



Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Meeting of our Lord in the Temple

February 2, 2014

**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

+++ 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.



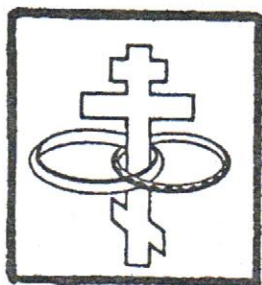
Birthday
Wishes!

We are pleased to greet those of our faithful communicants who celebrate their birthday this month. Our Lord has offered these souls yet another year of blessed life. The most obvious way He blesses us and participates in our life is by sharing his divine life with us in the Eucharist at the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. Thus we gather together and offer thanks for yet another year of life blessed by his most gracious hands. Today, we prayerfully remember in the Divine Liturgy the following souls who celebrate their birthday during this month:

February 7 Robin Pasquino
February 14 Sarah Anna Harrison
February 14 Tatyana Lucas Harrison
February 21 Joan Henry
February 24 George Idromenos
February 27 Marilyn J. Korba
February 28 Joseph F.Choti

With a prayerful heart and grateful soul, our parish faith community asks the Lord to continue to bless these birthday celebrants with good spiritual and physical health for the coming year. We invite all to add their personal intercessory prayers so that with one voice and one heart we may also participate in the grace and joy of their celebration. As we wish them a happy and blessed celebration of their birthday, our ardent prayer resounds that the Lord our God will continue to bless them for

Many and Blessed Years!



WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

The Byzantine Fathers of the Church were wont to emphasize how ancient and how venerable marriage is in the sight of our God because it was established yet in paradise before the fall of Adam and Eve and brought to blessed perfection by Christ in Cana of Galilee. Its grace survived the sin of our first parents and it remains a sign of the presence of the Holy Trinity in our midst. It is a living symbol of the deep and abiding love between Christ and His Bride, our blessed Church. It is characterized in the liturgical life of the Church as a happy martyrdom. And it is precisely for this reason the sacramental Mystery of Marriage is such a joyous event. On the third Sunday of this month, we honor those of our good parishioners who observe their marriage anniversaries this month. They are specially remembered in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy and subsequently receive an individual and personal blessing of the Lord at its conclusion. Celebrating this month are:

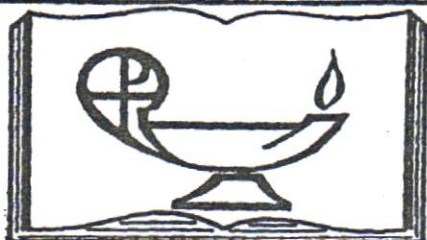
February 13 Nikita & Angeliki Tsokris

We gratefully give thanks to the Blessed Trinity for having guided and strengthened the marriages of these believers, and their cooperation with sacramental grace to remain faithful to one another over the years. Like all who are faithful to Christ, they recognize the presence and necessity of the Holy Spirit not only in the marriage, but in subsequent family life as well. As we praise our God for their witness in our midst, let us also join them with our prayers and thanksgiving before the throne of the Lord. May they continue to praise His Holy Name by their love and devotion to one another for

Many and Blessed Years

- +++ Today we celebrate the feast of the Meeting of our Lord in the Temple. Festal anointing concludes our celebration. The customary greeting is "Christ Is Among Us!" to which we reply, "He Is And Shall Be!"
- +++` We will have our luncheon prior to the beginning of the Great Fast on March 2, following the Divine Liturgy.
- +++ The next Pirohi Sale will be on Saturday, March 15.
- +++ Please turn in the All Souls' Day envelope with attached names. The first remembrance will take place February 22.
- +++ Please keep the intentions of these members of our parish intercession community in your daily prayers: Anna, Ryan, Barbara, Betty, James and Michael.
- +++ The sign-up sheet for both the Web Site and Bulletin sponsors is on the bulletin board in the kitchen. Please sign up as soon as possible. Do NOT make payment until your sign-up month has arrived. This will make it easier for Father to keep track of payments. Thanks in advance to all who support the parish in this way.
- +++ We offer thanks to the Blessed Trinity for inspiring generosity in the souls of our faithful and the blessing of abundant grace in our midst with the offering received last Sunday: Tithe Offering, \$603.00; Candles, \$11.00; Holyday, \$100.00; Parish Dues, \$25.00; Food Coupons, \$340.00; Kitchen, \$130.00; January Bulletin, \$25.00; January Web Site, \$25.00; Energy, \$75.00; Diocesan Dues, \$65.00, for a total of \$1399.00. We express our profound gratitude to the parishioner communicants who offer their God-given treasure and labored for the sake of the Lord and the good of our parish. God bless and reward you good and faithful souls! The attendance was 44 adults and 13 children last Sunday.
- +++ As faithful believers, we intercede and associate ourselves in prayer with the following who have prayed and offered seven day lights for their intentions: Father Lucas, Anna Zacharyczuk, Eleanor Korba, Robert 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 **\$1715.00** 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 \$5600 on this project to date!
- +++ The Clothing Drive is a permanent on-going project in our parish. Please bring any type of clothing and fabrics along with stuffed animals and shoes for the benefit of our parish. The bags can be left in the vestibule or on the front porch of the rectory. Please invite your friends and neighbors to assist us in disposing of unwanted clothing, shoes and fabrics.
- +++ Please pray the Lord our God grants us an enrichment of our spiritual lives for his glory.

LORD



TEACH
US

God's Revelation To Us

All Scripture is inspired of God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, correction, and training in holiness, so that the man of God may be fully competent and equipped for every good work 1 Timothy 3: 16, 17.

How shall a young man be faultless in his way? By keeping to your words Psalms 119: 9.

First you must understand this: there is no prophecy contained in Scripture which is a personal interpretation. Prophecy has never been put forward by man's willing it. It is rather that men impelled by the Holy Spirit have spoken under God's influence 2 Peter 1: 20, 21.

Jesus replied, "Scripture has it: 'Not on bread alone is man to live, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God'" Matthew 4: 4.

A lamp to my feet is your word, a light to my path Psalms 119: 105.

Until I come, devote yourself to reading the Scripture, to preaching and teaching. Do not neglect the gift you received, when as a result of prophecy, the priests laid their hands on you 1 Timothy 4: 13, 14.

But delight in the law of the Lord and meditate on his law day and night Psalms 1: 2.

Within my heart I treasure your promise that I may not sin against you Psalms 119: 11.

Ways To Help The Church

Be faithful to attend and participate in worship. Commit yourself to the Church and let your parish priest and fellow communicants know they can count on you. Be faithful to Christ and be present whenever the Divine Liturgy or other services are being celebrated for your benefit and intention. Obviously you cannot be much of parishioner if you do not show up and take part in the public prayers of the faith community. Some people underestimate the value of simply being present and praying along with other believers. Joining together with others adds to their encouragement and provides incentives to the parish priest who prays and prepares all week to minister and serve your needs. If you are not present, how can your spiritual needs be met? "We must consider how to rouse each other to love and good deeds. We should not absent ourselves from the assembly, as some do, but encourage one another; and this all the more because you see that the Day draws near. If we sin willfully after receiving the truth, there remains for us no further sacrifice for sin, only a fearful expectation of judgment and a flaming fire to consume the adversaries of God." Hebrews 10: 24- 26. It encourages your shepherd and the entire church for you to come faithfully and on time. And do not merely sit there like a bump on a log. Be friendly, put a smile on your face to show you enjoy the presence of God, and enter into the service of singing and worshipping enthusiastically. You can even utter a spirited rendition of the hymns so that your soul expresses itself to our Creator.

Commit yourself to love the Lord and your fellow communicants. Scripture teaches us that all the desires of God are condensed into only two cardinal commandments that Jesus made known to His followers. He said "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself" Luke 10: 27. By clothing ourselves in God's love, we help the Church to reinforce this objective for every believer and we also help eliminate the elements of conflict and division which can hinder the unity of the parish. "I beseech you to have a walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with long-suffering, being with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the body of peace" Ephesians 4: 1 - 3.

Pray for your parish, its shepherd and fellow communicants. The Apostle Paul explained that it is the duty of faithful Christians to pray for all who are in authority, especially those in spiritual authority. "I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence" 1 Timothy 2: 1, 2. Our church leaders are on the cutting edge of the battle with Satan and face temptations and spiritual conflict unlike anything you could imagine. The devil knows that if he can topple a spiritual leader or get him discouraged enough to quit, it will have a domino effect on the rest of the church, "Kill the shepherd and the flock will be scattered." Matthew 26: 31; "So they were scattered because there was no shepherd and were food for the beasts" Ezekiel

34: 5. The devil is well aware if he topples, with the parishioner's assistance our spiritual leader or get him discouraged enough to leave the priesthood, it will have a domino effect on the rest of the Church. You can be a tremendous help by praying for your parish church and its spiritual success, but especially for the pastor and shepherd that his work is blessed by God in our midst. Especially helpful is your fervent participation in the worship of the Church at each Sunday and holy day Divine Liturgy, where you come in prayerful agreement with other believers and where your pastor can feel and see your support and praise of God. God promised special strength through the combined prayer of his children, "Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven" Matthew 18: 19.

Get to know your spiritual leaders and cooperate with them. The more you get to know your parish priest and his godly life-style, the more you will likely come to trust their spiritual leadership. You will have a greater credibility in their teaching and counsel. "Thereupon the lawless one will be revealed and the Lord Jesus will destroy him with the breath of his mouth and annihilate him by manifesting his own presence. This lawless one will appear as part of the workings of satan, accompanied by all the power and signs and wonders at the disposal of falsehood, by every seduction the wicked can devise for those destined to ruin because they have not opened their hearts to the truth in order to be saved. Therefore God is sending upon them a perverse spirit to give credence to falsehood, so that all who have not believed the truth but have delighted in evil-doing will be condemned" 1 Thessalonians 2: 8 - 12. Show respect and cooperate with the authority our priests have been endowed with. Avoid challenging their rights or worthiness to serve in their position, but accept that God has seen fit to place them in this role. "Let everyone obey the authorities that are placed over him, for there is no authority except from God, and all authority that exists is established by God. As a consequence, the man who opposed authority rebels against the ordinance of God; those who resist us shall draw condemnation down upon their lives" Romans 13: 1, 2. Belligerence or antagonism toward spiritual leadership may be acceptable in secular society, but there is no place for it in the Church of the Lord. "Obey those who rule over you and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls as those who must give an account. So act that they may fulfill their task with joy, and not with sorrow, for that would be harmful to you" Hebrews 13: 17.

Help shoulder the load of responsibility. Shepherds and other leaders of the church often feel much like Moses did when Israel fought with Amalek. Their arms became weary under the weight of so many responsibilities and they need brothers and sisters to stand beside them and help distribute the load. "But Moses' hands became heavy; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun" Exodus 17: 12.

The Lord never intended for the whole ministry of service in the life of the Church to be carried solely by the pastor or a mere handful of people. It is often said, perhaps in jest, that 80% of the work in a parish is done by 20% of the people, and sadly, this has caused the burnout of many outstanding

workers for the cause of the Lord. Because of indifference and apathy, too many people permit their parish to degenerate into something it ought never become. If everyone would simply pitch in and do their fair share in helping, serving and giving, all the needs of the parish would be met and no one would be overburdened. It is far easier for a hundred souls to help one person than for one person to help a hundred. Be willing to volunteer with whatever needs done and do not be picky and choosy about what you will or will not do. Pursue the Scripture: "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might." Ecclesiastes 9: 10. And do not help out simply for the sake of securing attention or being noticed, but do it simply for God's sake, for His glory.

A parish is like any other organization with human resources. No one ever starts out at the top. Everyone knows that we have to start at entry level. But if a believer continues to grow strong in Christian character and proves faithful and responsible to do the basic tasks given to them in the church, they will likely be promoted and advanced to greater responsibility and service. "He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much, and he who is unjust in what is little, is unjust in what is greater" Luke 16: 10.

Apply the teaching of Christ and the ministry of the Church to your life. There is not much that a parish priest loves more than to see his flock practicing what he has preached, living a Godly life, a holy life and in prayer seeking the will of the Lord. If you wish to make your parish priest happy and fulfilled, always be present to worship on Sunday and holy days. Present yourself in repentance for the sacramental Mystery of Reconciliation. Worthily receive the Holy Eucharist. Learn to appreciate spiritual values the priest attempts to instill in you. "Be imitators of me, my brothers. Take as your guide those who follow the example we set. Unfortunately many go about in a way which shows them to be enemies of the cross of Christ" Philippians 3: 17, 18; "I beg you be followers of me" 1 Corinthians 4: 16; because God "loves those who follow righteousness" Proverbs 21: 21. It greatly helps your parish church when you conduct yourself in a Christ-like manner, whether you realize it or not, you are a walking billboard of the church. Whatever people in the community see in your life, they will tend to identify your pastor and his flock with as well. Behave yourself and speak well of the Church and your parish priest. The eyes and ears of the community in which you live are always open to the things you say and do. Your neighbors notice very clearly if you attend church on Sundays and holydays and the kind of example you provide for your children. Why would they be interested in Orthodoxy if you who claim to be Orthodox exhibit very little evidence of its having a sublime influence in your life?

Seek out and utilize your gifts. According to the teaching of the Lord, our heavenly Father distributes gifts to each in His Body, the Church, as it pleases Him. Spiritual gifts are not provided to you merely for your own gratification, but so that the Church would be built up. God has given you gifts that will be a help to the Church; it is up to you to discover them to develop the mandate to utilize them under the direction and cooperation of your spiritual father. By doing so, you will glorify God and be a great

help to the parish. "Even so, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel" 1 Corinthians 14: 12.

Contribute to solutions, not to problems. Every parish priest would be delighted if each of his flock got involved and helped the church in some way and advanced its cause in the community. However, priests would also rejoice if certain ones stopped being a pain in the neck! It is assumed that priests spend much time "putting out fires" that is, squelching problems that could have a negative influence on the whole body, such as gossip, rumors, complaining, misunderstandings, hurt feelings, discontent, and so on. Regrettably, it has been said that 90% of these kinds of problems are generated by some 10% of parishioners. Spiritually mature persons who wish to help their church do not become part of such problems, instead they contribute to solutions. They avoid divisive people, negative people, "Brothers, I beg you be on watch against those who cause dissension and scandal, contrary to the teaching you have received. Avoid their company. Such men serve, not Christ our Lord, but their own bellies, and they deceive the simpleminded with smooth and flattering speech. Your obedience is known to all, and so I am delighted with you. I want you to be wise in regard to what is good and innocent of all evil" Romans 16: 17 - 19. Do not get caught up in the contrived mischief and grievances of others. "Besides, they learn to be ladies of leisure, who go about from house to house, becoming not only time-wasters, but gossips and busybodies as well, talking about things they ought not" 1 Timothy 5: 13. If they are aware of spreading problems in the parish faith community, they will try to bring about a resolution, or else they bring matters to the attention of spiritual leadership so that they can bring an end to the difficulties they caused. "If your brother should commit some wrong against you, go and point out his fault, but keep it between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. If he does not listen, summon another, so that every case may stand on the word of two or three witnesses. If he ignores them, refer it to the church. If he ignores the church, then treat him as you would a gentile or a tax collector. I assure you whatever you declare bound on earth shall be bound in heaven. And whatever you declare loosed on earth shall be held loosed in heaven" Matthew 18: 15 - 18. People who devoutly wish to be an asset to the parish do not participate in spreading problems and they eagerly help their parish priest solve difficulties.

Support the Church with your earthly treasure. The Lord has given great dignity to believers because He placed the care of the very vehicle of their salvation into their care. Not only are we taught to never appear in the presence of our God empty handed, but that we should always gift the Church generously, sacrificially and totally. "No one shall appear before me empty-handed" Exodus 23: 15; "'All tithes of the land, whether in grain from the fields or in fruit from the trees, belong to the Lord, as sacred to him. These are the commandments which the Lord gave Moses on Mount Sinai for the Israelites" Leviticus 27: 30, 34; "Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed me! But you say, in what way have we robbed you? In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse that there may be food in my house. And try me in this, says the Lord of hosts. If I will open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessings that there will not be room enough to receive it" Malachi 3: 8 - 11.

The Art Of Awareness

A wise man once said, "Only that day dawns to which you are aware." The art of awareness is the art of learning how to wake up to the eternal miracle of life with its limitless possibilities.

It is rising to the challenge of the stirring old adage: "Awake my soul; stretch every nerve," to be aware of God's presence in your life.

It is developing the deep sensitivity through which you may suffer and know tragedy, and die to sin, but through which you will also experience the grandeur of human life as a child of God.

It is following the philosophy which teaches reverence for all life, from ants to man; it is developing a sense of oneness with all life to come to understand the purposes of God.

It is identifying yourself with the hopes, dreams, fears, and longings of others, that you may help them become God-like.

It is learning to interpret the thoughts, feelings, and moods of others through their words, tones, inflections, facial expressions and movements that you may serve them in a Godly way.

It is keeping soulfully alert to all that goes on around you; it is being curious, observant, imaginative that you may build an ever increasing fund of knowledge of God's universe.

It is striving to stretch the range of eye and ear; it is taking time to look and listen and comprehend God's love for you.

It is searching for beauty everywhere, in a flower, a mountain, a machine, a sonnet, and a symphony in an attempt to understand the eternal beauty of God.

It is knowing wonder, awe, and humility in the face of life's unexplained mysteries, so God's will is understood.

It is discovering the mystic power of silence and coming to know the secret inner voice of intuition so you may pray to God more frequently.

It is avoiding blind spots in considering problems and situations; it is striving "to see life steadily and see it whole," so you come to understand your relationship with God."

It is enlarging the scope of your life through the expansion of your personality by God's grace; it is by a growing awareness that you stock and enrich your memory with the Word of God so that as a great philosopher used to say, "A man thinks with his memory."

A Good Miss

We know that all things work together for good to those who love God Romans 6: 28.

A devoted grandfather tells an interesting story about a game in which his grandson was playing. In his second year of playing T-ball, which introduces six year olds to baseball. In this game the baseball is placed on a rubber post that sits on home plate. A baseball rests on the top of the batting tee just waiting to be heartily slugged. The youngsters swing with all their might, hoping to hit a home run, but often they miss the ball completely. This had just happened to his grandson and he appeared to be very upset with himself. The coach wanted to encourage him, so he shouted exuberantly, "That was a good miss, Peter!" My grandson had missed and yet the coach called it "good."

How this reminds us of our failures as believers in Christ! Certainly our God never calls our sin good, yet He does not treat failure as final. By His grace, He can bring out good out of our greatest and most seemingly abysmal failures. If we practice some introspection, we see that God is working all things together for the good of those who love Him. What a hopeful mystery our lives encompass!

If we truly wish to remain faithful in our commitment to the Lord, if we truly love God above all else and want to please Him, we do not give up or get down on ourselves. We do not become overwhelmed with the challenges of our lives. We think about God's grace working in us, leading us, prodding us, encouraging us to try again. We have a hopeful and confident faith. If we fail at one point in achieving our spiritual goals, we try again. Thus, then, the mistakes or failure to achieve success in our particular ambitions become a "good miss" Our God sees we are capable of much better and so He shows us as He pushes us in the direction of trying once again. If we ask for forgiveness in missing the mark and for continued strength to overcome our weaknesses, our God will see the sincerity of our motives and bestow His strengthening grace so that we do achieve success.

We are called upon to trust Him, to let Him bring some good out of our seeming failures.

Failure is failing to trust and believe
That God can accomplish His purpose through you;
Failure is failing to keep on trying
To do all the Saviour has asked you to do.

When we learn a so-called failure is only an opportunity to do better, to try harder, to seek a greater share of God's grace in our hopes, we then learn failure is never failure for those who begin again with God!

Did You Know That ...

- ...casual Christians become casualties of life?**
- ...an old young man will be a young old man?**
- ...all would live long, but none want to get old?**
- ...if passion drives, let reason hold the reins?**
- ...all should take heed of the vinegar of sweet wine and the anger of good nature?**
- ...an angry man rides a mad horse?**
- ...you may be cunning to one, but not to all?**
- ...we are not as sensitive to good health as we are to the least in sickness?**
- ...he is rich who is satisfied with his portion?**
- ...better is little with content than much with contention?**
- ...if a man had half his wishes, he would double his troubles?**
- ...in worldly affairs, men are saved not by faith, but want of it?**
- ...diligence overcomes difficulties, but sloth makes them?**
- ...God helps them that help themselves?**
- ...a full belly is the mother of all evil?**
- ...we should eat to live, not live to eat?**
- ...many times when wine enters the mouth, out goes the truth?**
- ...to lengthen life, shorten meals?**
- ...they who have nothing to be troubled with, will be troubled with nothing?**

Meeting of our Lord in the Temple

Saint Luke the Evangelist and beloved physician tells us that the old man Simeon was “waiting for the consolation of Israel” and was filled with the Holy Spirit. He regularly prayed that our heavenly Father would not dismiss him from the world until he should see with his own eyes the salvation prepared for all people, a light of revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of Israel. Did he expect that it would be a grown man, coming to the temple to worship? Someone who would engage him in conversation? A teacher whose words he could treasure? A deeply learned and erudite man who would sway the hearts of man and impress the souls of all who heard his carefully crafted thoughts and quickly form a path to paradise?

But the actual event is far more mysterious. The Birthgiver and Joseph bring the infant Jesus, the still speechless Word, into the temple on the fortieth day after his birth, according to the Law of Moses. The scene inspired many to capture the beauty of this event in formal art and word.

All prophets hail you, from old announcing,
by the inbreathed Spirit of the Father,
God's Mother, bringing prophecies to fullness,
Mary the Virgin.

You, the true virgin Mother of the Most High,
bearing incarnate God in awed obedience,
meekly accepting purification for a sinless offering.

In the high temple, Simeon receives you,
takes to his bent arms with a holy rapture
that promised Saviour, vision of redemption,
Christ long-awaited.

Now the first realm of Paradise attaining
and to your Son's throne, Mother of the Eternal,
raised all glorious, yet in earth's devotion,
join with us always.

**Glory and worship to the Lord of all things,
pay we unresting who alone adored,
Father and Son and Spirit, in the highest
Reign Eternal!**

Every word of the Lord is gold, but every event in the life of the Lord speaks to us and is golden as well. And here is caught the wonder of the event that was once known as the Purification. There is no shedding of blood in Eden. Bloodshed is the most obvious consequence of the fall. So "...if a woman has conceived seed, and born a man child" Leviticus 12: 2, she in blood has brought into the world a man tainted with blood, who must be circumcised and in his generative members dedicated to the Lord. And after forty days, she must make an offering of atonement for herself and, presumably, for that sinner-to-be, and then she shall be clean.

Note the mystery here. Christ who will take upon himself the sin of the world, Christ the Paschal Lamb is spotless as his Mother is yet a virgin. He who did not need to be circumcised since He himself was the Lord, sheds his first blood for mankind in that initiatory rite. And He who did not make his mother unclean now enters the temple on our behalf, as if He were as we are, unclean, and by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the aged Simeon sees it, witnesses and cries out that he is now ready to die.

We do not choose to dwell upon the homely details of the scene or upon Simeon's admonitory words to the Virgin, but immediately turn our attention to Paradise and to the united prayers of the Church in triumph and the Church upon earth. And that is because we have in mind the "great and fearful day of the Lord" Malachi 4: 5, of which this day in the temple is more than a foreshadowing. The day of the Lord is yet to come, but is already here. Who needs that "purification" which the scriptural translator cannily sets forth by itself in a single line? All we sinners do. The whole world does, both Gentile and Jew. Both deacon, priest and bishop. The light to the Gentiles blazes forth from a fire.

So says the prophet:

The Lord whom you seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom you delight in; behold he shall come, says the Lord of hosts.

But who may abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap:

And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver and he shall purify the sons of Levi and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the Lord an offering of righteousness Malachi 3: 1 – 3.

And so says the Forerunner:

I indeed baptize you with water, but one mightier than I comes, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose; he shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire Luke 3: 16.

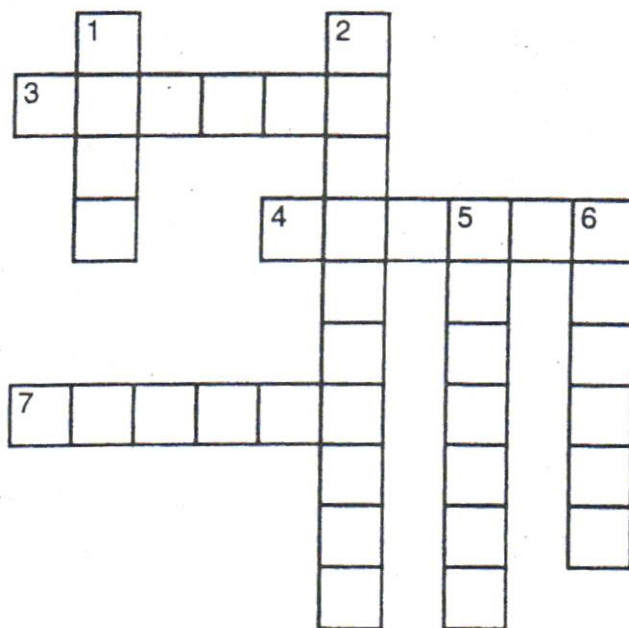
With all that, we can connect and bring together all three rites: circumcision, purification, and baptism. Jesus comes to baptize us in fire. It is more violent than the ritual drowning of baptism. It is more lacerating than the ritual blood shed of circumcision. And it is far more comprehensive. Imagine a man-child or a mother tainted with blood. Imagine a lump of sin, of worthless earth and dross, veined and flecked with gold and silver. Imagine what does not shine and is of no use. Imagine man. Jesus the purifier immerses that lump, that son of Levi, into the all-searing and consuming fire of his love. Only then can we sing in full accord with the saints on high.

To him who loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests to God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen Revelation 1: 5, 6.



SAMSON & DELILAH

Hint: You'll find help in Judges 13 - 16

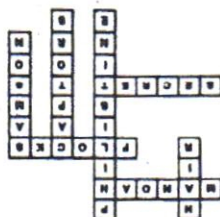


ACROSS

- 3 Samson's father
4 Samson tended his father's ____
7 Samson's enemies tried to find out the ____ of Samson's strength

DOWN

- 1 Samson's strength was in his ____
2 The ____ offered gold and silver to learn Samson's secret
5 Several times Samson broke his bonds and escaped from his ____
6 ____ was dedicated to God





ZACCHÆUS, HURRY
DOWN. LK 19. 5

Zaccheus

At that time Jesus entered and was passing through Jericho. And behold there was a man named Zaccheus and he was a leading publican, and he was rich.

He was trying to see Jesus, who he was, but could not, on account of the crowd because he was small of stature. So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was going to pass that way. And when

Jesus came to the place, he looked up and saw him, and said to him, "Zaccheus, make haste and come down for I must stay in your house today."

And he made haste and came down and welcomed him joyfully. And upon seeing it, all began to murmur, saying, "He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." But Zaccheus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, I give one half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold." Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

Luke 19: 1 – 10.

Zaccheus was a publican. The publicans were the tax collectors among the Jews of our Saviour's day. The tax, or tribute as they called it, was levied by Rome. Though conquered by pagan Rome and under its rule, the Jews fretted under the yoke and yielded only a sullen and unwilling obedience to its authority. They hated to pay tribute to Caesar and consequently, hated even more those who collected the tax. After all, they were people with a covenant with God the Creator. Their only allegiance would be to the God of the Covenant which they would openly express by supporting his revealed works among them. So it was convenient for everyone to hate the sight of the publican.

How far away the beginnings that led to that final step, how far they lay back, we do not know. Doubtless like beginnings were small, almost unnoticeable. A passing thought about Jesus, a timid look into his own heart, a hasty glance over his past life, a slight dissatisfaction with self, an unexpressed longing after something better in this veil of tears, such may have been the varied and collective beginnings. These were the seed-corn, rooting and sprouting. With clearer ideas of sin and the Saviour, with deeper sorrow for sin and more earnest longing to come to the security of the Saviour, the change was becoming more decisive. And now the crisis had come, and he surrendered fully to the Son of God. The separating choice was decisively made.

So none of us should despise the day of small things or events. Where small measures and opportunities of grace begin, they are improved, and greater ones are granted. Even now Zaccheus might have refused to come down and receive Jesus into his home. He might have resisted even this effectual call on the basis of many pretexts. Man always has the sad and awful prerogative and power to beat back the hand that is stretched out firmly to greet, welcome and save him.

A true conversion always proves itself. So did this one. Zaccheus made public confession. This must inevitably follow every conversion. *Faith in the heart leads to justification, confession on the lips to salvation* Romans 10: 10. Zaccheus confessed his former sins. He did this in the presence of the people and before Christ. He said, *If I have defrauded...* Luke 19: 8. This is an acknowledgement he had not been careful to be honest; that he had been capable of taking by false accusation. He confesses his sinfulness and his sin.

How many have had their first serious thoughts, their first good impulses, checked by *the deceitfulness of riches* Matthew 13: 22. How many have been kept out of the kingdom of grace here and the kingdom of glory in eternity by the glitter of gold. Not so Zaccheus; he was already beginning to esteem the reproach of Christ greater than the riches and treasures of Rome.

And how many have been kept away from Christ by bodily impediments. Oh, how many are kept away, or rather, keep; themselves away from the home of God and the means of grace, from the house of worship by real or imagined bodily ailments. How many nervous spells, hang nails, sore toes, keep us comfortably esconsed in our beds on Sunday mornings because we are not in the mood to worship the source of our creation. The Sunday morning illnesses that disappear after lunch are miracles in themselves. The Sunday morning headaches. The dread of exposure on the day of the Lord! We have known many who could work so hard all week, but were too weak or nervous or achey or too sick to go to church Sunday morning. Because of light or only supposed bodily ills, the poor soul is allowed to starve and die whereas in those devoted to reality and truth in the time of Christ, particularly at the moment of pain and illness were eager to be in his company and came to adore him!

On the other hand, we have known persons who readily had serious bodily ailments, aches and pains, who yet had themselves led, assisted or carried into the house of God because they knew it was the place for them to be. We have seen persons sit under the preaching of the Word, while their bodies were shaking with fever and pain. These are the earnest. They were hungry. They wanted to meet Jesus in his church, in his place, and in his ordinances. Such was Zaccheus. Too little to see Jesus like other people, he

quietly devised a way and found a place where he actually could encounter him and even be enriched by his presence.

How many also have been kept from yielding to the strivings of the Holy Spirit in the preaching of the Word of God, because they were afraid of being ridiculed. As we think about it, how many have been laughed and sneered out of heaven because of the disgruntled attitude of so many who do not believe? Zaccheus did not stop for this, but boldly braved the bravado of the crowd. Thus he overcame every obstacle that stood in the way of his conversion.

Thirdly, we note the conversion itself. We notice the preparatory work that had been done by the fragmentary gospel he had doubtless received. Through this the preparatory grace reached him and drew him towards Jesus. This brought him to where the Word of God and the merciful look of Jesus could reach him. And Jesus does reach him. He looks up and sees him. As one of the Fathers of the Church, an old writer says, "He saw in Zaccheus a ripe fig, ready to drop into his lap." It was there, in that tree, where the turning point was made. There the decisive step was taken and Zaccheus was brought to the doors of heaven.

When the Lord spoke to him, called him personally by name, and invited him to come down, it was the same voice, the same living word that had spoken power into a withered hand, and life into dead bodies.

Zaccheus hears that divine word. He yields fully to its power, and in yielding he *turned from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God* Acts of the Apostles 26: 18. When Zaccheus *made haste and came down* Luke 19: 5, he was a converted and changed man.

The Roman government took contracts for the taxes. Some wealthy man would become responsible for the taxes of a certain district or county. He would sub-let that district to a number of others, each one of whom became answerable to him for a certain section, such as a township. The sub-contractor again would generally hire men to go from house to house and gather in the payments. Thus it came about that the tax money had to pass through three or four hands before it reached the treasury of Rome. Each one of these hands wanted to be paid for their labor. In order to make a profit more tax money was collected than was levied by Rome. And so it became almost a part of the system to extort what was called unlawful money. The people knew this and therefore hated these seemingly unjust and oppressive publicans still more. To be a politician then, as was so in the years of the publicans, was to be an extortioner, a thief and a crook. Those who had contracts for larger district were *chief among the publicans* Luke 19: 2. Such was Zaccheus.

The city of Jericho was probably the most important commercial site in the Holy Land. Laying just opposite the fords of the river Jordan, it was on the great highway that led from Arabia and Syria across into Egypt. The City of Palm Trees was naturally a headquarters for those who are chief of the publicans. Zaccheus lived there.

The gospel account gives us insight of the remarkable conversion of this chief publican. It is this spiritual drama we consider.

Initially we inquire: What led to this conversion? There are some who tell us that it was the simple curiosity of Zaccheus that brings us his story. They say that he heard about Jesus and therefore had that curious desire to see him that we all have to look upon some eminent or famous person. And this idle curiosity alone, they insist, made him so eager to encounter Jesus.

This appears like a rather superficial view of the matter. The eagerness of Zaccheus seems too great to be accounted for on the mere ground of curiosity. There seems to be a deep and intense earnestness underlying his rather strange actions. The sequel of the story also seems to squarely contradict the idea of mere curiosity.

The Fathers of the Church believe there were deeper motives and we believe the freely imparted grace to a receptive soul was at work.

Jesus was closing his public ministry. He was on his last journey to Jerusalem. For three years he had been going up and down in the land with blessings in his heart, with blessings on his lips and with blessings in his hands. He had been the great Helper and Healer of bodies and souls. His fame had gone abroad in all the land. Everywhere people were talking about him. He had been in the region of Jericho at different times before. Zaccheus must have heard about him. The tax collectors under him, who were going from house to house would naturally have come in contact with some who had seen him and actually heard Jesus, who had been helped, or had seen him in salutary action. Quite likely some of these under-publicans had themselves seen some of those wonderful deeds of love and heard some of those inspiring words of life. All this they would report to Zaccheus when they came to turn in their collected proceeds. They would also, no doubt, be very likely to tell him that this wonderful Jesus did not think himself above speaking to, mingling with, and helping men of their generally despised class, that He had even called one of them, who had been chief among the publicans, for the receipt of customs, to become one of his twelve chosen disciples.

Zaccheus heard these stories about Jesus. This was literally gospel truth to him, for what is the gospel but the glad tidings, the good news, of

the Son of God? Zaccheus had his God only in disconnected stories, almost unbelievable stories. It was only a fragmentary gospel, but it was all the gospel message he had. And even this gospel was to him *the power of God unto salvation* Romans 1: 16.

He accepted what little of the gospel he was aware of. He believed these stories. They stirred in him longings after a better life. They had worked an earnest desire to come near to this Jesus and receive a blessing from him. His heart was going out towards this unknown Jesus. He heard little. He liked what He heard. He wanted more.

In passing, it is true Zaccheus might have resisted, might have shaken off these impressions; he might have plunged more deeply into business and speculation; he might have *quenched the Spirit* 1 Thessalonians 5: 19, who mysteriously works through the Word of God. But he did not. He allows even fragmentary heavenly messages to do their blessed preparatory work. This leads to his conversion in God's time.

We cannot but notice the obstacles in the way of his change of life. Firstly, he was rich. Earthly riches have ever proved a formidable obstacle to the conversion of sinners. Our heavenly Father demands the whole heart or none. He will not have a divided heart or soul. *No man can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other or be attentive to one and despise the other. You cannot give yourself to God and money* Matthew 6: 24. Physical riches take a strong hold on the heart of man. Covetousness grows as wealth increases. *Take heed and beware of covetousness* Luke 12: 15, *which is idolatry* Colossians 3: 5.

Prior to the telling of this enriching tale of conversion, we have a sad example of the adverse power of riches. In view of that example Jesus said,

How hard will it be for the rich to go into the kingdom of God! Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven Luke 18: 24, 25. Further one He explains that while *with man it is impossible, with God it is possible* Matthew 19: 26. It seems to require a special measure of heavenly grace from our heavenly Father and special earnestness on the part of man, for a rich man to become and remain a child of God. It is not impossible, but it is difficult. Zaccheus was rich. In his very self was an obstacle to his conversion.

And of course, there was a physical bodily impediment; *he was small of stature* Luke 19: 3, so short and small that he could not see Christ because of the crowd that surrounded him. This physical disability might have kept him away from Jesus. He may have just as easily said, "I want to see and meet Jesus. I fully intended to see him, but my limitation of stature prevents me, so I'll give it up."

Another further difficulty in the way was the ridicule to which he would expose himself by taking a position where he could see Christ. As a publican he was despised by the people. He knew they would be only too ready to ridicule him if he should climb up into a tree. Again, he had a certain dignity and decorum to maintain, after all he was a representative of imperial Rome. He was a rich man, a chief among the publicans, an officer of the Roman government; and should he compromise his dignity to make a public spectacle of himself? Should he run ahead of the crowd and in full view of them, climb into a tree like a boy? Should he become a laughing-stock to his enemies and a mortification to his friends and associates? Here were mighty obstacles to be overcome.

But Zaccheus was too much in earnest to be deterred. Oh, how many have been kept away from Christ by just such impediments as were in his way.

He professes faith in Jesus Christ by coming down from the tree branch at his call, going with him in the presence of the murmuring crowd, and making public declaration to him as *Lord* Luke 19: 8. He further proves his conversion by his determination to make restitution for any wrong done. A truly converted man cannot keep what he knows he has ill-gotten. He is enlightened and now a tender conscience compels him to make restoration as far as possible.

In proposing to make restitution, Zaccheus, at the same time, professes he will henceforth be strictly honest and upright in all his dealings. There can be honesty where there is no religious profession, but there certainly can be no true spiritual or religious practice where there is no honesty. A genuine Christian cannot misrepresent, adulterate, give short weight or measure or take advantage of ignorance in his daily transactions. A man may pray ever so fervently in church, at home or at the Divine Liturgy, or talk ever so touchingly in experience, but if he is not strictly truthful and honest in all his dealings, we take no stock in his religious profession. A true conversion turns a dishonest into an honest man.

Zaccheus becomes liberal-hearted. Half of his goods he determines to give to the poor and needy. A true conversion turns the stingy into a generous man. It opens the pocket-book as well as the heart and soul. There is no such thing as a Christian miser. If one is a miser he is not Christian; he needs to be rerouted and redirected, converted to the values of Christ.

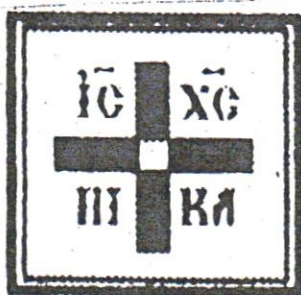
Finally, salvation came to the *house* Luke 19: 9 of Zaccheus, not that all members of the household were at once converted, but the head of the family became a disciple of Jesus Christ, so the opportunity for grace to further fulfill its purpose among his family members became instantly possible by proximate good example. Zaccheus brings and introduces a

Christian atmosphere into his home, The Word of God and prayer life assume their proper place in the family. The things of God are talked about and advanced in that home. God's presence is valued and recognized among family members. A true conversion shows piety at home. All are eager to be fed with the milk of God's word. The presence of angels from heaven is felt within the walls. We once heard a boy say with considerable bitterness, "Yes, my father can pray at church in public, but I never heard him pray at home." He professed to be Christian, but salvation was not brought by him into the precincts of the family household.

Pursue the testament of Christ in the life of Zaccheus and see proofs of conversion. Do you profess to be exclusively a follower of the Saviour? Can you provide in your lifestyle evidence he so readily advanced?

Or is there still need for further intense effort in your life? Are you yet *poisoned with gall and caught in the grip of sin* Acts of the Apostles 8: 23? Do you in fact desire to live an entirely converted life? What must you do? Simply use the means. Use them diligently and prayerfully and they will introduce renewing grace into your soul and those you love.

As regards others, ponder well the response of Simon in the apostolic history of the Church, *I need the prayers of all of you to the Lord so that what you have just said may never happen to me* Acts of the Apostles 8: 24.



The Son of Man

came

seek and save

what was lost.



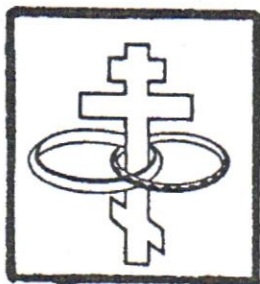
Birthday
Wishes!

We are pleased to greet those of our faithful communicants who celebrate their birthday this month. Our Lord has offered these souls yet another year of blessed life. The most obvious way He blesses us and participates in our life is by sharing his divine life with us in the Eucharist at the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. Thus we gather together and offer thanks for yet another year of life blessed by his most gracious hands. Today, we prayerfully remember in the Divine Liturgy the following souls who celebrate their birthday during this month:

February 7 Robin Pasquino
February 14 Sarah Anna Harrison
February 14 Tatyana Lucas Harrison
February 21 Joan Henry
February 24 George Idromenos
February 27 Marilyn J. Korba
February 28 Joseph F.Choti

With a prayerful heart and grateful soul, our parish faith community asks the Lord to continue to bless these birthday celebrants with good spiritual and physical health for the coming year. We invite all to add their personal intercessory prayers so that with one voice and one heart we may also participate in the grace and joy of their celebration. As we wish them a happy and blessed celebration of their birthday, our ardent prayer resounds that the Lord our God will continue to bless them for

Many and Blessed Years!



WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

The Byzantine Fathers of the Church were wont to emphasize how ancient and how venerable marriage is in the sight of our God because it was established yet in paradise before the fall of Adam and Eve and brought to blessed perfection by Christ in Cana of Galilee. Its grace survived the sin of our first parents and it remains a sign of the presence of the Holy Trinity in our midst. It is a living symbol of the deep and abiding love between Christ and His Bride, our blessed Church. It is characterized in the liturgical life of the Church as a happy martyrdom. And it is precisely for this reason the sacramental Mystery of Marriage is such a joyous event. On the third Sunday of this month, we honor those of our good parishioners who observe their marriage anniversaries this month. They are specially remembered in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy and subsequently receive an individual and personal blessing of the Lord at its conclusion. Celebrating this month are:

February 13 Nikita & Angeliki Tsokris

We gratefully give thanks to the Blessed Trinity for having guided and strengthened the marriages of these believers, and their cooperation with sacramental grace to remain faithful to one another over the years. Like all who are faithful to Christ, they recognize the presence and necessity of the Holy Spirit not only in the marriage, but in subsequent family life as well. As we praise our God for their witness in our midst, let us also join them with our prayers and thanksgiving before the throne of the Lord. May they continue to praise His Holy Name by their love and devotion to one another for

Many and Blessed Years

Forgiveness Vespers: Strength for the journey

Mahatma Ghandi, the quiet, deceptively frail man whose radical philosophy of nonviolence revolutionized colonial India was influenced by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He once said "The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong." But for those of us born in weakness, from where can such strength come? There is only one authentic Source, from whom every good and every perfect gift has its origin.

During this sacred time we can reflect on three values or gifts that can help us make this deeply personal journey from the desert of the Great Fast to the bounty and victory of Resurrection: silence, forgiveness and community. We can participate in and access all three gifts during the powerful and moving celebration of Forgiveness Vespers, the service that heralds the Great Fast for all believers in the Orthodox Church of Christ.

These vesper services sing about the fall of Adam and remind us that we are outcasts in this world, that our true home and destiny is in the eternal paradise, the heavenly kingdom to which the paschal pilgrimage leads us. In our parish, we can begin the Great Fast journey with a silent and listening heart, then join with our brothers and sisters of faith commitment in a communal celebration of mutual forgiveness. What greater strength for the journey ahead could we ask for and receive?

**Forgive me, a sinner.
I forgive you~! May
God forgive you; May
He forgive us both!!**

AN UNLIKELY TEACHER

As Christians, we are told not to judge someone by their outward appearance. We are taught to look below the surface to something deeper. Today's bulletin tells the story of a man who passed a local church on a dreary winter morning. This young man had the disheveled look of a street person. Wearing a ragged jacket with a dirty baseball cap pulled down over his eyes, his appearance was almost menacing. He looked like the kind of person you would find yourself walking around and placing a firmer grip on your purse or wallet. But when this man reached the corner of the church, something amazing happened. The man, in a pious gesture of respect, removed his cap and held it in his hand until he walked past the front entrance doors. Only then did he dawn his cap again and continue on at a brisk pace.

There is an important lesson found in this true story. This modern day parable is an excellent example of the truthfulness of that old adage: "YOU CAN'T JUDGE A BOOK BY IT'S COVER." Let's be honest now: we are all guilty of making unfounded judgements sometimes. We board a train and a seat is vacant next to a person we may deem as "unsavory." More often than not, we will pass it by, hoping to find a "better seat" in another car. We fear or, worse yet, look down upon those whom we perceive as not measuring up to our standards. Yet how can we pretend to know what is in their minds and in their hearts?

Martin Luther King, Jr, who knew a little something about prejudice (that's what pre-judging someone really is), exhorted us to judge one another on the content of their character. Our Lord was much more emphatic: "JUDGE NOT, LEST YOU BE JUDGED" was His stern warning to all of us - a warning that, sadly, often goes unheeded.

Very often God places a mysterious "messenger" in our path to teach us a lesson. Many times we will never set eyes on that person again. Hopefully this encounter teaches us that lessons are often learned in unlikely places. Let's make sure our hearts and minds are open to receive them.

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