

A CROWN OF THORNS

"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."

Luke 23:34

Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Fourth Sunday of the Great Fast

April 10, 2016

**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

+++ This Saturday is the postponed All Souls Day will be celebrated. The Divine Liturgy and Memorial Service are celebrated at 9: 00 AM. Please come and join us in prayer and praise.

+++ May this season of the Great Fast be an encouragement to all of us in growth of the soul in our advancement towards heaven. Come early for Confessions are heard before the Divine Liturgies.

+++ The next Pirohi Sale is Saturday, April 23. Please secure orders and plan on helping.

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

+++ The sign-up sheet for both the Web Site and Bulletin sponsors is on the bulletin board in the kitchen. Please sign up as soon as possible. Do NOT make payment until your sign-up month has arrived. This will make it easier for Father to keep track of payments. Thanks in advance to all who support the parish in this way.

+++ We offer thanks to the Blessed Trinity for inspiring generosity in the souls of our faithful and the blessing of abundant grace in our midst with the offering received last Sunday: Tithe Offering, \$125.00; Candles, \$6.00; Kitchen, \$30.00; Self – Sacrifice, \$50.00 for a total of \$211.00. We express our profound gratitude to the parishioner communicants who offer their God-given treasure and labored for the sake of the Lord and the good of our parish. God bless and reward you good and faithful souls!

+++ As faithful believers, we intercede and associate ourselves in prayer with the following who have prayed and offered seven day lights for their intentions: Father Lucas, Maria Idronmenos, Anna Zacharyczuk, Bob Gorbich, Marilyn Korba and Pani Buletza.

+++ We make a **PENNIES FROM HEAVEN** Canister available for our faithful to bring in pennies for our altar and its appointments. We are already in receipt of **\$1860.00** 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 \$6750 on this project to date!

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

+++ We invite all pray the Lord our God grants us the grace of enrichment of our spiritual lives for his glory.

LORD



TEACH
US

In Love Of God

But bestowing mercy down to the thousandth generation, on the children of those who love me and keep my commandments Exodus 20: 6.

I prayed: "O Lord, God of heaven, great and awesome God, you who preserve your covenant of mercy toward those who love you and keep your commandments" Nehemiah 1: 5.

Understand then, that the Lord, your God, is God indeed, the faithful God who keeps his merciful covenant down to the thousandth generation toward those who love him and keep his commandments Deuteronomy 7:9.

May all your enemies perish thus, O Lord! but your friends be as the sun rising in its might! And the land was at rest for forty years Judges 5: 31.

You will live in my love if you keep my commandments, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and live in his love. You are my friends if you do what I command you John 15: 10, 14.

"Therefore you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." "Yes, to love him with all our heart, with all our thoughts, and with all our strength, and to love our neighbor as ourselves is worth more than any burnt offering or sacrifice" Mark 12: 30, 33.

The Father already loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God John 16: 27.

*Wisdom Of
The*



*Byzantine
Fathers*

If God is slow to grant our request and you do not receive what you ask for promptly, do not be grieved, for you are not wiser than God. When this happens to you, it is either because your way of life does not accord with your request, or because the pathways of your heart are at odds with the intentions of your prayer.

Or, it may be because your inner state is too childish by comparison with the magnitude of the thing you have asked for. It is not appropriate that great things should fall easily into our hands, otherwise God's gift will be held in dishonor, because of the ease with which we obtain it.

For anything that is readily obtained is also easily lost, whereas everything which is found with hard striving is respected and preserved with care. St. Isaac the Syrian.

Husband & Wife Should Be Christ To Each Other

A woman in her forties came to the rectory. She spoke to her priest about her three children, well into their teens, and the husband she loved. Her marriage spanned some twenty years. Until recently, there had been no major crisis.

Her husband was a successful corporation executive. Perhaps it was the pressure of his work, but a year earlier an old skeleton had raised its ugly head. "Slowly, my husband slipped back into weekend alcoholism." Petty squabbles multiplied. "What frightened me most was his deadly silence. I felt helpless." In a matter of months, her husband was hospitalized. "And can you imagine, Father, some of my best friends are suggesting, 'Joanne, why don't you leave him?'" Her hands were tight. "How can they be so stupid?"

"Joanne, I get the impression, you are pretty angry these very friends could insinuate separation, and you're probably hurt by their ignorant arrogance," remarked her priest. "You're absolutely right, Father. Their nonsense just scalds me, but then, who else was there to talk to?" The priest then asked, "Tell me why it is that you have stayed so close to your husband over these difficult times."

Silence. She was surprised by the priest's question. Was he trying to prod? Was he trying to make evident her sentiments, uncover her commitment? Sensing genuine concern, not curiosity, she breathed a long sigh and relaxed in the chair for the first time. "Yes, I can tell you why, Father." Her eyes closed as if reliving a fond memory. "I remember what our priest back home, who married us said on our wedding day. "As husband and wife, you must be Christ to each other; as husband and wife, you must save each other." She quietly cherished those inspiring words; they summed up everything. Her look was confident now. "That's the way John and I have tried to live for the twenty some years we have been married. Separation? Divorce? Never! If I left John, where would I find Christ? And if John left me, who would be his saviour?"

Joanne left the rectory shortly after, renewed by her own newly recovered faith. Her insight and her courage as well as her frankness put flesh and blood on

sound marriage theology. How did marriage become the sacramental Mystery Joanne and John live as husband and wife being Christ to each other?

Faithless

Spouse

Already in the Old Testament, marriage is growing into such a sacramental Mystery. Even then, marriage could be a visible outward sign of an invisible saving reality. Helpful here are the first three chapters of the book of Hosea. This Old Testament Prophet lived in the northern part of the Holy Land around 750 BC. Though a single man at the time of his call by God, the Lord soon changed all that. "Go and marry a prostitute" Hosea 1 3. He was to give her his love and rear a family. Amazed, but obedient to God's holy word, Hosea went to the city. There he met and married a woman named Gomer. Hosea loved his wife and the three children she bore him. But Gomer was restless; and after a few years, she deserted husband and family and returned gladly to her former occupation.

In the second chapter of the prophetic book, God Himself begins to speak. He very much understands Hosea's hurt because His divine love for the chosen people of Israel has been similarly unrequited. God thinks to Himself: "I am also rejected. My bride, Israel, has abandoned me to run off with other gods. She plays their mistress. I make love to her and she calls me by their names!" God's jealous anger is strong, but His desire to enjoy again the happiness of their honeymoon is unrelenting. "If only she would repent, I would gladly welcome her back into my home and heart." "Many days you shall wait for me; you shall not play the harlot, or belong to any man; I in turn will wait for you" Hosea 3: 3.

God asks Hosea to become, himself, the visible sign of His (God's) love for Israel. "Return to the city and search its streets for Gomer. If she repents, restore her to your home and your heart." "Give your love to a woman, beloved of a paramour, an adulteress; even as the Lord loves the people of Israel, though they turn to other gods..." Hosea 3: 1. Hosea agrees. Despite the hurt feelings and rejected love, he retraces an old path and finds Gomer. It was all very familiar. Again, he offers his love. But this time Gomer shows a new sincerity. Hosea raises the money to buy her personal freedom and welcomes Gomer back into his home and heart once again.

Thus the Old Testament shows that a particular marriage, can, by God's power and purpose, have a deeper grace-filled meaning. God intends that this sacramental Mystery disclose some of the kind of divine love God Himself bears towards His people. Through Hosea's marriage, God's eternal fidelity and readiness to welcome the repentant partner is proclaimed. Hosea and Gomer played out, in a visible manner, the invisible relationship of love which God shares with His chosen people. So we can readily identify and detect the sacred Mystery in this marriage.

Marriage in Christ

In the New Testament, the full sacramental reality of marriage is achieved. With the coming of Christ, the union of husband and wife more than symbolize the sacred bond between God and His bride, the Church. Much more. The sacramental union of husband and wife shares in the powerful mystery itself of Christ's union with His Church. In fact husband and wife are a contact point with Christ and express its reality. St. Paul clearly teaches this in the Corinthian Epistle (1 Corinthians 7: 1 - 17).

In this section, St. Paul answers some specific marriage questions. In the early fifties (AD), the new enthusiastic Corinthian converts wondered if they should adopt the strict ethical morality of the pagan philosophers. Some pagans taught that virtue and sexuality were incompatible. Unfortunately, some of the well-intentioned Christians at Corinth concluded that personal holiness was likewise incompatible with marriage! Naturally this "new morality" was hotly debated, so the Corinthians appealed for St. Paul's decision on the following questions:

1) Should existing marriages between two Christian people be broken up for the sake of holiness? St. Paul's answer, is an emphatic NO! "To those now married, however, I give this command, though it is not mine, but the Lord's: a wife must not separate from her husband. If she does separate, she must either remain single or become reconciled to him again. Similarly, a husband must not divorce his wife" 1 Corinthians 7: 10, 11. Marriage in the Lord is itself a holy state. For proof, St. Paul refers to the Lord's own teaching on the matter. "Therefore let no man separate what God has joined" Mark 10: 9. Marriage means living together in a life communion; and as a gift of God's creation for marriage is good. "That is why

a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one flesh" Genesis 2: 24. This union of two in one flesh is meant to continue. Separation among Christian partners, for its own sake has no place in Jesus' thought. It contributes nothing to holiness.

2) What about converts to Christianity? Should converts continue to live with their non-Christian spouses, or should they separate? Apparently some people were saying that to live with a non-Christian would bring "contamination" to the Christian and a loss in personal holiness before God. Again St. Paul answers "Nonsense! Stay together!" "As for the other matters, although I know of nothing the Lord has said, I say: if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, but is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her" 1 Corinthians 7: 12. He bases his decision precisely on the kind of holy relationship that exists between a Christian and the non-Christian partner. St. Paul says that if two people can maintain their union in mutual love and trust, that is in peace, then there is absolutely no reason for the Christian party to leave the other. Why? "For the unbelieving husband is consecrated by his believing wife; the unbelieving wife is consecrated by her believing husband" 1 Corinthians 7: 14.

In other words, a Christian wife cannot withdraw from her pagan husband because, since her Baptism, she has become a visible sign of the invisible love Christ bears her husband. In baptism, she was united to Christ; in marriage she has become a living invitation from Christ, which her husband may accept or reject. Because of her baptismal identification with Christ, if she abandoned her non-Christian husband, the tangible presence of Christ and His offer of forgiving love would be withdrawn from her husband. St. Paul says, "Wife, how do you know that you will not save your husband; or you, husband, that you will not save your wife?" 1 Corinthians 7: 16. Paraphrased, St. Paul is saying "Stay together, because in effect, you are Christ for each other."

Sanctified

Spouse

St. Paul pushes his point of truth further. The Christian wife is the means by which her unbaptized husband becomes "acceptable" or "consecrated" 1 Corinthians 7: 14, to God. That is saying a great deal. The Apostle indicates that,

by living together in love, the unbeliever is brought into a new, special relationship with Christ through the conjugal union lived with his wife. Marriage to a Christian woman gives an unbelieving man a whole new status before Christ.

It is true his "acceptance" or "consecration" does not have the force of a sacramental Mystery and he is not incorporated into the visible Body of Christ. But the degree of his union with Christ is stronger than before. In fact, it is of a new kind! Why? Since he has lovingly accepted his Christian wife, he has implicitly accepted the Mystery of Christ which she embodies. In effect, St. Paul says, "Stay together; as a means of grace you sanctify your husband."

3) What if the unbaptized partner clearly rejects his wife after her baptism, or deserts her, or no longer will live in peace with her? Then, according to St. Paul, the Christian wife is free to separate and marry again. "If the unbeliever wishes to separate, however, let him do so. The believing husband or wife is not bound in such cases. God has called you to live in peace" 1 Corinthians 7: 15. Where does her freedom come from? From the Saviour Himself! Christ alone is the foundation for an unbreakable bond which constitutes the sacramental Mystery of marriage. In refusing to live in peace with his wife, the pagan husband is likewise rejecting Christ, Who offers sacramental permanence to their union. In such a case, she may seek a permanent marriage with another baptized man.

When Joanne described her marriage, she summed up almost two thousand years of theological understanding and insight into the sacramental Mystery of marriage. Like that of Hosea, her marriage revealed to the world something of God's love for His people. When she spoke of being "Christ for her husband," even during hard times, when others advised separation, she remained faithful and summed up St. Paul's message from God to us. Marriage not only foreshadows the union of Christ and His Church, but baptized spouses actually share in the reality of that union and bring its grace to each other.

God never divorced His Chosen People. Hosea never divorced Gomer. Christ eternally loves His Church and so should every Orthodox wife love her husband as every Orthodox husband should love his wife as a sign of God's enduring love for us.

WISDOM! BE ATTENTIVE

O John our father, God-bearer, hermit of the desert and angel in the flesh; you received heavenly gifts by your fasting, vigils, and prayers. You healed the sick and those coming to you with faith. Glory be to the One Who gives you strength; glory be to Him Who crowned you; glory be to the Lord Who heals all through your intercession Troparion, Fourth Sunday of the Great Fast.

O John, our leader and father; the Lord has placed you on high as a true guiding star lighting the ends of the earth with the truth of your virtue Kontakion, Fourth Sunday of the Great Fast.

Let the faithful exult in glory; let them sing for joy and take their rest Prokimenon, Fourth Sunday of the Great Fast.

Having heard the Gospel of the Lord, O venerable Father John, you left this world, counting as nothing the riches and glory that it offered. Then you cried out to everyone: Love the Lord and you shall find eternal favor, for nothing is preferable to His love. And when He shall come in glory, you will find repose with all the saints. Through their prayers, O Christ, grant great mercy to our souls Vesper Hymn, Fourth Sunday of the Great Fast.

We now behold a new mother, greater than the wonders of old. For who has ever known a mother to bear a child without the help of man? Who has known a mother to hold within her arms the Source of all creation? It was God's own will to be born in this manner, and you, O most pure Virgin, carried Him as an infant in your arms. Because of this, you can approach God with the boldness of a mother. Therefore, we venerate you and ask you to always beseech Him to have mercy on us and save our souls Vesper Hymn, Fourth Sunday of the Great Fast.

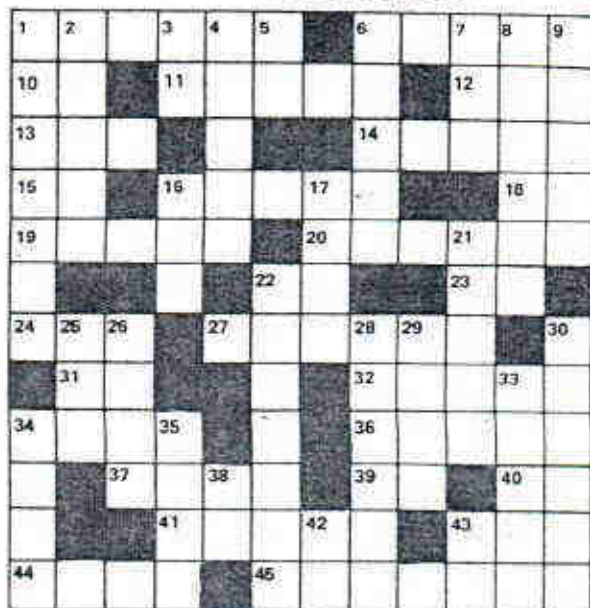
Traversing the path of this life, I have been sorely wounded by the thievery of passions; lift me up, O Christ, I beseech You. My soul has been stripped by thieves; they have left me half dead along the path, wounded by the blows of my sins; now deign to heal me, O Lord. By my passions, O Christ our Saviour, I have been stripped of Your commandments; sensual pleasures have struck me down; pour out the oil of Your love upon me Matins Hymn, Fourth Sunday of the Great Fast.

APOSTLES

• CHRIST
HEALS THE
EPILEPTIC •



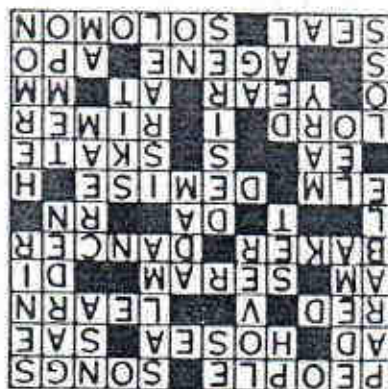
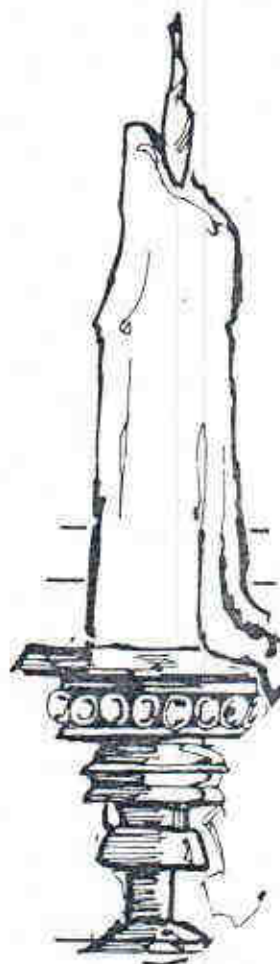
SONG OF SONGS



ACROSS

DOWN

1. "Song of Songs" shows mutual love of the Lord and his —.
2. A swelling or tumor.
3. Public Housing. (abbrev.).
4. The Lord is the — in "Song of Songs."
5. Specialist (US Navy, abbrev.).
6. Syrian desert region referred to in 1:5.
7. National Security Agency.
8. Ch. 4:12 refers to the Lover and his —.
9. Rugged heights symbolizing obstacles for lovers in 4:8.
10. After Christ.
11. Ancient OT prophet.
12. Soc. of Automotive Eng.
13. Jews crossed this sea.
14. To gain knowledge or skill.
15. Before noon.
16. Indonesian Island.
17. First man.
18. Chem. symbol for "didymium."
19. One who bakes bread.
20. One who dances.
21. Rich part of milk.
22. District Attorney.
23. Registered Nurse.
24. An American shade tree.
25. Name of 13 different popes.
26. In some liturgies Song of Songs is applied to —.
27. The transfer of an estate.
28. Land of Promise.
29. A short play.
30. Rugged heights mentioned in 4:8.
31. Each (abbrev.).
32. To glide on ice.
33. Rate of speed.
34. The — is the Lover in Song of Songs.
35. Variation of "rhymet."
36. Ch. 3, " — and Discovery."
37. Twelve months make a —.
38. To distribute.
39. Presence in, on, or by.
39. Serviceman's address.
40. Maryknoll Missionary.
41. Nitrogen trichloride.
42. Attorney General. (abbrev.).
43. "Set me as a — on your heart." (8:16).
44. Negative answer.
45. Song of Songs is attributed to —.
45. Air Mail (abbrev.).



SONG OF SONGS

“Help Thou mine unbelief”



1. When Jesus came down from the mountain, He saw His other disciples surrounded by crowds. A man ran to Him, crying: "Master, have mercy on my son here for he suffers from fits of madness and Thy disciples could not cure him!" "O, faithless generation!" sighed Jesus. "How long shall I be with you?"



2. The boy fell down in a fit. The people thought he was dead, but Jesus turned to his father. "All things are possible if only you believe," He said.



3. Weeping, the man cried: "Lord, I believe—help Thou mine unbelief!" Then Jesus took the boy by the hand and he got up, sane and well.

ST.
JOHN

CLH.
ACUS



REINCARNATION

Members of what is commonly called the "New Age" movement often claim that early Christians believed in reincarnation. Shirley MacLaine, an avid New Age disciple, recalls being taught: "The theory of reincarnation is recorded in the Bible. But the proper interpretations were struck from it during an ecumenical council meeting of the Catholic Church in Constantinople sometime around A.D. 553, called the Council of Nicaea [*sic*]" (*Out on a Limb*, 234–35).

Historical facts provide no basis for this claim. In fact, there was no Council of Nicaea in A.D. 553. Further, the two ecumenical councils of Nicaea (A.D. 325 and A.D. 787) took place in the city of Nicaea (hence their names)—and neither dealt with reincarnation. What did take place in A.D. 553 was the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople. But records from this Council show that it, too, did not address the subject of reincarnation. None of the early councils did.

The closest the Second Council of Constantinople came to addressing reincarnation was, in one sentence, to condemn Origen, an early Church writer who believed souls exist in heaven before coming to earth to be born. New Agers confuse this belief in the preexistence of the soul with reincarnation and claim that Origen was a reincarnationist. Actually, he was one of the most prolific early writers *against* reincarnation! Because he is so continually misrepresented by New Agers, we have included a number of his quotes below, along with passages from other sources, all of which date from *before* A.D. 553, when the doctrine of reincarnation was supposedly "taken out of the Bible."

The origin of Shirley MacLaine's mistaken notion that Origen taught reincarnation is probably *Reincarnation in Christianity*, by Geddes MacGregor—a

book published by the Theosophical Publishing House in 1978. The author speculates that Origen's texts written in support of the belief in reincarnation somehow disappeared or were suppressed. Admitting he has no evidence, MacGregor nonetheless asserts: "I am convinced he taught reincarnation *in some form*" (58). You may judge from the passages below whether this seems likely.

IRENAEUS

"We may undermine [the Hellenists'] doctrine as to transmigration from body to body by this fact—that souls remember nothing whatever of the events which took place in their previous states of existence. For if they were sent forth with this object, that they should have experience of every kind of action, they must of necessity retain a remembrance of those things which have been previously accomplished, that they might fill up those in which they were still deficient, and not by always hovering, without intermission, through the same pursuits, spend their labor wretchedly in vain. . . . With reference to these objections, Plato . . . attempted no kind of proof, but simply replied dogmatically that when souls enter into this life they are caused to drink of oblivion by that demon who watches their entrance, before they effect an entrance into the bodies. It escaped him that he fell into another, greater perplexity. For if the cup of oblivion, after it has been drunk, can obliterate the memory of all the deeds that have been done, how, O Plato, do you obtain the knowledge of this fact . . . ?" (*Against Heresies* 2:33:1–2 [A.D. 189]).

TERTULLIAN

"Come now, if some philosopher affirms, as Læberius holds, following an opinion of Pythagoras, that a man may have his origin from a mule, a serpent from a woman, and with skill of speech twists every argument to prove his view, will he not gain an acceptance for it [among the pagans], and work in some conviction that on account of this, they should abstain from eating animal food? May anyone have the persuasion that he should abstain, lest, by chance, in his beef he eats some ancestor of his? But if a Christian promises the return of a man from a man, and the very actual Gaius [resurrected] from Gaius . . . they will not . . . grant him a hearing. If there is any ground for the moving to and fro of human souls into different bodies, why may they not return to the very matter they have left . . . ?" (*Apology* 48 [A.D. 197]).

ORIGEN

"[Scripture says] 'And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" and he said, "I am not"' [John 1: 21]. No one can fail to remember in this connection what Jesus says of John: 'If you will receive it, this is Elijah, who is to come' [Matt. 11:14]. How then does John come to say to those who ask him, 'Are you Elijah?'—'I am not?' . . . One might say that John did not know that he was Elijah. This will be the explanation of those who find in our passage a support for their doctrine of reincarnation, as if the soul clothed itself in a fresh body and did not quite remember its former lives. . . . [H]owever, a churchman, who repudiates the doctrine of reincarnation as a false one and does not admit that the soul of John

was ever Elijah, may appeal to the above-quoted words of the angel, and point out that it is not the soul of Elijah that is spoken of at John's birth, but the spirit and power of Elijah" (*Commentary on John* 6:7 [A.D. 229]).

"As for the spirits of the prophets, these are given to them by God and are spoken of as being in a manner their property [slaves], as 'The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets' [1 Cor. 14:32] and 'The spirit of Elijah rested upon Elisha' [2 Kgs. 2:15]. Thus, it is said, there is nothing absurd in supposing that John, 'in the spirit and power of Elijah,' turned the hearts of the fathers to the children and that it was on account of this spirit that he was called 'Elijah who is to come'" (ibid.).

"If the doctrine [of reincarnation] was widely current, ought not John to have hesitated to pronounce upon it, lest his soul had actually been in Elijah? And here our churchman will appeal to history, and will bid his antagonists [to] ask experts of the secret doctrines of the Hebrews if they do really entertain such a belief. For if it should appear that they do not, then the argument based on that supposition is shown to be quite baseless" (ibid.).

"Someone might say, however, that Herod and some of those of the people held the false dogma of the transmigration of souls into bodies, in consequence of which they thought that the former John had appeared again by a fresh birth, and had come from the dead into life as Jesus. But the time between the birth of John and the birth of Jesus, which was not more than six months, does not permit this false opinion to be considered credible. And perhaps rather some

such idea as this was in the mind of Herod, that the powers which worked in John had passed over to Jesus, in consequence of which he was thought by the people to be John the Baptist. And one might use the following line of argument: Just as because the spirit and the power of Elijah, and not because of his soul, it is said about John, 'This is Elijah who is to come' [Matt. 11:14] . . . so Herod thought that the powers in John's case worked in him works of baptism and teaching—for John did not do one miracle [John 10:41]—but in Jesus [they worked] miraculous portents" (*Commentary on Matthew 10:20* [A.D. 248]).

"Now the Canaanite woman, having come, worshipped Jesus as God, saying, 'Lord, help me,' but he answered and said, 'It is not possible to take the children's bread and cast it to the little dogs' . . . [O]thers, then, who are strangers to the doctrine of the Church, assume that souls pass from the bodies of men into the bodies of dogs, according to their varying degree of wickedness; but we . . . do not find this at all in the divine Scripture" (*ibid.*, 11:17).

"In this place [when Jesus said Elijah was come and referred to John the Baptist] it does not appear to me that by Elijah the soul is spoken of, lest I fall into the doctrine of transmigration, which is foreign to the Church of God, and not handed down by the apostles, nor anywhere set forth in the scriptures" (*ibid.*, 13:1).

"But if . . . the Greeks, who introduce the doctrine of transmigration, laying down things in harmony with it, do not acknowledge that the world is coming to corruption, it is fitting that when they have looked the scriptures straight in the face which plainly de-

clare that the world will perish, they should either disbelieve them or invent a series of arguments in regard to the interpretation of things concerning the consummation; which even if they wish they will not be able to do" (ibid.).

LACTANTIUS

"What of Pythagoras, who was first called a philosopher, who judged that souls were indeed immortal, but that they passed into other bodies, either of cattle or of birds or of beasts? Would it not have been better that they should be destroyed, together with their bodies, than thus to be condemned to pass into the bodies of other animals? Would it not be better not to exist at all than, after having had the form of a man, to live as a swine or a dog? And the foolish man, to gain credit for his saying, said that he himself had been Euphorbus in the Trojan war, and that when he had been slain he passed into other figures of animals, and at last became Pythagoras. O happy man!—to whom alone so great a memory was given! Or rather unhappy, who when changed into a sheep was not permitted to be ignorant of what he was! And [I] would to heaven that he [Pythagoras] alone had been thus senseless!" (*Epitome of the Divine Institutes* 36 [A.D. 317]).

GREGORY OF NYSSA

"[I]f one should search carefully, he will find that their doctrine is of necessity brought down to this. They tell us that one of their sages said that he, being one and the same person, was born a man, and afterward assumed the form of a woman, and flew about with the birds, and grew as a bush, and obtained the life of an aquatic creature—and he who said these things of himself did not, so far as I can judge, go far from the truth, for such doctrines as this—of saying that one should pass through many changes—are re-

ally fitting for the chatter of frogs or jackdaws or the stupidity of fishes or the insensibility of trees" (*The Making of Man* 28:3 [A.D. 379]).

AMBROSE OF MILAN

"It is a cause for wonder that though they [the heathen] . . . say that souls pass and migrate into other bodies. . . . But let those who have not been taught doubt [the resurrection]. For us who have read the law, the prophets, the apostles, and the gospel, it is not lawful to doubt" (*Belief in the Resurrection* 65–66 [A.D. 380]).

"But is their opinion preferable who say that our souls, when they have passed out of these bodies, migrate into the bodies of beasts or of various other living creatures? . . . For what is so like a marvel as to believe that men could have been changed into the forms of beasts? How much greater a marvel, however, would it be that the soul which rules man should take on itself the nature of a beast so opposed to that of man, and being capable of reason should be able to pass over to an irrational animal, than that the form of the body should have been changed?" (*ibid.*, 127).

JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

"As for doctrines on the soul, there is nothing excessively shameful that they [the disciples of Plato and Pythagoras] have left unsaid, asserting that the souls of men become flies and gnats and bushes and that God himself is a [similar] soul, with some other the like indecencies. . . . At one time he says that the soul is of the substance of God, at another, after hav-

ing exalted it thus immoderately and impiously, he exceeds again in a different way, and treats it with insult, making it pass into swine and asses and other animals of yet less esteem than these" (*Homilies on John* 2:3, 6 [A.D. 391]).

BASIL THE GREAT

"[A]void the nonsense of those arrogant philosophers who do not blush to liken their soul to that of a dog, who say that they have themselves formerly been women, shrubs, or fish. Have they ever been fish? I do not know, but I do not fear to affirm that in their writings they show less sense than fish" (*The Six Days' Work* 8:2 [A.D. 393]).

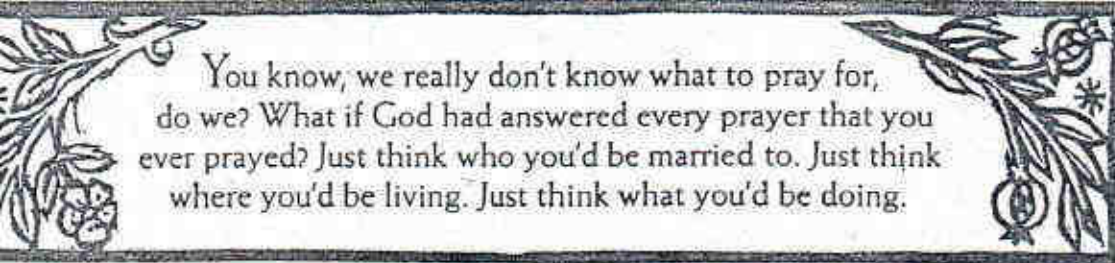
**Let
Us
Pray
To
The
Lord**

Lord, when You were among us on earth, You prayed. You
prayed in the morning, You prayed at night; You prayed alone,
You prayed with other people. In Your hours of distress,
You retreated into times of prayer. In your hours of joy, You
lifted Your heart and hands to the Father in prayer. Help
us to be more like You in this way...help us to make
prayer a priority in our daily lives.

*Those who go to God Most High for
safety will be protected by the
Almighty. I will say to the Lord, "You
are my place of safety and protection.
You are my God and I trust you."*

PSALM 91:1-2

Listen to the counsel of God, reestablish your roots, and pray.
This is the only way to achieve safe passage through a crisis in your life.



You know, we really don't know what to pray for,
do we? What if God had answered every prayer that you
ever prayed? Just think who you'd be married to. Just think
where you'd be living. Just think what you'd be doing.

The beauty of prayer is that anyone can pray. You don't have to be a certain age, you don't have to have wealth, you don't have to have a certain talent—all you have to have is a stubborn faith and a willingness to intercede.

The Christian is the one who seeks to discern the voice of God amidst the many voices that come our way. One of the greatest challenges that we have is to learn to hear the voice of truth.

Let us look only to Jesus, the One who began our faith and who makes it perfect.


HEBREWS 12:2

In our "bootstrap" society, where you tough it out and do it on your own and take pride in being a rugged individualist, the one thing that seems to escape us is being before God on our knees, being before God aware that we are helpless, and *allowing* him to assist us.



Let us, then, feel very sure that we can come before God's throne where there is grace. There we can receive mercy and grace to help us when we need it.

HEBREWS 4:16



*So I bow in prayer before the Father from whom every family in
heaven and on earth gets its true name. I ask the Father in his
great glory to give you the power to be strong inwardly through
his Spirit. I pray that Christ will live in your hearts by faith and
that your life will be strong in love and be built on love.*

EPHESIANS 3:14-17

Prayer is the recognition that if God had not engaged himself in our problems, we would still be lost in the blackness. It is by his mercy that we have been lifted up. Prayer is that whole process that reminds us of who God is and who we are.

Father, we confess that sometimes
prayer is not very easy.

We do not see You with our physical eyes nor do we see
You hearing our words, and the
eyes of our soul are so limited.

But we do have so many experiences in our lives
where prayers have been answered by faith
that we continue coming before You,
opening our hearts to You
through prayer.

Lord, every morning you hear my voice.

Every morning, I tell you what I need,

and I wait for your answer

Psalms 5: 3.

*Then people will say,
"There really are rewards for doing what is right.
There really is a God who judges the world."*

PSALM 58:11

Listen to the voice of Christ rather than to the voices of men. Jesus says you can't please men and still be a servant of God. Those who listen and follow Christ will be received into heaven by the pierced hands of the one who knows the freedom of giving up what you cannot own in order to receive what no one can take from you—eternal life.

I believe there's great power in prayer.
I believe God heals the wounded and
that he can raise the dead. But I don't
believe we tell God what to do and
when to do it. You see, there's a
difference between faith and
presumption. There's a difference
between believing he's the almighty
God and demanding that he become
our divine servant.



The Lord

shows his true

love every day.

At night I

have a song,

and I pray to

my living God.

PSALM 42:8

*Those who
know the Lord
trust him,
because he will not
leave those who
come to him.*

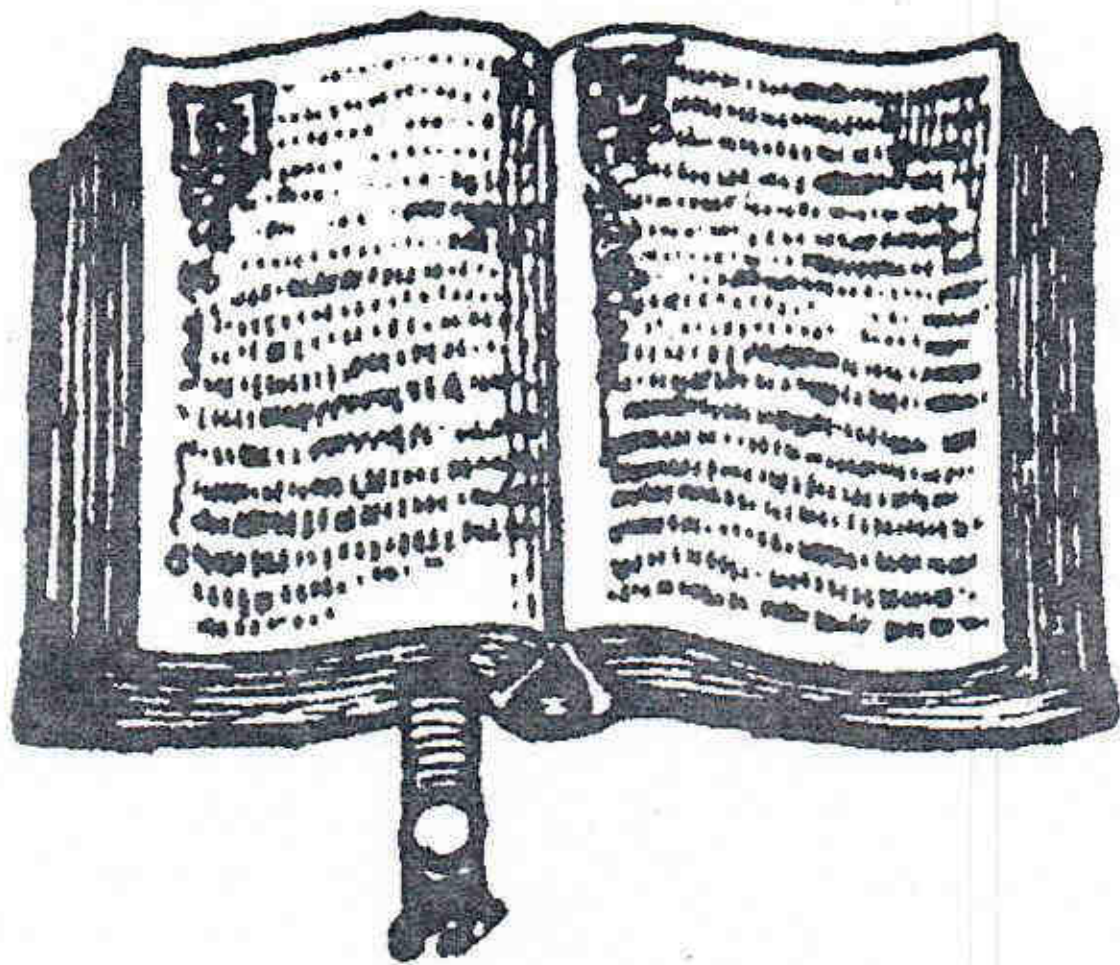
PSALM 9:10

Our God knows that with our limited vision, we do
not even know that for which we should pray.

And we are praying
for things right now that our God knows
would not be best for us.

When we entrust our requests to Him,
we trust Him
to honor our prayers with holy judgment.

*Answer me when I pray to you, my God who does what is right.
Make things easier for me when I am in trouble. Have mercy
on me and hear my prayer. Psalms 4: 1.*




*All the days planned for me were written in your book
before I was one day old.*

PSALM 139:16

When Jesus talks about prayer, he doesn't present it as an arduous task, he doesn't describe it as a requirement, he doesn't say that it's something you do and hopefully beautifully so that some divine audience will throw flowers to you. That's not what prayer is. It's the divine relationship that allows us to stand before God and express the deepest concerns of our hearts.

*But dear friends, use your most holy faith to
build yourselves up, praying in the Holy Spirit.*

JUDE 1:20



*Continue praying, keeping alert,
and always thanking God.*

COLOSSIANS 4:2

A VERY DIFFERENT "CROWN"

Many people seem to have a fascination with Royal Families. They represent the wealth of their individual nations. They wear lavish clothes and have beautiful jewelry passed down from generation to generation. The Crown Jewels of the United Kingdom are a perfect example. Stored within the Tower of London, they are protected 24 hours a day. The Crown Jewels symbolize the prestige and power of the kingdom. The icon on today's bulletin depicts a very different kind of "crown."

Jesus is worthy of the greatest crown and the highest honor. But our Lord suffered many hours of humiliation before He was crucified. The Gospel reads: *"the soldiers twisted a crown of thorns and put it on His head . . ." (John 19:2)*. That day, the crown was not a symbol of royalty and honor, but instead was a tool of mockery and hate. Yet Jesus wore it willingly. He wore it for us, bearing our sin and our shame. The One who deserved the best of all crowns took the worst for us.

In His death, Jesus may have seemed powerless. But when we read the whole story, we see that He gave His life willingly and proved Himself to be the Son of God thru his glorious Resurrection. We should "crown" Him the Lord of life.