



Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Thirteenth Sunday After Pentecost

September 3, 2017

**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 insightful riches 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

+++ His Grace, Bishop Gregory, will be visiting our parish the week – end of November 4, 5, to bless the icons on the icon screen and to impart his episcopal blessing

to our faithful. We will have a service Saturday afternoon honoring our tear - shedding icon and the Sunday morning Divine Liturgy followed by a dinner in honor of the Most Blessed Bishop. Please set aside these dates to assure your presence with the parish family for this auspicious event.

+++ Today we have festal anointing on the occasion of this past week's simple feast of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist. The customary greeting is "Christ is among us!" to which we respond, "He Is And Shall Be!"

+++ Today at 9: 15 AM, we have a Memorial Service for the repose of the soul of +George Szmaida at the request of his beloved wife, Debbie. We pray the Lord grant the soul of his departed servant, +George a blessed repose and creates for him Eternal Memory!

+++ With regret we note many of our faithful are not offering their Diocesan Dues. Please bring them in because the parish is responsible for remitting \$65.00 per adult for support of the diocese.

+++ Please keep the intentions of these members of our parish intercession community in your daily prayers: Betty, James, Yevlogia, Nicholas, Maria, William, 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.

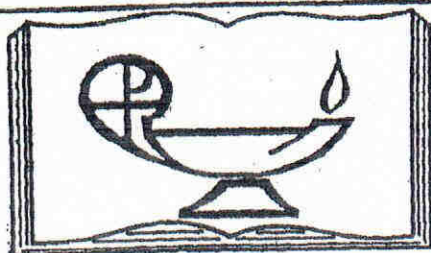
+++ We offer thanks to the Blessed Trinity for inspiring generosity in the souls of our faithful and the blessing of abundant grace in our midst with the offering received last Sunday: Tithe Offering, \$290.00; Candles, \$23.00, for a total of \$313.00. We express our profound gratitude to the parishioner communicants who offer one tenth of their God-given treasure and labor 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, Pani Lucas, Maria Idromenos, Anna Zacharyczuk, 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.

+++ 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, blankets and fabrics.

LORD



TEACH
US

Perfection

For in Christ there is all of God in a human body; so you have everything when you have Christ, and you are filled with God through your union with Christ. He is the highest Ruler with authority over every other power. When you came to Christ he set you free from your evil desires, not by a bodily operation of circumcision, but by a spiritual operation, the baptism of your souls Colossians 2: 9 – 11.

Epaphras, from your city, a servant of Christ Jesus, sends you his love. He is always earnestly praying for you, asking God to make you strong and perfect and to help you know his will in everything you do Colossians 4: 12.

For night and day we pray on and on for you, asking God to let us see you again, to fill up any little cracks, there may be yet in your faith. This will result in your hearts being made strong, sinless and holy by God our Father, so that you may stand before him, guiltless on that day when our Lord Jesus Christ returns with all those who belong to him 1 Thessalonians 3: 10 – 13.

O Timothy my son be strong with the strength Christ Jesus gives you 2 Timothy 2: 1.

Let us stop going over the same old ground over and over again, always teaching those first lessons about Christ. Let us go on instead to other things and become mature in our understanding as strong Christians ought to be Hebrews 6: 1.

For by that one offering he made forever perfect in the sight of God all those whom he is making holy Hebrews 10: 14.

The Devoted Mate

What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder
Mark 10: 9.

A farmer in Pennsylvania tells us an interesting, uplifting and perceptive story about a pair of swans swimming leisurely and contentedly on a pond that was part of his property. One day as he watched them, the gander or male swan ascended skyward, circling round and round, honking earnestly, and glancing down at his mate, hoping his dream would come true.

The farmer says that the goose or female swan was injured and could not fly. The injury healed but left her apparently handicapped. Her spouse left her side daily to fly overhead, looking back and forth, hoping she would still one day join him in flight. The gander's desire increased when the migratory season approached.

"Oh, if only she could join me, and we could fly to a warmer climate for the winter as other couples do," he seemed to be saying. But knowing that she too longed to be a normal spouse who could meet his expectations, he would descend again and again with a resounding splash to resume and maintain his role as "husband" and remain a faithful companion for life. Though, no doubt, disappointed, he would stay with her, sacrificing his own delights, and enduring the cold northern winters, he never considered deserting or abandoning her. Such was the strength of his natural instincts.

Many human beings, married couples, reflect back when life together was in some ways more complete, more fulfilling and more desirable. Changes may come from the aging process, from accidents or from sickness. Many have deserted their spouses because of selfishness. Is it not absurd that people would be less devoted and committed to each other than a pair of feathered fowl? How strange to think to think that man, endowed with a rational mind cannot sustain himself in a position that is strengthened by heavenly grace, but which a mere animal, or bird in this case, without a soul can be sustained on mere instinct! Why do we forget so easily that husband and wife, together, are heirs of the grace of life?

Thirteenth Sunday

The failure of Israel to accept Jesus' prophetic message deserved the punishment of deprivation — a warning of divine judgment against Christians who fail to live according to the precepts of their faith.

The tenants in today's parable know precisely what their responsibilities, privileges and obligations entail. And instead of fulfilling them, they pursue their own horrific agenda. In a not so veiled attempt our Lord is teaching the hard-hearted Jews about themselves. For centuries, after having been blessed by our heavenly Father with particular and specific revelation, they nevertheless choose to follow their own detours from truth.

God then decides to send his own Son in person, to teach them and draw them back to reality. They are undaunted. They seize him and kill him, taking him outside the vineyard.

Our Lord then remonstrates with his listeners, "The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone of the structure. It was the Lord who did this and we find it marvelous to behold" Matthew 21: 42.

How much this reminds us of the admonition of David the Old Testament king: "...no good thing will be withheld from them that walk uprightly" Psalms 84: 11.

Obviously the tenants of the vineyard, the Old Testament so-called believers and even now, in our own midst hard-hearted baptized Christians often fail in their earthly pilgrimage because they go it alone, do it by themselves and follow their own imaginary intuitive instructions, forgetting it is the faith of God, the faith of Christ we are called to pursue, not the even seemingly rich results of our own imagination. We cannot save ourselves, even for a brief moment!

There is often a very good reason why our most earnest supplications seem to beat helplessly against skies of brass. Before we so flippantly say, "Let's pray about it," we ought to take careful spiritual inventory. We should see if there are things in our life which should be straightened out first. Perhaps there are wrongs to be righted, sins to be repented of and confessed, and pardons which should be granted to others before our prayers can be correctly and honorably offered before the throne of God.

"Walking uprightly," is one of the fundamental keys to spiritual power; it opens the door to "quick" answers to our petitions and needs.

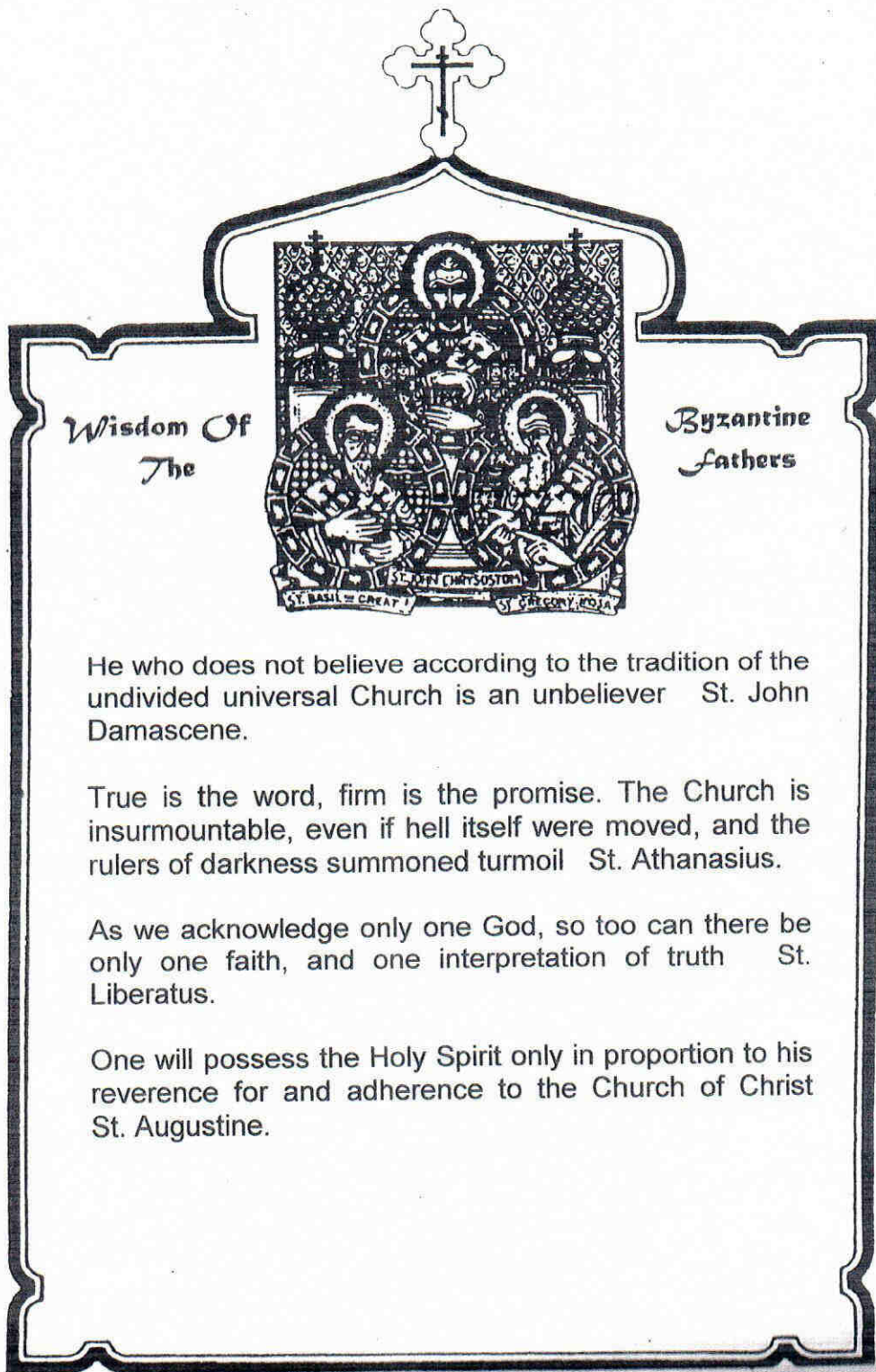
The story is told of a certain woman who asked her parish priest to pray that her husband who was not a church-goer or actually not a genuine believer, but a Christian in name only, be saved. She said she had been deeply concerned over him for many years. "I will pray with you for him on one condition, and that is that you have fulfilled the condition of Psalm 84. Tell me, are you "walking uprightly" yourself? "I'm afraid not," she said with some hesitation. The priest reminded her, "Ask God to forgive the past and save you from your besetting sins and then promise him that you will do his will." Come now to the confessional after you have thought about your transgressions so you may sincerely seek his forgiveness and begin a serious pilgrimage to "walk uprightly."

The woman got down on her knees in the pew and after some time, approached the priest once again, admitted her own shortcomings and sins and was eager to get right with the Lord. In tears she sought God's forgiveness of her own transgressions before seeking to help overcome those of another. Then both she and her priest prayed earnestly for her husband's repentance and salvation.

The very next day that man turned to the Lord because of his wife's sincere tear-filled prayers on his behalf. That devout woman found her prayers answered according to the promise of God. The priest was later heard to say he had seen similar, almost miraculous answers in spiritual requests when the requirement of Psalm 84 had been fully met by those who sought God's blessing.

The tenants in today's parable wanted earthly success without heavenly assistance or blessing. Their purpose was unrealistic so they could not count on God's help. Their focus was so earth-bound and narrowly superficial, they could not see beyond the limitations of their own wants.

Perhaps the things many of us seek are not good for us. This may be the reason why we do not receive because we ask incorrectly. Most likely, however our unanswered prayers may be traced to the fact that we are not walking uprightly. Let us ask today for our heavenly Father to search us, to teach us to know our own hearts. Let us ask God to try us and prove us honestly in our hidden desires, that they be uncovered and abandoned. Let us ask the Holy Spirit to cleanse us and make us holy and lead us in the everlasting way of virtue because we do our best kneeling in prayer when we are in good standing with God.



Wisdom Of
The

Byzantine
Fathers

He who does not believe according to the tradition of the undivided universal Church is an unbeliever St. John Damascene.

True is the word, firm is the promise. The Church is insurmountable, even if hell itself were moved, and the rulers of darkness summoned turmoil St. Athanasius.

As we acknowledge only one God, so too can there be only one faith, and one interpretation of truth St. Liberatus.

One will possess the Holy Spirit only in proportion to his reverence for and adherence to the Church of Christ St. Augustine.

God Hears Me

If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you Matthew 17: 20.

Our God does hear us. How difficult to believe at times. We want to believe it with all our heart and soul, and so we pray mightily and storm heaven with our voices. And the silence terrifies us because we are so accustomed to reverberating and intruding noise in our lives. We invite and desire it, but quiet is a fear-producer in our present culture. We turn inward to the God who dwells within and there is only unabashed emptiness there.

And yet, we believe. We know He is there because the mustard-seed faith we do have is stronger than the mountain of doubt that threatens it. That is the only way we can express how our little faith continues to win over the emptiness and doubt that seems so large, looms so terrifying.

Our God does indeed hear us and is faithful to us even though we only partially approach him with limited expectancy because our investment in faith and hope is so very limited, even superficial. He encourages us to respond as genuine believers even though it seems so difficult. He continually reminds us, He prods and pushes, sometimes gently and other times more forcefully that we express what fills the depth of our yearning soul.

Our response ought to be vigorous and zealous, but instead we simply manage to permit the expression of a mere whimper of faith. Our Creator knows our limitations. He hears us pray and even beg for a strong courageous faith and He keeps sending mustard seeds and they are and enough and sufficient now. If we only knew we do not have to beg God for anything, least of all strength in faith. We ought but take the mustard seeds as they are allotted us and provide the fertile soil in our soul for them to grow and bloom into beautiful expressions of our need as faithful disciples of the Lord.

When the little comes to fruition, our God will provide more as appropriate for our needs and ability to advance toward heaven successfully, slow at first, but sure-footed later. In our initial stages we always want more than we really need while our heavenly Father continues giving us our necessary daily bread. Our prayer ought be "Lord, I believe! Help my unbelief!"

See you at 6: 30?

Boast not of tomorrow for you do not know what any day may bring forth
Proverbs 27: 1

"See you at 6: 30 in the morning," the elderly lawyer said as we rose to leave his office. "My son will accompany you to the county seat and by tomorrow night your paperwork should be totally complete."

According to the agreement, the client drove up to his office at 6: 30 the next morning. Something was wrong. There was confusion as a sober group huddled outside the office. Finally, a young man walked over to us and shared the startling news; the elderly lawyer had died unexpectedly during the night!

"See you at 6: 30" or similar statements are often heard among us. We just naturally assume we are going to live up to all the expectations of the future. We forget that instead of seeing the faces of our beloved friends at the appointed time we might see the smiling face of our heavenly Father or the malicious grin of the wicked devil. Tomorrow is promised to no one. Even our peasant ancestors in their mountain villages would always preface such conversation with "If God wills it."

"See you at 6: 30." Why do we assume what we anticipate will become reality without the blessing and grace of our heavenly Father? What kind of memories would your family and loved ones have if these would be your final words?

"See you at 6: 30." The next time you make such assumptions and use such a phrase, keep in mind some Godly-revealed comparisons of your brief life: "a shadow" Job 8: 9; "a vanishing vapor" James 4: 14; "a flying shuttle" Job 7: 6; "as grass" James 1: 10; "as a flower of the field" Isaiah 28: 4; "like hurrying messengers" Job 1: 14; and "only a handbreath" Psalms 39: 5.

May our heavenly Father help us heed the warning in his revelation to us: "Denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we who should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" Titus 2: 12, 13.

"There is but a step between me and death" 1 Samuel 20: 3.

Did You Know That ...

...faith is not believing that God can, it is knowing that He will?

...holy day worship and celebration make us participants in the very exciting drama of our own salvation?

...the first step in getting help is humility?

...to hear God's voice, we must turn down the world's volume?

...Christians are strongest when they stand together?

...marriage thrives in a climate of love and respect?

...Christ's Resurrection guarantees our own?

...God is not getting through to us if we remain the way we were before?

...knowledge without common sense is folly?

...knowing about God is not the same as knowing God?

...there is no legacy as rich as integrity?

...you need not fear where you are going when God is going with you?

...our highest good may come only from our deepest suffering?

...the pathway to heaven begins at the foot of the cross?

...if we are infected with the faith of Jesus Christ, others will catch it from our example?

...only our God can transform a sin-stained soul into a masterpiece of grace?

...while pride brings shame, humility introduces wisdom?

...life's purpose is found in the person of Jesus Christ?

...God's revelation to us in scripture is a mirror that reflects how God sees us?

*Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost
Matthew 21, 33-42*



Elisha helps a widow.

2 Kings 4:1-7

A woman's husband died. The woman had no money to pay her bills. The bill collector said, "Give me your two sons so I can sell them as slaves and get my money back."

The woman asked Elisha for help. Elisha asked, "What do you have in your house?" The woman said, "I don't have anything except a little oil."

"Go ask your neighbors to give you empty jars," Elisha said. "Get as many jars as you can. Then go inside your house and shut the door. Pour oil into all the jars." The woman and her sons did exactly what Elisha said.

The woman took her little jar of oil and began to pour oil into the jars. She filled up one jar, then another and another. She kept pouring oil until all the jars were full! When all the jars were full, the oil stopped flowing out of her jar. The woman knew that only God could fill all those jars with oil from her little jar!

Elisha told the woman to sell the jars of oil and use the money to pay what she owed. She did what Elisha told her to, and she even had some money left over!

Elisha helps a widow.

2 Kings 4:1-7



ELISHA AND THE OIL

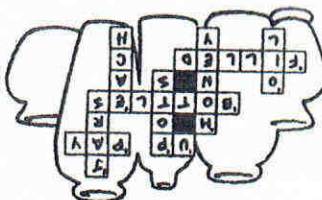
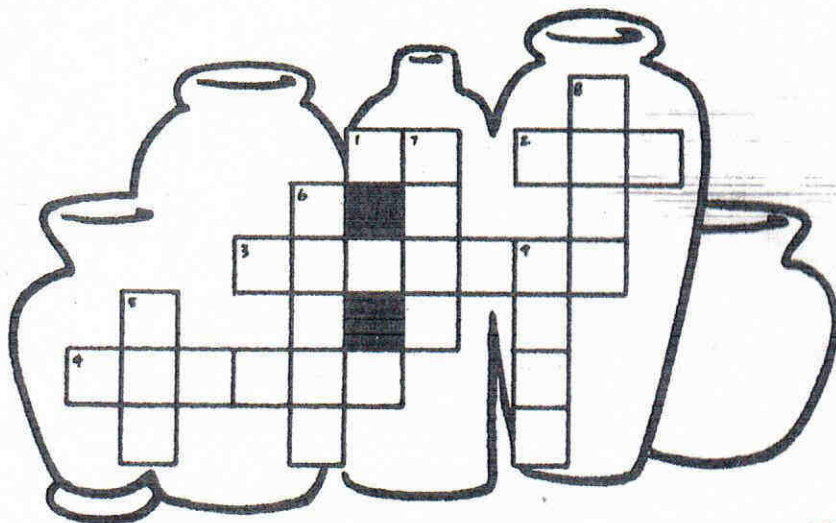
2 KINGS 4:1-7

ACROSS

- 1) OPPOSITE OF DOWN
- 2) THE WIDOW COULD NOW
____ OFF THE DEBT
(RHYMES WITH "HAY").
- 3) TALL CONTAINERS FOR
LIQUID - RHYMES
WITH "THROTTLES"
- 4) THE WIDOW _____ ALL
OF THE JARS TO
THEIR TOPS.

DOWN

- 5) LAMPS BURN _____
FOR LIGHT
- 6) WE USE THIS TO
BUY THINGS.
- 7) LARGE MOUTH
CONTAINERS - RHYMES
WITH "LOTS"
- 8) CONTAINERS WITH LIDS -
RHYMES WITH "CARS"
- 9) " _____ AND EVERY ONE "
RHYMES WITH "PEACH"



"O LORD, BLESS THE CROWN OF THIS YEAR WITH YOUR GOODNESS"

At the First Ecumenical Council in 325 A.D., it was decreed that the Church Liturgical Year would begin on September 1st. This was no random selection, for the Romans had been celebrating the start of the civil year on this day for quite some time. The Jews also attached significance to the month of September. It was then that Moses descended from Mt. Sinai with the Ten Commandments. It was also during this month that Solomon's glorious Temple was consecrated. The Jews also viewed September as a time for offering sacrifices of thanksgiving to God, for this was the month when they harvested their crops.

It is the tradition of the Church that it was on September 1st that Christ came to the synagogue in Nazareth and read this passage from the book of Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed and proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. Today, this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." (Luke 4:18-21)

As we begin another Liturgical Year, a time when we will revisit and relive all of the major events in the life of our Saviour, it would be good for us to reflect upon these words. In a spiritual sense, we are all POOR. We are all held CAPTIVE by sin and weighed down by the OPPRESSION of our faults and shortcomings. Still, the Lord stands before us once more, offering to heal us and set us free. Will this be the year that we open our eyes to Him and open our hearts to His message? Will this be the year that the Scriptures will be fulfilled in OUR ears? May this truly be that year.

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