

# ROYAL DOORS



Located in  
the center  
of the  
iconostasis,  
they signify  
the opening to  
the Heavenly  
Kingdom  
for believers.

# Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Twenty Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

December 6, 2015

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

+++ Today is the simple feast of St. Nicholas, Archbishop of Myra in Lycia. Please join us in fellowship at the Luncheon following the Divine Liturgy today. Our celebration ends with festal anointing. We are greeted with "Christ Is Among Us!" to which we respond, "He Is And Shall Be!"

+++ Yesterday we had our monthly Pirohi Sale. We thank sincerely all the good souls who came, secure orders, distributed them and labored for good of our parish. God bless you devoted souls with good health to you and loved ones!

+++ Every Monday, we have prayerful devotions before the Myrrh bearing icon at 6:00 PM. Everyone is invited to be present in praise. The Birthgiver invites us to manifest our faith in response to her first shown love, to unite our prayers with hers for the salvation of our souls. Invite your friends and neighbors to join us.

+++ Please keep the intentions of these members of our parish intercession community in your daily prayers: Barbara, Betty, James, Yevlogia, Nicholas, Maria, Cynthia, 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, \$121.00; Candles, \$9.00; Holyday, \$8.00; Kitchen, \$65.00 for a total of \$203.00. 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 **\$1828.00** 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

### God's Correction

*Whom the Lord loves he corrects; even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights*  
Proverbs 3: 12.

*Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects; therefore do not despise the correction of the Almighty; for he inflicts and he binds up, he wounds and his hands heal* Job 5: 17, 18.

*Blessed is the man whom you instruct, O Lord, whom you teach by your law, giving him rest from adversity until the pit be dug for the wicked* Psalm 94: 12, 13.

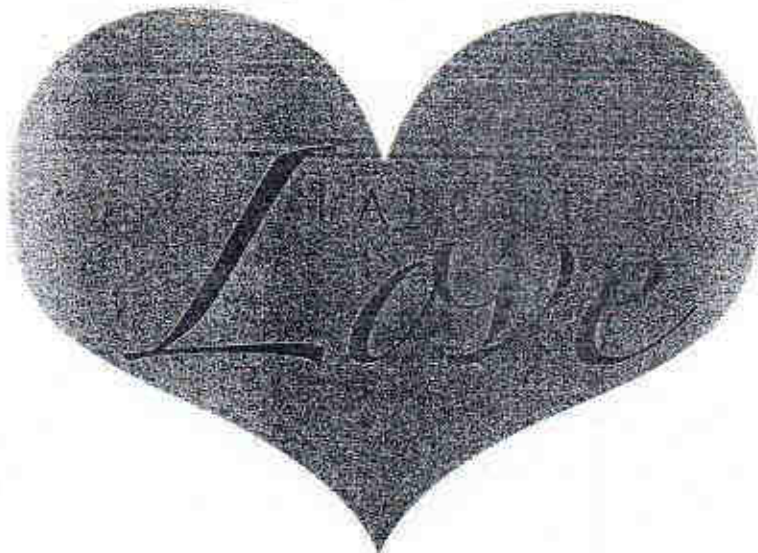
*But when we are judged, we are corrected by the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world* 1 Corinthians 11: 32.

*We do not lose heart because our inner being is renewed each day even though our body is being destroyed at the same time. The present burden of our trial is light enough, and earns for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. We do not fix our gaze on what is seen but on what is unseen. What is seen is transitory; what is unseen lasts forever*  
2 Corinthians 4: 16 - 18.

*My sons, do not disdain the discipline of the Lord, nor lose heart when he reproves you. For whom the Lord loves he disciplines. Endure your trials as the discipline of God who deals with you as sons. For what son is there whom the father does not discipline. If you do not know the discipline of sons, you are not sons, but bastards. If we respected our earthly fathers who corrected us, should we not all the more submit to the Father of spirits and live? They disciplined us as seemed right to them, to prepare us for the short span of mortal life; but God does so for our true profit, that we may share his holiness. At the time it is administered, all discipline seems a cause for grief and not for joy, but later it brings forth the fruit of peace and justice to those who are trained in its school. So strengthen your drooping hands and your weak knees. Make straight the paths you walk on, that your halting limbs may not be dislocated but healed* Hebrews 12: 5 - 13.

Love comes to ultimate  
expression in sacrifice, but  
rightly directed love and  
misdirected love produce  
radically different sorts  
of sacrifice.

**Make All You Do A**





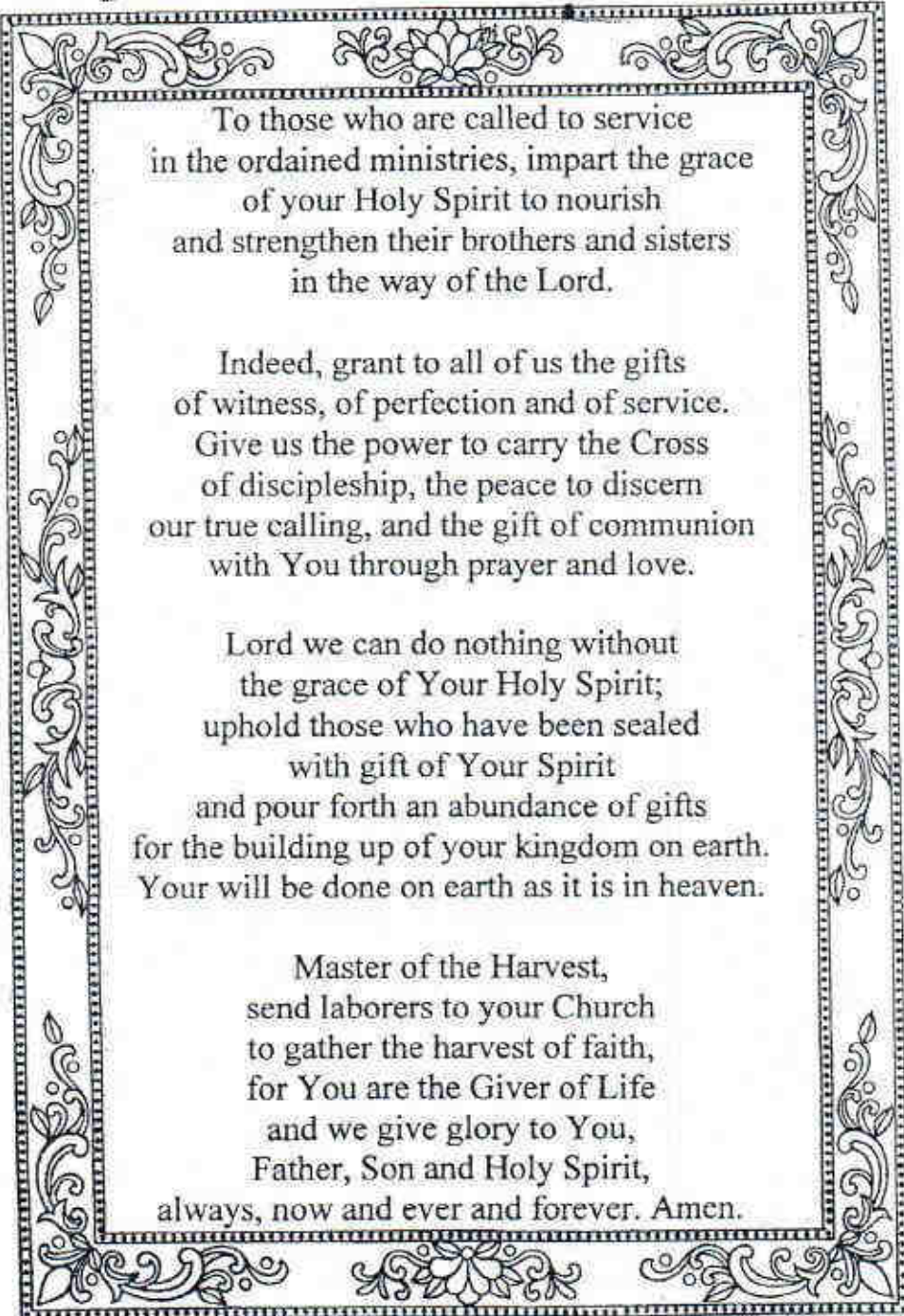
## Prayer FOR VOCATIONS

Lord Our God,  
In your great love You have called us  
from nothingness into being.

Through Jesus Christ your Son,  
Who is the Way, the Truth and the Life,  
You called us to walk on the road  
of perfection, and to consecrate ourselves  
to You and to the service of all people,  
whom you have created for life and glory.

To those who are called to a life of faith  
in the midst of the world,  
grant the grace of witness to the Gospel.

To those who are called to the life  
of Christian perfection,  
give the gift of contemplation,  
understanding of the will of God  
and zeal for righteousness and charity.

A decorative border with intricate floral and scrollwork patterns surrounds the text. The border is composed of a double-line inner edge and a more ornate outer edge with large floral motifs at the corners and midpoints.

To those who are called to service  
in the ordained ministries, impart the grace  
of your Holy Spirit to nourish  
and strengthen their brothers and sisters  
in the way of the Lord.

Indeed, grant to all of us the gifts  
of witness, of perfection and of service.  
Give us the power to carry the Cross  
of discipleship, the peace to discern  
our true calling, and the gift of communion  
with You through prayer and love.

Lord we can do nothing without  
the grace of Your Holy Spirit;  
uphold those who have been sealed  
with gift of Your Spirit  
and pour forth an abundance of gifts  
for the building up of your kingdom on earth.  
Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Master of the Harvest,  
send laborers to your Church  
to gather the harvest of faith,  
for You are the Giver of Life  
and we give glory to You,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
always, now and ever and forever. Amen.

## The Three Gifts

Faith, is the germ and seed,  
Of intent, act and thought,  
It goes before -- the soul doth feed,  
And by it, noble things are wrought.

Hope is a window shining clear,  
Giving vistas of beauty rare.  
Keeping the heart from nameless fear,  
And showing horizons, wondrous, fair.

Love is from God on high,  
'Tis gentle, strong, patient-true --  
It reaches unto the very sky;  
It is holy, tender, and joyous too.

Faith -- hope -- love, a wise design  
Are given our beings to refine,  
To be more like our Master, day by day,  
To aid and cheer a neighbor on his way.

Three noble gifts have come to man,  
These are a part of God's great plan.  
Sweet trilogy of gifts from above --  
Faith -- hope, but greatest of all is love.



## We are His Joy

*For the Lord delights in you*  
Isaiah 62: 4.

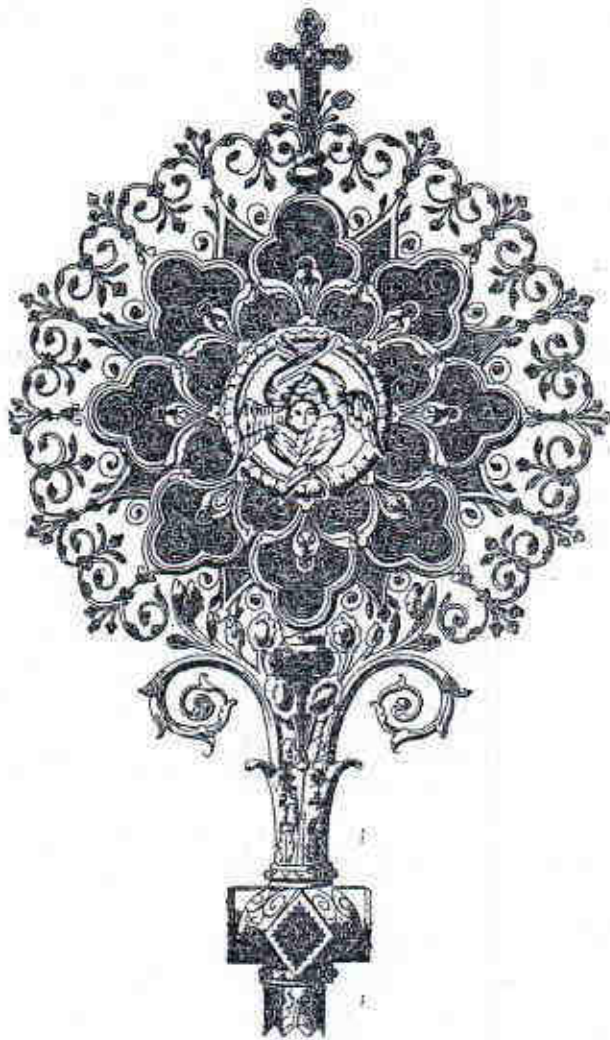
We love God not merely to convince ourselves that we are good people, or to get a warm glow of peace, or to fit into an approving group, or to get rid of anxiety, but to throw all that to the wind and anxiety or not, even though we realize the utter depth of our inadequacy, to understand that all this simply does not matter in the eyes of our God, for as we are, with our misfortune and desperate needs, we are his joy and He delights to be loved by us with perfect confidence in him because He first loves us.

It is not that we have to sweat and groan to placate an austere Father God in our own imagination, but rather to come to a firm conviction, with liberation and joy, that He is any of the negative shadowed elements at all. That in fact, He is none of our gruesomely imagined idols, none of our figments, nothing that we can imagine, good, bad or indifferent anyway. He is simply Love itself and it is to share and spread that love that He created us.

When we come to realize we can love him simply and purely in order to respond to his first shown love and please him from an overflowing heart, we become as it were, his crown, his delight and life itself is changed, elevated and transformed in this light which is disinterested love.

That we would invest so much of ourselves, that we are willing to make that transformation in becoming God-like is the highest glorification of the Blessed Trinity we can aspire after. The love our Creator has for us leads us into transcendence of our own human nature, arriving at the pinnacle of perfection by his grace. The source of our inspiration is the object We end in the way we started.

We are sensitive enough in soul that we do not want to offend the God who so greatly loves us. We allow ourselves nothing that even remotely offends. So eager are we to please him who inbreathed life to us that we become wholly positive in our response to his enduring and long-suffering love. O Lord, teach us to fear you in love so that we may love you without fear.



### **Lest We Forget**

On both sides of the tabernacle on the altar table in the sanctuary are two circular fans surrounding the processional cross. Depicted on them are cherubs which surround the heavenly throne. Just as in the Old Testament Holy of Holies, so about our altar table are these same images placed purposely, at the direction of our Creator God to remind us we are participants in heavenly worship. The glory of our God is enthroned mystically within the tabernacle in a golden chalice called a ciborium which contains the gifts of Body and Blood of the Saviour who is as surely present among us as He is enthroned in heaven at the right of the Eternal Father. We are eager to worship our God as the Church prescribes because we are citizens of eternity, our common destiny. They remind us we are not alone, or simply with other believers, that we worship with the angelic powers and the saints!



*Our fight is not against people on earth  
but against the rulers and authorities and the  
powers of this world's darkness, against the  
spiritual powers of evil in the heavenly world.*

EPHESIANS 6:12

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Where's our battleground in life? Is our battle against our neighbor?

Is our battle against our kind? No. The battle is with the invisible

forces of darkness, the evil one who has invaded the earth, whose goal

is to win the battle within every Christian. Satan failed in his desire

to control God, and it's only with God's help that we can defeat him.

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## St. Nicholas

*All who love to celebrate, come and sing the praises of the most notable of bishops,  
the glory of the ancient fathers, a fountain of wonders and  
great protector of the poor. Rejoice,  
faithful helper of the afflicted, and fervent advocate of those who are oppressed.*

*O holy Bishop Nicholas,  
never cease to intercede with Christ our God,  
for those who honor your blessed memory with faith and love*  
Vesper verses, Feast of St. Nicholas of Myra.

Writers have asserted that St. Nicholas, perhaps the most human of saints, was always ready to help where a need existed. By his very humanity, the saint reflected popular hopes and fears. He changed and adapted himself to whatever circumstances needed help and assistance.

Once we have immersed ourselves in the spirit of this holy anticipatory season, we get a chance to actually taste of its meaningful success in our lives. We witness that great effort made to lead an honest Christian life as we commemorate the presence of St. Nicholas of Myra on the liturgical calendar. His feast is an important pause in our spiritual journey, a time to reflect and ponder his admirable example of gospel living. There is so much in his life that Christians of all times and places, be they from the East or the West, North or South, can learn from him.

Among the several icons of saints, that of St. Nicholas stands out brightly. Because his presence is so vital in our spiritual development, believers are eager to gaze upon it while in prayer. What is particularly striking is the fact that the saint is not represented alone. St. Nicholas is in the center in gesture of prayer and all around him, as almost framing his presence is our Lord and the Birthgiver of God. In other instances, the icon may depict episodes of the many good deeds he performed and the many people he helped during his lifetime.

We cannot help but think how appropriate it is for Christians today to reflect on the humble example of St. Nicholas. His life, a rather ordinary one, was given entirely to prayer and good works. He was not a writer, or a teacher, but he preached devotion to God as he lived it. He battled for the rights of the poor and oppressed and vigorously defended the rights of widows and orphans. One could easily describe St. Nicholas today as a saint with a certain and pronounced social conscience.

Like Christ, his Lord and Master, St. Nicholas was a good shepherd to his flock, exercising special compassion and mercy toward the outcast, the poor, the undesirables of his time and all those who in distress in one form or another. His gentle goodness and exemplary life radiated beyond the frontiers or limits of his own diocese of Myra, attracting pagans and unbelievers to the revelation of Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

The life of St. Nicholas is an exemplary reverberation of the gospel witness for our times, not just as we get ourselves ready for the coming of the Lord at the Nativity, but our entire life unfolds under a societal climate not unlike that of the time of St. Nicholas. His example and relentless preaching, totally in accord with the Lord's teaching in the gospels, is the antithesis of the rhetoric of meanness and self-centeredness preached by many speakers, particularly politicians on a soap box who have no values today: that the poor, the elderly, the undocumented immigrants, the marginal, etc. are enemies for whom compassion is too costly. In such times, intolerance of those who appear different from the social norm because of race, age, language, nationality, is countenanced. It saddens the believer deeply that one who espouses such policies call themselves Christian when these ideas are in direct opposition to the teachings of Jesus our eternal Master. All we have to do is read God's revelation to us in Scripture to be reminded where the Gospel stands (Matthew 25: 31 - 46).

What an irony that these same people would make claims of being people of faith, who seemingly spend their days honoring our Creator God, yet in practice do nothing in meditating on the very words and example of our Master *Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine you did for me*. We need to remind ourselves of the Lord's stringent words to people who are similarly fashioned *Hypocrites well did Isaiah prophesy about you when he said, 'This people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrine human precepts* Matthew 15: 7 - 9.

For the genuine believer, political ideologies do not mean very much. We should be far enough removed from the life of this world when we follow Jesus that whatever occurs does not directly influence or affect us because we take seriously being in the care of Jesus Christ our Saviour. But though politics may mean little to us, policies mean a great deal, as they should to all believers. Policies usually either protect or are in opposition to the values of the gospel. It is our duty, therefore, as believers, not only to pray, but even to speak out for the cause of Christ on occasion in this chaotic and selfish world, where greed, hatred, intolerance, punishment, revenge and discrimination became the exalted values of society. The Christian, like St. Nicholas must gently but

firmly proclaim the love and selflessness of Jesus, the peace, the compassion and mercy of the gospels. We must look at the present political and cultural climate in our nation and in the entire world with pity, and as St. Nicholas, the humble disciple of the Lord would see it as a challenge to exert more of our own personal Christian example to this much needy world. We must realize its condition as a challenge from God to take the gospel seriously and to proclaim it with our very lives. This is the grace we must pray for and actually seek intercessory assistance from St. Nicholas to live up to all the graceful strengthening we can offer the world around us.

Holy Father Nicholas, Healer of the sick, Liberator of captives, Treasury of the poor, Consoler of the afflicted, Guide to travelers, be always a living symbol of the love of our Saviour and mercy for all of us who are desperately in need. Amen.



#### HYMN TO ST. NICHOLAS

O, who love, Nicholas the Saintly,  
O, who serve, Nicholas the Saintly;  
Him will Nicholas receive,  
And give help in time of need.  
Nicholas! Nicholas!

O, who dwells in God's holy mansion,  
Is our help on the land and ocean;  
He will guard us from all ills,  
Keep us pure and free from sin.  
Nicholas! Nicholas!

## THE NEW GATES TO PARADISE

**T**he main entrance into the altar-area, the sanctuary of a church, is the set of Royal Doors. They occupy the very center of the icon-screen, and provide access by the clergy into the "Holy of Holies." Even access by the priest is limited, determined by liturgical norm.

Since the icon-screen divides the two parts of a temple – the sanctuary from the body of the church (symbolically the divine and the human, the spiritual and the material) – the Royal Doors, then, are the passageway into the Kingdom of God as the faithful gather for worship. It is through these doors that the King of Glory, Jesus the High Priest, comes to feed His people the Bread of Life.

Tradition dictates the images contained in the double doors. The icon on the bulletin has, at top, the two-part image of the Annunciation, depicting the Angel Gabriel announcing the good news of Christ's coming to the Holy Virgin. This proclaims that the Kingdom of God is about to be inaugurated. It is customary on the remaining portion of the doors to depict the Four Evangelists, Saints Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, whose writings speak of the Kingdom brought by the Lord.

So it is that the Royal Doors remind us that we have a King, One whose Kingdom is "not of this world." He is the object of our love, our devotion, our loyalty and our service. The doors also remind us of our true Home, and the Way that leads to that blessed life.

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