may be a tip-off betraying a great abysmal spiritual poverty unless it can also be said with equal conviction, 'I have come to know the Father personally.' But Western Christianity has all but forgotten about the mystery of the Holy Trinity. There is overemphasis on Christ, but actual neglect of the Father and the Holy Spirit. The truth is if you know Jesus Christ, the Son personally, you will necessarily know the Father and the Holy Spirit as Persons. They cannot be known part from one another, though one may know all three persons without being consciously aware of this necessity.

Coming to know God is far more than a matter of getting an accurate knowledge of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. The latter must not be used as a substitute for the former. But the latter is vitally important, particularly in averting the danger of attempting to get acquainted with God as though He were some impersonal divine nature far away in the sky. There is no such God, and any religious experience established on that basis will be found wanting. Doctrinal knowledge cannot guarantee personal knowledge of God, but apart from such knowledge we may miss knowing that God is personal and altogether knowable.

The Son, too, is a Person. Ever existing with the Father, He is the eternal and only-begotten Son of the Father. The Son possesses fully the nature of His Father. Were that not the case, He would not be the Son. In the Creed, we confess of the Son of God, "*...begotten, not made, of one substance with the Father...*" Substance and essence mean the same thing here as nature.

We are so susceptible to a human perspective rather than a divine outlook that it is difficult for us to conceptualize the Son as co-eternal with His Father. We may thoughtlessly eliminate the possibility of the Father and the Son being always co-existent because that could not possibly be the case with humans. But humans are not God and there is a vitally great difference between the two! We need spiritual insight into what it means for the Son of God to have always co-existed with the Father.

God is uncreated and eternal. We humans are created and creatures of time. God has no beginning; we do. It is apparent that the Father, uncreated and eternal by nature, if He begets a Son, must of necessity beget an uncreated, eternal Son. Human fathers, with their created human nature, beget human sons and daughters with created human nature, that is, their children possess the nature of their parents. Human fathers do not beget children with bird nature or tree nature, and certainly do not beget children with divine nature. And because we are human and bound by time, a human father necessarily lives several years before He is capable of having a son. That is part of the limitation of being both created and subject to the limits of time. But with the uncreated, eternal Father, such limitations do not exist. And thus the eternal Father necessarily begets from before all time a Son co-eternal with Himself.

The Holy Spirit

The third Person of the Holy Trinity is the Holy Spirit, Who, together with the Father and the Son, can be known personally. He is not an impersonal influence for good, as some erroneously believe. Neither is He an impersonal love which binds the Father and the Son together, as others have falsely maintained. And the Holy Spirit is not an "also ran" in the Godhead, like some kind of celestial second lieutenant.

The Holy Spirit is God, and like the Father and the Son, He fully and completely possesses the one undivided divine nature of the Father. He is not *begotten* of the Father; He *proceeds* from Father. In speaking of the Holy Spirit, Jesus said, "*When the Paraclete (the Holy Spirit) comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of me*" John 15:26. How the Holy Spirit proceeds, or comes forth from the Father is a great mystery. But we do know it is not the same as being begotten of the Father. Both the Son and the Spirit possess the Father's nature, the Son by being begotten, and the Holy Spirit by procession.

Our Lord made it forever clear that the Holy Spirit can be known personally when He said concerning Him, "*And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever, the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him, but you know him, for He dwells with you and will be in you*" John 14:16, 17.

That is very far, far removed from the often pompously claimed and proclaimed, "You just need to know Jesus" because it is outright heresy and contradicts Christ. It denies the genuine Bible and ignores the Creed and blatantly denies the need for a Christian to know and experience the Holy Spirit and the Father as genuine Persons.

There is a well-known and much-loved prayer hymn which our Orthodox Christian Church offers to the Holy Spirit. It very well expresses our constant dependence upon this divine Person for His work in our lives, and it is a prayer all sincere believers should know and use: *"O Heavenly King, Comforter, Spirit of Truth! You are everywhere present and fill all things. Treasury of blessing and Giver of life, come and dwell within us, cleanse us of all stain, and save our souls, O gracious Lord."*

When you ignore or take away the Person of the Holy Spirit in your life, you take away the only One by Whom we are joined to Jesus Christ in the life of His Body the Church and Who works out the life of Christ in us, energizing us with the power of Christ for persistent battle against sin.

If the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are three distinct, knowable Persons, are there not then really three Gods? Emphatically No, because even though God is three Persons, there are no variety packages of non-essential characteristics of the Father's nature. That nature is one and undivided. In our case as humans, each person has a variety package of non-essential human characteristics. There are as many of these packages as there are human beings. With God, each of the three divine Persons fully and completely shares the whole of the Father's nature. This explains why every Sunday and whenever the Divine Liturgy is celebrated, faithful Orthodox believers confess in their worship, *"the Trinity, one in substance (essence) and undivided."*

Considering two aspects of nature, mind and will, can help make this sharing of one whole nature easier to understand and grasp. Does each of the three Persons of the Holy Trinity have His own mind or will distinct from the others? The answer is categorically no. If each of the Persons of the Holy Trinity has a mind or will of His own, separate from the others, we would have to restate the often asked question, 'How do I know the *will* of God?' to 'How do I know the *wills* of God?' Or we would no longer inquire concerning the *mind* of God, but rather the *minds* of God. How complicated and confusing that would be! In the multiplicity and diversity of human nature there are as many minds and wills as there are persons. But in the Holy Trinity there is but one mind and one will shared by all three Persons because all three Persons share the Father's nature.

Though the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct Persons, it is of the utmost importance to recognize they do not function independently of each other. They are distinct Persons, and they do, as it were, some distinct things. But they never work or function separately. Creation provides a perfect illustration of how the Holy Trinity works together in perfect harmony. We read in Genesis 1:26 that God said, *"Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness..."* Who made people? The Father did; the Son did; the Holy Spirit did. God did. But that is not to imply the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit each did exactly the same thing in the creation of humanity. Each had a role, yet together they created our race. The Scriptures say of the Son, *"All things were made through him, and without him nothing was made that was made"* John 1:3, and of the Holy Spirit, *"...and the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters"* Genesis 1:2.

When we look at and study the Scripture, we see a pattern surfaces showing how the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit work as one. That is: *from the Father, through the Son, and in the grace of the Holy Spirit. Three in one. Unity.*

It is true there are Western so-called theologians who insist the Father alone was responsible for creation, the Son alone was responsible for effecting our redemption, and the Holy Spirit alone is responsible for working our salvation in us. It is as if each Person of the Holy Trinity has His own private area of responsibility, to the exclusion of that of the others. Unionized perhaps! Specialized and compartmentalized perhaps! But this kind of fuzzy thinking only confuses people immeasurably in regard to the Holy Trinity and it prevents them from knowing these Persons in their daily life experience.

Knowing Persons as Persons

If we consider a seriously endangered aspect of human experience, marriage, which Scripture and the Fathers of the Church have myriad times utilized to illustrate the relationship human beings can have with each of the Persons of the Holy Trinity, we come to a better grasp of our potential. Imagine a young man and a young woman who meet and are greatly attracted to each other. He is attracted by the beautiful countenance, flowing hair, curvaceous body and brilliant mind. She is attracted to his muscular physique, his curly thick hair, and an ever-present twinkle in his eyes, and of course, his lightning-quick wit. They assume this mutual attraction to each other is love and they marry.

Three children and twenty years later, her face develops lines, her hair changes color and the curves in her body have significantly shifted. And his once muscular healthy body has given way to no noticeable definition except the very obvious one around the middle. The hair has been exchanged for a shiny, bony head with just a wisp of gray around the edges. His eyes are tired now from the pressures of worry and care and the quick wit has degenerated into a steady diet of biting cynicism and sarcasm. And one day our once-young man sees a younger woman with a beautiful face, flowing hair, curvaceous body, and a brilliant mind. He becomes increasingly attracted to her and at the same time progressively disenchanted with his wife of two decades, the mother of his children. Somewhat bewildered by what he views as a change of attractions, he is trying to figure out how to dispose of the 'old' love to give himself to this 'new' love for which he finds himself so pleasantly and passionately burning.

Is this an unreal scenario? It actually is happening around us everyday, leaving a patch of devastated people and relationships in its wake. What happened? One very possible answer may well be that our original couple never really got to know each other as *persons*. What they mistook for love was limited to mutual attraction to an appealing "variety pack" of non-essential characteristics of human nature. As these 'packages' aged, sagged, rearranged themselves and finally faded, they lost their appeal. And as soon as an attraction to another 'package' developed, interest was lost in the old, with all the attention going to the new.

Solid marriage relationships demand people know each other as utter unrepeatable, unique persons. Unquestionably the variety packages are still there and they are not unimportant. But lacking knowledge of each other as persons, and building an enduring relationship mostly between different variety packages is not a sound basis for a personal relationship, something which married needs to possess.

As in our relationships with people, so in our relationship with God. He must be known personally to really be known at all. Many have had an attraction to or an awareness of God in days past. But their knowledge of God never passed beyond an initial excitement about learning a set of divine attributes, that He is infinite, eternal, unchangeable, even perhaps that He is love. But to truly know God is to know Him as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; in that knowledge, there is great and lasting fulfillment, which will lead to commitment and ultimately to eternal salvation.

Faith commitment to our God does rest on the solid rock of reality and this includes a God Who is Trinity, three Persons, and Who can be known as such. It is in Him that we are called to have faith. The Christian life is not simply "just knowing Jesus." To reduce simplistically things down that far cuts spiritual living into spiritual ribbons. And when it comes to the heat of spiritual conflict, no victory in our life can begin apart from knowing God personally. There is more to be done for spiritual victory than that, but apart and separated from knowing God, personal conflict will always end in defeat.

COMPLETELY NEW TEACHING

Nothing is more excellent than peace, for it does away with war among the creatures of heaven and earth. You are well aware of this if you have genuine faith in Jesus Christ and have love for Him. These are the beginning and goal of life: faith the beginning, love the goal.

No one who has genuine faith sins; no one who loves hates. "*A tree is known by its fruit,*" and those who profess to belong to Christ are known by their actions. What counts in this life is not merely professing the faith but living it to the end.

It is better to be silent and act, than to speak and be idle. Teaching is a fine thing,

providing one lives what one teaches. There is but one Teacher Who spoke and it was done; but what He did in silence the Father also approved. Those who make their own the word of Jesus can also hear His silence, that they perfect and act through their speech and be understood through their silence.

Nothing after all, is hidden from the Lord, even our secrets are open to Him. Let us always act, therefore, as though He were dwelling in us so that we may indeed be His temples and He may be our God in us.

St. Ignatius of Antioch, Letter to the Ephesians 13-18

VESPER VERSES ACCORDING TO THE EIGHT TONES

TONE 4

1. We bow in worship to your life-giving cross,
O Christ our God;
We glorify your resurrection on the third day.
By it you renewed our fallen nature, Almighty
Lord.
You gave us the assurance of heaven;
You are gracious and the Lover of mankind.
2. Freely accepting crucifixion on the tree of the
cross,
You destroyed the penalty of the tree of sin.
You descended into the Abyss, Almighty
Lord.
Being God, You broke the bonds of death.
Therefore, we bow in worship to your resur-
rection;
In joy we cry out to You
“ Almighty Lord : glory be to You! ”
3. O Lord, You shattered the gate of the Abyss;
By your death you destroyed the power of
death.
You freed the human race from corruption;
You gave life and great mercy to the world.
4. Come, all you nations and people,
Let us praise the Savior's resurrection!
It has freed us from the bonds of the Abyss.
We have received life and incorruption :
Let us cry out :

“ O Lord crucified, buried, and now risen :
Save us by your resurrection,
For you alone love mankind. ”

5. Angels and men glorify your resurrection,
O Savior :
By it you have enlightened all the earth.
You redeemed us from slavery to our enemy.
Let us cry out in song :
O Savior, you are the mighty Giver of Life.
Save us by your resurrection,
For you alone love mankind.
6. You shattered the gates of the Abyss,
You broke it's bonds, O Christ our God!
You raised our fallen human race.
We cry to you in song :
O Lord risen from the dead : glory be to You!
7. O Lord, your birth from the Father is eternal
and before all ages;
Your incarnation from the Virgin is beyond
explanation :
No language can tell it properly.
Your descent into the Abyss is fearful
Both to Satan and to his angels.
You conquered death; You arose on the third
day;
You gave great mercy and life to the world.
8. Glory be to the Father ✚, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and
forever. Amen.

Because of you, O Mother of God,
David the prophet became an ancestor of God.
Praising Him who worked wonders in you,
He foretold you in joyous song :
The Queen stood at your right hand.
You are revealed as the mother of Life.

Without a father, God chose to become
incarnate of you.

He renewed in man his image corrupted by sin.
Finding the lost sheep on the mountain, He
put it on his shoulder;

He carried it to the Father and to his will;

He numbered it among the heavenly powers.

He has saved the whole world :

He is the Christ of great and rich mercy.

At the Apostichon

1. O Lord lifted upon the Cross,
You wiped away our ancestral curse.
In the Abyss, You freed those bound for ages;
You granted incorruption to the human race.
Because of this we sing our praise to You
Glorifying your saving and life-giving resur-
rection.
2. Raised upon the cross, O Mighty Lord,
You shook the whole earth.
Buried in your tomb, You raised the dead;
You granted life and incorruption to the world.
Because of this, we sing our praise to You,
Glorifying your saving and life-giving resur-
rection.
3. Evil people delivered You to Pilate, O Christ
our God.
He condemned You to crucifixion.
They proved themselves ungrateful to their
Benefactor.
Your freely accepted suffering and death.
Being God you rose by your own power on
the third day.
You gave us eternal life and great mercy.
4. In tears, the faithful women came to your tomb:
They were seeking You.

Not finding You, sighing and lamenting, they
cried out :

“ O Savior and King of all, how were you
stolen?

Where does your life-giving Body lie now? ”

An angel appeared and said to them :

“ Do not cry but go proclaim the news :

The Lord is risen giving us joy :

He alone loves mankind. ”

5. Glory be to the Father ✝, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and
forever. Amen.

O Virgin most pure,

Listen to the supplication of your servants;

Protect us from our enemy;

Deliver us from sorrow.

You are our safe and secure haven;

We have you as our advocate.

Let those who call upon you never be put to
shame.

Quickly answer those who call to you :

Hail Virgin, help of all,

Our joy, our protection, and salvation of our
souls!

THE SEVEN HOLY MACCABEES

It may surprise you to learn that our Holy Church honors among her saints 7 young men who gave their lives for God some 200 years before the birth of Christ! Each August we commemorate the Seven Holy Maccabees, who were martyred for having supported the faith of their Fathers and the sacred traditions of the Jewish people.

We read the moving story of the Maccabees in the apocryphal book of the Old Testament which bears their name. In the second century B.C., King Antiochos IV sought complete control of the Jewish populace. He was determined to completely wipe out all of the religious practices and beliefs of the Hebrews and replace them with pagan concepts and ideals. Numbered among those who defied the King's edicts were the Maccabees. Led by their mother Salome and their teacher Eleazer, the seven brothers brought about a fierce revolt against the pagan ruler and his followers. Though valiant in their efforts, the Maccabees were finally captured by Antiochos. The evil leader chose a horrible form of execution for the young boys. They were tossed into a fiery pit, along with their teacher, as Salome was forced to watch. Unable to bear such grief, their anguished mother broke free from her captors and jumped into the fire herself, preferring to die with her family than to live without them in a pagan land.

In 165 B.C., just eight years after the death of the Maccabees, an army of some 4,000 men conquered the forces of Antiochos – which outnumbered them some ten-fold – and won a remarkable victory, avenging the slaughter of the seven youths in the process. The faith and heritage of the Hebrew nation had been restored! Our Church urges us to show the same firm convictions about our faith, as the Maccabees had for theirs.

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