



Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

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FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Thirty Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

February 3, 2013

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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

+++ Please keep the intentions of these members of our parish intercession community in your daily prayers: Anna, Ryan, Betty, Mary, Beth, Ann Helene, Debra 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.

A Shared Effort

*There are practical ways for husbands and wives
to help each other become better parents*

Wives want what is good for their husbands and as mothers, they want what is best for their children. The same can be said of husbands and fathers, and one of the best ways to accomplish these goals is for spouses to help each other with their respective roles. Both can reinforce the paternal and maternal vocation in each other. Here are some ways for husbands and wives to encourage each other in their joys and struggles of parenthood.

For wives

Take notice. It is very likely that your husband performs loving acts for your children all the time, whether it is giving them hugs, making them lunch, driving them to sports practice, or paying the tuition and dental bills. Taking notice and verbalizing your gratitude for these kindnesses will not only teach your children to appreciate their father, but will make your husband's heart soar.

With young children, you can say, "Did daddy pour you a drink? What a nice daddy you have!" Or with older children you can note, "I think its great that dad takes time to help you with your homework."

Ask yourself, Do my words to and about my husband build him up as a father or tear him down?

Consciously interjecting a genuine Christian perspective into the parenting style can be an upbeat, positive way to improve common parenting.

Respect his authority. This can be a tricky one because our maternal pride sometimes gets in the way. Often, mothers are the ones who do the lion's share of feeding, bathing, changing, carpooling and kissing boo-boos. Surely we know what is best for our children, don't we?

Maybe not always. We need to remember our heavenly Father gave our children a mother and father for a good reason. Your husband wants what is best for the children as well; he may just have a different way of getting there. Maybe he does not recognize the importance of the baby's socks matching his shirt. Or he lets older children watch more television than you would. But these are probably not battles that need to be fought. Let go of the pressing need for control and bite your tongue.

Ask yourself: Do I respect my husband's authority as a father or do I discount his perspective and belittle his opinions even if only in my own mind?

Be critical carefully. Of course, there will be times when you might notice that your husband could improve in some important way. Recognizing his good intentions and particular challenges will make him more receptive to hearing your concerns.

For example, if you think your husband should cut back on his work hours to invest more time at home, do not say things like "Your job is more important to you than your family!"

Try a positive, encouraging approach instead: "I appreciate how hard you work at your job and the money you earn for the family is really great, but we really miss you around here. Is there something I can do to make it easier for you to come home a little earlier this week?"

Ask yourself: Do my words to my husband make him want to be a better father or make him want to stop trying altogether?

Give him a break. A goodwife knows when her husband is near his breaking point. Whether it is frustration with toddlers or teens or a stressful day at work, when you see the telltale signs of a raised or strained voice, a twitching eye or a clenched jaw, it is time to intervene, just as you would have him do for you.

As the Gospel message teaches us, blessed are the peacemakers, so separate your husband from the source of his frustration if this is possible, without judgments or demands, encourage him to take a break. Then everyone can regroup without dad blowing his top. Part of being a good parent is knowing your limitations, and part of being a good wife is knowing your husband's limitations and helping the family to navigate them successfully, without serious incident.

Ask yourself: Do I do everything I can to ensure that my husband's time with the children is pleasant and positive?

Wives, working to help your husband fulfill his vocation as a father will bless you and your children. Never forget the power of prayer. Ask for the intercession of St. Joseph on behalf of your children and ask the Birthgiver of God to watch over you and him in your family life. While you are at it, teach your children to offer prayers of intercession for their father and for you.

For Husbands

The most essential character a husband and father should provide his wife and family is spiritual example and direction. Parenting is fulfilled in the truth that fathers and mothers are faithful to Christ and only fulfill his will. Thus in all they do is simply fulfilling the expectation of the Lord in their family life. Husband must by lifestyle provide spiritual stability which has its source in seriousness about receiving God's sustaining grace for themselves and the family. Successful parenting does not simply occur. An avid effort must be made to attain it and this is possible only by seriously and sincerely maintaining without fail spiritual equilibrium in sacramental life.

It is the father who leads the family to salvation, to submission to the will of our Saviour. It is he who first demonstrates to wife and children that he wholly accepts the Lordship of Christ and submits to his authority as Saviour. Regular reception of the Eucharist must be without question with just as regular eagerness for forgiveness as a family of sinfulness in the sacramental Mystery of Reconciliation, confession of sin. Undoubtedly, the family that prays and worships together stays together.

It is a strong father who admits he can err and knows where to overcome separation from the source of life. Teach both your wife and children the efficacy of apologizing to each other when necessary. Seek together as family the forgiveness of Christ and each other before approaching the sacramental Mystery of Confession. Fathers must be in the forefront of leading their family in worship and if this responsibility is seriously assumed, they will readily recognize the serious role they have to fulfill in family life.

Ask yourself: Am I attempting to provide the kind of spiritual leadership for my family that the Birthgiver of God and the Christ child received in Nazareth?

Lend a hand. Even a strong mother has physical and emotional limitations. Pay attention to how your wife spends her time. While you relax at the end of the day, is she still cleaning the kitchen, folding laundry or wrestling through bedtime with the children? Do what you can to make sure she gets some downtime too and spend it together.

Take over one of the evening chores, delegate jobs and responsibilities to the children or agree together to save certain tasks for the weekend. Just because she is not asking for a break does not mean she does not need one.

Ask yourself: Do I make certain my wife gets the rest she needs to be her best, or do I neglect her need for sleep, socialization and time alone?

Nurture her spiritually. Often, one of the first casualties of motherhood is a consistent spiritual life. Even if your wife is unable to spend hours at the church in prayer, you can be a means of spiritual support for her. If you recognize the unique dignity you possess as head of the household, if you appreciate your vocation as a father and husband makes you the head of the household, what it really means is you are first in serving to the last degree all the needs of your family. Help her to find time for daily prayer, alone or with you and the children. Do not forget to pray for her. Ask the good God to shower her with the grace she needs to fulfill her vocation to marriage and motherhood and you can depend on his response in providing her with what she needs. Teach your children to intercede for her in their daily prayer life as they learn from your example.

Ask yourself: Do I pray for my wife daily and support her spiritually, or do I allow other family matters to take precedence over her spiritual needs?

Be on her side. If you disagree with any of your wife's parenting decisions, make certain you speak with her privately, not in front of the children and definitely not in the heat of a family crisis. Children need to learn that you will always back up their mother's authority. If you treat your wife with love and respect and insist your children do the same, you set her up to be the most effective mother she can be. With your support, even toddlers can be taught to respect boundaries in a way your wife might not think about. Teach them table manners, for example, and never tolerate teens who are disrespectful and take them to task when the occasion arises. Nothing gives a mother greater confidence in her authority and self-worth than to hear her husband demand that unruly children show her respect.

Ask yourself: Do I protect my wife, even from our children when they disrespect her or abuse her goodwill? Or am I content to let her fend for herself?

Say the words. You might think your wife knows you appreciate her, but hearing those words from you will renew her confidence and inspire her toward greater heights of motherly love. Be specific and let your children

hear you praise her: "I think its amazing the way you are able to get up at night and care for the baby." Or: "I know what a sacrifice it is for you to drive the children to basketball when I cannot. Thanks for doing it."

Ask yourself: Do I verbalize admiration and appreciation for my wife's efforts as a mother, or do I assume she already knows what I think?

Husbands, the joy that your wife finds in motherhood will have a ripple effect that can bless the entire family. One of the greatest gifts you can give your children and yourself is a happy home by loving your wife and your children's mother and making certain the entire family knows it. Make a commitment to give that priceless gift to your family - starting today!



God's Children

We are God's children now; what we shall later be has not yet been revealed

1 John 3: 2.

Children of God; heirs to the kingdom...These terms are familiar, but sadly unreal. In our every day experiences, especially in times of darkness and overwhelming imperfection, it is difficult to believe we are of God, destined for God, his inheritance, because Christ has won victory for us and paying the price for our freedom from the devil and sin.

Weighed down by things of the earth – illness perhaps, or big bills, awkward relationships, demeaning jobs – it is easier to see ourselves as people of the earth easier recalling the warning of our Creator after the sin of Adam and Eve: “Remember man, you are dust and to dust you shall return.”

As we honestly practice some introspection, there seems so little divine about ourselves or about our activities. But the Evangelist John reminds us that we already are the children of God, whether we believe it or not, whether we experience God our heavenly Father as a loving and devoted divine parent or not. We are not children of God because of our own heroic efforts at sanctity, but because the God who has called us into being has also lavished his love on us and it is irrevocable.

In our baptism, the God who created us and from whom we alienate ourselves proclaims a restoration between us. The saints recognized this. It was not their divine activity that made them holy; it was God's grace being utilized and correctly appropriated. They made themselves usable to our heavenly Father whom they eagerly served. They allowed the grace and blessing of heaven to enlarge itself within themselves and become manifest with their cooperation.

As a manifestation of God's great love, all who graduated to sanctity were able to do God's work because they first learned to accept God's great love and to recognize its presence in their lives. This became the inspiration which led to the conviction of being a favored child of God. Then the enjoyment of being a child of God begins and reaches fruition: becoming always aware of the myriad blessings of which we are recipients.

May we too, learn to recognize this love which exhilarates the soul since then we are brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ our Saviour!



HOSEA

Author—The prophet Hosea (commemorated October 17) is traditionally considered the author of this work. He was of the tribe of Issachar and his name means “salvation” or “deliverance.”

Date—Hosea’s prophecy occurred about 750 BC, during the reign of Jeroboam II (786–746) and also after that king’s death.

Major Theme—*God’s love and faithfulness to His people.* Hosea’s marital experience is used as a parable in the book, illustrated by his faithfulness to his unfaithful wife Gomer. Hosea is also one of the prophets who emphasize the importance of knowing God (6:6) in steadfast love, instead of substituting vain and empty sacrifices and burnt offerings to come into His presence.

Background—Hosea was a contemporary of the prophets Amos (in the Northern Kingdom of Israel) and Isaiah and Micah (in the Southern Kingdom of Judah). His prophecy was directed to the Northern Kingdom. The time of Hosea was marked by great material prosperity but also national anxiety in Israel. The people in their complacency and insecurity turned to the gods of the pagans (primarily Baal and Ashtoreth) for guidance. Hosea saw these pagan religions as the exact opposite of God’s revelation to His people. Hosea saw it as his calling to bring wayward Israel back to its covenant with the Lord.

Outline

I. Introduction: Author and Time of the Prophecy (1:1)

II. Hosea and Gomer as Images of God’s Dealings with Unfaithful Israel (1:2–3:5)

A. The children as signs (1:2–2:1)

B. The unfaithful wife—Gomer and Israel (2:2–3:5)

III. God’s Faithfulness and Israel’s Unfaithfulness (4:1–14:10)

A. Israel’s unfaithfulness (4:1–6:3)

B. Israel’s punishment (6:4–10:15)

C. The compassionate and faithful love of God (11:1–14:10)

Thirty Fifth Sunday

As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting in the tax collector's place and said to him, "Follow me!"

Matthew 9: 9, 10.

Because the Resurrection this year is so late, some five week's after the Western celebration, additional gospel narratives are added to the Sunday's which are created in preparation. We will celebrate the triumphal victory of the Lord over death on the very last day it can be liturgically celebrated, May 5. Today's gospel prescription is from the Sixteenth Sunday so we will meditate on the call of the apostle who wrote the very first gospel, St. Matthew the Evangelist.

When our Lord began his public life He worked alone. This was no disadvantage since He could have accomplished his mission whatever manner He best chose. He selected his apostles and disciples because He willed to have laborers continue his work after He returned to the eternal Father. They were chosen from different ranks and occupations, but none were really qualified for the mission for which they were chosen. Regardless of our preparation, formation or education, how can we really ever be ready to teach in his name? Most of them were relatively illiterate, ordinary men with all the ordinary human weaknesses, yet Christ adequately equipped them for their task by means of grace, by means of exposure to his person and example and by actually infecting them with the blessed germ of eagerness to teach in his name. He modeled their personalities in spite of themselves, and scoured their hearts and souls into heroic stature as eventual saints. Out of raw stone, He sculpted them into appealing works of spiritual art. This transformation is perhaps one of his greatest miracles, that out of so little to begin with, He created so much.

After healing the paralytic, Christ left the noise and tumult of Capharnaum for the more peaceful calm and solitude of the nearby seashore. As usual, a large crowd followed him. As He walked down to the waters of the sea, He passed by a tax collector seated in his customary booth. His name was Matthew. His duty probably was to collect the custom tax for the boats on Lake Gennesareth. SS. Mark and Luke identify him as Levi. Having two names, however, was not uncommon among the Jews, as it is even today among us as believers in Jesus Christ.

Roman tax collectors were called publicans, an office of high honor in Rome. They usually hired subordinates, who generally were also called publicans. Both publicans and their hirelings were hated by the Jews not only because they collected exorbitant taxes, but because they represented imperial pagan Rome which dominated and subjugated so called religious Jews, the Chosen People of God. But the Jews never thought of themselves as deserving the punishment because of their gross lack of faith over the centuries. These oppressors of the religious minority were many times nonconformist Jews, non-believing Jews and Matthew apparently was one of them. They saw an opportunity in reality and took advantage of it.

As the Lord approaches Matthew, He speaks plainly to him, looking him in the eye, showing deep and profound seriousness, saying "Follow me." There is no doubt that Matthew knew of Jesus and his extraordinary miracles and signs which were performed in the region of Capernaum, but there is nothing specific, no contrast, no conditions in the summons of the Lord. He simply invited him to follow him. Matthew, in turn, simply responds to this stranger's invitation without any question. It is impelling, he thinks to himself. He must answer. He must follow. He cannot sit there and remain indifferently in his life long vocation. There can be but one answer to this innocent encounter. There is no weighing of alternatives, no doubt about the correctness of response.

The affirmation of divine grace, the compelling eagerness to follow in God's footsteps, although unknown and not understood by Matthew, is being witnessed. Heavenly grace penetrates every disposed human heart and allows it to rise above its surroundings. It makes up for lack of understanding. Amid the sordid cares of the tax collector's duties, Christ finds an apostle who will play an important part in the design of his divine mission among us.

After being called, Levi decides a celebration is in order. He therefore prepares a banquet feast and invites his friends, some of whom are fellow publicans, nonconformist Jews, and probably other known rogues, local politicians and wanna-bes, pagan Gentiles, as well as some real orthodox Jewish scribes and Pharisees. Our Lord comes and sits with them.

“Why does your Master eat with publicans and sinners?” the Pharisees are quick to notice and ask and question.

Jesus is of course, very aware of their complaint and says, “It is not the healthy who need a physician...I have come to call sinners, not the just.” Our Lord here identifies himself as the Great Physician, as the Saviour of the World. The world is sick, continues to be sick, and He came to heal it. He comes to heal it. He did not imply by his answer that anyone present at the banquet, or elsewhere for that matter, was not in need of his healing power, because we all are. If anything, it is somewhat of a tacit rebuke to the falsity of self-righteousness of the pharisees including the scribes, publicans. His mission is above social convention and Jewish elitism. A believer in name only is of no value. All of us are sinners, including the seemingly very best at that dinner reception. All equally need the vocation of Christ in their lives.

Considering his position as a publican, the chosen disciple, Matthew who became in time, the evangelist, to writer of the good news of salvation, was probably wealthy and had an education surpassing and far superior to all the rest of the original twelve apostles. He has enduring the distinct honor of being not only the first evangelist called, but the Evangelist who wrote the first gospel, the actual story of the Savior among us. It is the most important book of the New Testament. Its primary object is to prove that Jesus is the Messiah foretold in the Old Testament, who comes to fulfill the Jewish law and the prophets by establishing his Messianic kingdom on earth, our blessed Church. It also shows the unbelieving Jews that by their sin, the unbelief, of their prejudice, their misunderstanding and miscalculation, by their rejection of the Messiah, they would be excluded as a nation from the Messianic promise that we, who are not Jews, in body, only in spirit and soul would be blessed forever by our inclusion in the Body and Bride of the Lord if we take seriously our heavenly vocation in living the tenets of the Lord embodied in Matthew’s gospel. This grace, this blessing, St. Matthew writes is now all inclusive, even for us who were originally pagan gentiles.

It is generally believed that St. Matthew preached in Judea. Beyond this we have no reliable evidence as to where he journeyed or how he died. Legend says he suffered a martyr’s death in Ethiopia, thus introducing the so-called dark continent to the light of salvation long before present day Moslems came and martyred his converts and their progeny. Our blessed Church honors his memory and celebrates his feast day on November 16.

A TRUE CHAMPION OF THE EARLY CHURCH

*M*any of us have the false impression that once the Christian Church survived the terrible days of Roman persecution and became the state religion of the Empire, there was a "happily ever after" atmosphere in which the Church existed. Nothing could be further from the truth! For centuries the Church experienced times of great unrest, brought about by those who attempted to introduce false teachings into her dogma. There were extended periods when the heretics held the upper hand, with even emperors and patriarchs falling prey to theological falsehoods.

It was during such a time that MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR served the Church. Born in Constantinople in 580 AD, Maximus served as a high-ranking official in the court of Emperor Heraclius. When he realized that the Heraclius was corrupted by the Monothelite heresy, which taught that Christ had only a Divine Will, Maximus resigned from his position and became a monk; committing himself to defending the Church's true teaching as to Who Christ was -- as set down by the Nicene Creed. He traveled around the Empire, imploring the faithful to believe in the doctrine of Jesus Christ having two natures and two wills. He wrote extensively on this issue, carefully explaining the theological reasoning behind this teaching. Even though several local councils condemned Monothelitism, the controversy over the heresy continued to rage for decades, largely because the Emperor Constans II was one of its ardent followers. He had Maximus arrested and imprisoned in 654 AD. His tongue was cut out and his right hand severed, so that he could no longer speak nor write. Maximus was condemned to exile for life in Scythia, where he died in 662 AD. The Monothelite heresy was ultimately condemned by the 6th Ecumenical Council in 681 AD. The Council also exonerated Maximus and declared him to be a "Father of the Church."