



# **Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church**

**24 BURKE ROAD**

**FREEHOLD, NJ 07728**

**Sunday of the Prodigal Son**

**January 31, 2010**

**Father Robert E Lucas, Pastor; Deacon Kenneth  
E. Ellis and 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**

**+++ On Sunday, February 14, we will have our luncheon prior to the Great Fast. Everyone is invited to participate with prepared simple fast finger foods due to the condition of the kitchen and hall. We will have Forgiveness Vespers after the luncheon at which all will pray for the blessing of a successful fasting experience prior to the Resurrection feast day. The Great Fast begins, Monday, February 15.**

+++ Today we have festal anointing on the occasion of this past week's simple feast of the Three Hierarchs. The customary greeting is "Christ Is Among Us!" to which we respond, "He Is And Shall Be!"

+++ This Tuesdays is the solemn feast of the Meeting of our Lord in the Temple, one of the twelve feasts of the Church. In anticipation, the Divine Liturgy will be celebrated Monday evening at 7:30 PM. Please come and join us in prayer and praise.

+++ The first All Souls day will be celebrated this coming Saturday at 9:00 AM when the Divine Liturgy and Memorial Services will take place. Please submit the appropriate envelope with names to be commemorated. The customary offering is \$10.00. We do expect our faithful parishioners to come and join us in prayer for our beloved departed.

+++ We are having our monthly Pirohi Sale this coming Saturday. Preparations will take place Thursday morning at 7: 00 AM. On Wednesday we will come at 9:00 AM to clean up the kitchen and hall from construction debris. We are in need of helping hands for each of these days. The Order Sheet is in the kitchen and we expect additional orders with the coming Great Fast approaching.

+++ Those of our faithful who would like their homes blessed are asked to inform Father and arrange an appointment when convenient.

+++ Today at 9:15 AM, we have a Memorial Service for the repose of the soul of beloved grandmother, +Theresa Sabol requested by Robin Pasquino on the anniversary of her death. We pray the merciful Lord continues to comfort Robin and her loved ones in their loss and grants a blessed repose and Eternal Memory to the soul of +Theresa.

+++ We are pleased to announce and thank the four additional family units who joined the previous three with increased Sunday offerings, one of which is practicing tithing, that is, offering one tenth of income to our generous God. Having the example and support of these generous souls is important to the glory of our God and the good of our parish. We pray others will pray and follow their example. We pray their generosity be blessed with good health of body and soul for Many & Blessed Years!

+++ We remind our faithful that at the last Diocesan Council this past summer, the Diocesan Dues were raised, due to inflation and need, from the past \$50.00 per adult individual, eighteen years and older, to \$60.00 per year. Our envelope offering system still has the old amount on it, so please disregard that figure and make your offering according to the new mandated amount. If this offering was made in the old amount, please correct it by submitting the additional amount with a notation on the envelope because the parish must send the entire amount to the diocesan chancery.

+++ 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 this past week-end: Tithe Offering, \$1,149; Candles, \$100; Food Coupons, \$100; Energy, \$100; Parish Dues, \$100; Diocesan Dues, \$100; Kitchen, \$100; Birthday Offering, \$100; Holyday, \$100; Special Gift, \$100.00, for a total of \$1,849. We express our profound gratitude to the parishioner communicants who offered their God-given treasure for the sake of the Lord and the good of our parish. God bless and reward you good and faithful souls! The attendance was 41 adults and 15 children last Sunday.

+++ As faithful believers, we intercede and associate ourselves in prayer with the following who have prayed and offered seven day lights for their intentions: Father Lucas, Pani Lucas, +Paul Szmaida, Debra Szmaida, Kent Pasquino, Anna Zacharyczuk 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 \$100.00 from this apostolate. Even your pennies can help and are a blessing to our parish.

+++ For the expansion of our much needed parochial facilities, our parish pledge support to date totals \$1,149.00. As we thank the Lord for inspiring generosity in the hearts of our faithful, we also thank the donors for accepting the challenge of the Lord in building up His Body. We cordially invite and look forward to receiving additional and increased pledges from all our devoted parishioners.

+++ Please check the Sign-Up-Sheet for the weekly Christian Fellowship for the coming weeks. Simple foods without need for preparation are the best. Marilyn Korba coordinates this vital apostolate. Please assist her in making it a success by bringing your donation early so that all are present at the worship of our God.

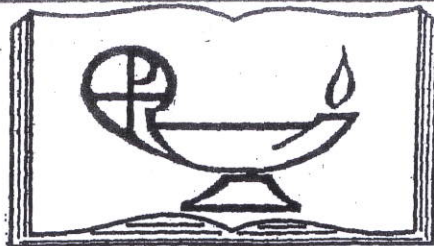
+++ Be certain your child attends the spiritual formation classes held each Sunday following the Divine Liturgy. We make a serious attempt to share the love of our Lord with all.

+++ Please be certain to see **Helen Karpiak** or 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 \$5050.00 on this project to date!

+++ We remind our faithful only those who are present for the entire Divine Liturgy should come forward to receive Communion. The entire Liturgy means "Amen" to "Amen."

+++ 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!

LORD



TEACH  
US

## Fatherhood of God

*Surely you are still our Father! Even if Abraham and Jacob would disown us, still you would be our Father, our Redeemer from ages past* Isaiah 63: 16.

*And yet, O Lord, you are our Father, we are the clay and you are the potter. We are all formed by your hands* Isaiah 64: 8.

*And I thought how wonderful it would be for you to be here among my children. I planned to give you part of this beautiful land, the finest in the world. I looked forward to your calling me Father and thought that you would never turn away from me again* Jeremiah 3: 19.

*You are my sons, children of the living God* Hosea 1: 10.

*When Israel was a child, I loved him as a son and brought him out of Egypt* Hosea 11: 1.

*In that way you will be acting as true sons of your Father in heaven* Matthew 5: 45.

*Then he added, "Anyone who obeys my Father in heaven is my brother, sister and mother"* Matthew 12: 50.

*Then the godly shall shine as the sun in their Father's kingdom* Matthew 13: 43.

*Jesus replied, Every plant not planted by my Father shall be rooted up* Matthew 15: 13.

*God has blessed you, Simon, son of Jonah, Jesus said, for my Father in heaven has personally revealed this to you; this is not from any human source. For I, the Son of man shall come with my angels in the glory of my Father* Matthew 16: 17, 27.



## Prodigal Son

Like the devoted father in today's parable of the Prodigal Son, we must approach seriously our loving response to God and those around us.

As we are preparing for the inception of the Great Fast, let us not bring to the sacred season any of our imagined preconceptions so that we may seriously invoke the grace of the Holy Spirit to judge rightly, to pursue sanctity seriously and find and be confirmed in redemption with the sung announcement of the Resurrection of our Lord.

It is a great evil and dangerous to place before faithful believers teachings not quite exact or of little certainty instead of thoughts and convictions that contribute to their instruction, edification and spiritual advancement.

Thinking correctly about the love we should return to God from the vast treasury He has first exposed us to in our own lives, we might think seriously of what St. John Chrysostom says on another matter. *If we think worthily, we must give alms solely because it is a good work and from a motive of compassion for our brothers in need, and not in view of the reward which God has promised us. But when we are unable to think of any higher motive, we should at least give alms because God rewards such activity without thinking about the applause of men. We ought not fear hell because of the fire which is never extinguished, or because of the terrible punishment and unceasing torments, but because we have incurred the disgrace of displeasing so good a Master, and have chosen to lose his friendship. In the same way we must do our utmost to reach heaven in order to possess fully God's love and enjoy his favor. For since the good pleasure of our kind Master is more desirable than heaven itself, so the loss of his friendship is for us more to be regretted than hell itself. If we have sinned we are not sorry because of the punishment awaiting us, but because we have offended our Saviour. Similarly, if we do some good works, we ought not to be glad because of the reward we shall receive in heaven, but simply because we have fulfilled the will and expectation of our heavenly Father for our life. For if we think clearly, the thought of offending God, should have more influence with us than the thought of the pain of hell; just as God's good grace is more to be desired than our heavenly reward.*

*A human lover will gladly die for his beloved, although he knows that he has nothing necessarily to look forward to after his death. We should suffer then, not because of a heavenly kingdom or some future reward, but for the sake of God himself. We should love the commandments, not because of the reward attached to them, but because of him who gave them to us so that we can become conformed to his image and likeness. We should practice virtue gladly, not for fear of hell, or because of the threat of punishment; not even for the sake of gaining heaven, but in view of the Divine Legislator. Leaving aside all the benefits we have from God, we should render him thanks and always be eager to glorify and praise his name and offer all for his glory, because of his greatness and his ineffable glory to which He invites us to participate!* In Genes. Hom. viii. 6; xxiii. 5.

The purpose with which we respond to God's first shared love with us is vital and must necessarily be pure. It is understandably what even divides believers and communicants of the true Church of Christ from those outside its pale. In the west, you have emphasized love of God not from a proper motivation, that is simply because He is our God and loves us, but from a negative fearful perception, that is, from the fear of what happens when we don't love him at all. Westerners go to church and worship on Sundays and holy days not out of pure love, not because God loves them, but because it is a mortal, deadly sin not to be there. The motivation is misplaced and the relationship with God is actually lost. It follows, the consequences are even more pronounced: we have chosen another God to glorify and worship. We choose to make ourselves less than children of God.

Orthodoxy wishes and desires to approach our Triune God from a proper perspective, with a pure heart and eager zeal and enthusiasm which fundamentally requires honesty of heart, mind and soul. St. John Chrysostom insists our purpose in responding to God's first shown love is pure and unrestrained. He is always wont to explain the well-known passage in which St. Paul the Apostle says, *I wish myself to be separated from Christ, for the sake of my brothers* Romans 9: 3. He thus shows the apostle's wish was sincere were that possible, if only he could obtain the conversion of the Jews and put an end to their separation from Christ the Messiah. Thus is the heart of the prodigal's father filled as we witness his exorbitant generosity in accepting his return from worldly slavery and alienation.

Since we should love our God not only when our reward is that love itself, but even when, instead of the reward He has promised, He would permit to send us, if that were possible, to hell, yet retaining that love amid the fires and pains of punishment.



We recall the words that Moses spoke to God on the subject of the recalcitrant Israelites, *Either forgive them this trespass, or, if you do not, strike me out of the book you have written* Exodus 32: 31, 32. Moses speaks as a father to whom there can be no happiness if his children are excluded from it. The rich man, for instance who says to a poor woman, "Come dine with me, but leave that child you are carrying, for he cries and will be a nuisance." So you think she would agree? Would she not prefer to go without food than eat with a rich man while leaving exposed the object of her love? So it is with Moses. He had no wish to be introduced to the joys of heaven, if the people he was leading had to remain outside, for obstinate and obdurate as they were, he had for them the love and affection of not only a father, but of a mother as well.

The saints teach us love suffices to itself. Wherever it exists, it draws other affections to itself and holds them fast. Our God willed to be feared as Master, honored as Father, but loved as a Spouse which is why He so often likens our love relationship with him in the context of an honorable marriage.

Of these sentiments, which excels all others? Surely love alone because without love, fear imparts pain, honor finds no favor. Fear is servile when it exists apart from love because what we mean by fear in love is we are so sensitive of heart and soul, in our entire being that we do not at all wish to offend our God; we fear offending him because He does not desire that kind of response from us. Honor which does not proceed from love is not honor at all, but nonsensical untrue flattery. Love, then, suffices by itself, pleases not only itself, but pleases most of all our God, and for its own sake, is its own merit and reward. It finds its motive and purpose in God and sees its reward in God as well, its fruits in the act of loving.

I love because I love; I love in order to continue to love and understand and be capable of receiving the love of God and others.

Children many times love, but with a view to their inheritance; and when they fear to love, give honor more to those from whom they expect it, but love then altogether less. We look with suspicion on that kind of love, which appears to be founded in the hope of a reward other than participating in God's love itself. It is weak, when the motive of hope being withdrawn, causes it to languish and all but dies. It is impure, because it covets something apart from itself. Love is never mercenary, desires not earthly strength or hope, and suffers nothing from diffidence.



The fire our Lord came to cast upon the earth is the love of God. Jesus possessed in himself the fullness of that love, having received and shared it with the Father in order to communicate it to us. *Of that fullness we have all received*, says St. John the Theologian, *and the Word was made flesh and lived among us* John 1: 14, 16.

Jesus passed through the various stages of life on earth; He spoke, acted and suffered to teach us by word and example to love God, to properly respond to God's first shown love. He died on the cross to obtain for us and to acquire the right to share with us the grace of that love. His grace is his supreme gift and presupposes and includes all the rest to show by concrete example unbounded love and mercy of the devoted Father in the parable.

LET HIS  
*Family*  
REJOICE

Wisdom Of  
The



Byzantine  
Fathers

What is this banquet hall? Let us find out from the gospels in order that we may share the joy; so I shall call the parable to mind. He was at first stripped of any grace. For he had squandered all his substance, and he runs to his father with many tears, crying, "Father, I have sinned!" then He who beholds all, saw him and hurried to meet him and embraced him, throwing his arms around his neck. For He is the God of those who repent. So, in his mercy, He takes pity on his son who has fallen. He is the Lord and Saviour of the ages St. Romanos the Melodist.

Everyday you provide your bodies with good to keep them from failing. In the same way your good works should be the daily nourishment of your hearts. Your bodies are fed with food and your soul with good works. You are not to deny your soul, which is going to live forever, what you grant to your body so readily and which is going to die. St. Gregory the Great.



# WISDOM! BE ATTENTIVE

*When I foolishly separated myself from Your fatherly glory, I squandered in wickedness the riches You had given me. So now I cry out to You with the voice of the Prodigal Son saying: "I have sinned before You, O merciful Father, receive me repentant and make me as one of your hired servants."* Kontakion, Sunday of the Prodigal Son.

*I have sown sin in a land of innocence and life and have harvested the ears of thoughtlessness. I have gathered my actions into bundles of sheaves, but I have not placed them on the threshing floor of repentance. And now I pray to You, O my God, for You are the pre-eternal tiller of our fields: With the breath of Your loving kindness, winnow the grain of my actions, feed my soul with Your grace and forgiveness.* Vesper Hymn, Sunday of the Prodigal Son.

*O faithful, let us discover the power of the divine mystery. The Prodigal came back from his sin and returned to his father's house; in his loving kindness his father came out to meet him and kissed him. He restored him to the glory of His house and prepared a mystical banquet on high. He killed the fatted calf so that we may share in his joy; the joy of the Father Who offers with love, and the joy of the Lamb Who gives Himself for us; for He is Christ the Saviour of our souls.* Vesper Hymn, Sunday of the Prodigal Son.

*I have wasted the treasure that my Father gave to me; I have lived among senseless animals; I have longed to eat the food of the swine, and because no one offered it to me I remained hungry. But now I return to my Father Who is so good, and with tears I cry out: Treat me as one of Your servants, for I no longer deserve Your love, and in Your mercy, save me.* Vesper Hymn, Sunday of the Prodigal Son.

*When I think upon the multitude of my evil deeds; I tremble for the terrible Day of Judgment. But trusting in the compassion of Your mercy, O Lord, I cry out to You like David: Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your great mercy.* Matins Hymn, Sunday of the Prodigal Son.

*O Jesus, now receive my repentance, for I have sinned as the Prodigal Son; I have spent my life in carelessness, thus provoking the anger of my God. I have foolishly wasted the divine treasure of the heritage You once gave me. By my senseless life I have separated myself from You. Accept me, O Father, in Your goodness, as I now return to You. Receive me now, Lord, as You once received the Prodigal. Open to me Your fatherly arms, and in thanksgiving I will sing of Your glory and goodness.* Matins Hymn, Sunday of the Prodigal Son.

## Keep Watch

*Asleep, Simon? Could you not keep watch with me for one hour*

Mark 14: 37?

A dear friend calls and she needs help. She asks her friend of long-standing to take her to the hospital, stay with her and then take her back home after her expected short recovery from surgery. She had a grapefruit sized growth, possibly cancerous which was to be biopsied. The friend she depends on would have to tell her family if the news was negative. Ironically, the surgery is scheduled early in the morning of Great and Holy Friday.

The good friend upon whom she so depended did not want to go. Being a reluctant invitee, she barely paid attention to the precise words reverberating over the telephone. She had so many things to do in preparation for services later that day and the coming feast of the Lord's Resurrection. An uneasy feeling came over her. Recently retired and with medical problems of her own, she wondered if she would have the energy and the patience for such a long, arduous, demanding day. And as she continued to listen to the plea of her friend for assistance, she could clearly hear the voice of the Lord speak to her as He spoke to Peter, "Can you not watch with me?"

On this remembrance day of all days, when the Son of God died for our sins, how could she say no to Christ and to her long-proven friend?

Finally the message came through clearly and distinctly. She was being taught an important lesson that day, a lesson which would enrich the rest of her life and draw her into the spiritual witness and drama of Christ's own passion. When we are with those in need, it is our God with whom we keep watch.

How easy it is to forget the needs of others and that as we respond to their needs we also react to the needs of our Lord. A significant prayer during the Great Fast is always remembering Christ is present in all persons. When we assist others, friends or strangers, it is Christ whom we are helping.

In what way can I watch with God today?



## FULFILLING THE LAW

**O**ne of the Church's great holy days is the Feast of the Meeting of our Lord in the Temple, which is celebrated on February 2/15. Later in life, Christ would maintain that He came to BUILD UPON, not to CHANGE the Law of Moses to which the Jews of His time dutifully followed. This feast day is a living testimony of the strict obedience to the Law that was practiced by His earthly parents: Joseph and Mary. The Law taught that a woman could not enter the Temple for 40 days if she gave birth to a male child. At the end of this period, the parents could now bring the baby to the Temple and offer either doves or pigeons as a "purification sacrifice" to God. Certainly the Theotokos had no need for purification, for she had given birth to the "Source of Purity and Sanctity." In her humility, however, the Mother of God fulfilled the requirements of the Law.

The Child was "met" in the Temple by 2 special people that day: the Righteous Simeon, who had been promised by God that he would not die until he would see the coming of the Messiah, and the Prophetess Anna, who had dedicated her lengthy life to serving in the Temple. The Church views both individuals as a sacred link between those of the Old Testament, who had patiently awaited their Savior, and those of the New Testament, to whom Christ would one day minister.

The words of the Righteous Simeon to Mary prophetically outline what would lie ahead for her and her Beloved Son: "Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against you. Yes, a sword will pierce your own soul also, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." (Lk 2:34-35) Yes, Christ would go on one day to enlighten the world.

*Icon by Nataliya Zharsky - The Prosopon School of Iconology*

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