



Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Sunday of Orthodoxy

February 21, 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

+++ Please join us Friday evening at 7: 30 PM for the Presanctified Liturgy. Confessions are heard prior to and after the celebration.

+++ This Saturday is the second All Souls' Day. The Divine Liturgy and Memorial Service are celebrated at 9:00 AM. Please come and join us in prayer and praise of our God.

+++ A special meditative booklet of homilies preached a while back for the spiritual enrichment of our faithful during this holy season is distributed today. We pray it is a blessing for our parishioners.

+++ 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.

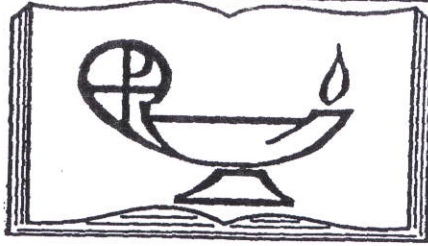
+++ We offer thanks to the Blessed Trinity for inspiring generosity in the souls of our faithful and the blessing of abundant grace in our midst with the offering received this past week-end: Tithe Offering, \$5,000.00; Candles, \$1,000.00; Food Coupons, \$1,000.00; Kitchen, \$1,000.00; Holyday, \$1,000.00; Great Fast Self Denial, \$1,000.00; Energy, \$1,000.00; Pennies From Heaven, \$1,000.00; Diocesan Dues, \$1,000.00; Parish Dues, \$1,000.00, for a total of \$10,000.00. 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, Robert Gorbich, 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 \$1,000.00 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 \$1,000.00. 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.

LORD



TEACH
US

Fasting

I began to weep and continued mourning for several days; I fasted and prayed before the God of heaven Nehemiah 1: 4.

Why do we fast and you do not see it? Afflict ourselves and you take no note of it?...Would that today you might fast so as to make your voice heard on high Isaiah 58: 3, 4!

Say to the people of the land and to the priests: When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and in the seventh month these seventy years, was it really for me that you fasted? And when you were eating and drinking, was it not for yourselves that you ate, and for yourselves that you drank Zechariah 7: 5, 6?

On one occasion, while they were engaged in the liturgy of the Lord and were fasting, the Holy Spirit spoke to them...Then after they had fasted and prayed, they imposed hands on them and sent them off Acts of the Apostles 13: 2, 3.

When you fast, see to it that you groom your hair and wash your face. In that way no one can see you are fasting but your Father who is hidden and your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you Matthew 6: 17, 18.

But I, when they were ill, put on sackcloth; I afflicted myself with fasting and poured forth prayers within my bosom as though it were a friend of mine, or a brother, I went about; like one bewailing a mother, I was bowed down in mourning Psalms 35: 13, 14.

You are free to eat from any of the trees of the garden except the tree of knowledge of good and evil. From that tree you shall not eat; the moment you eat from it you are surely doomed to die Genesis 2: 16, 17.

The Great Fast

The idea of forty days of the Great Fast calls on an instinct that is as old as the Chosen People spending forty years wandering in the desert to ready themselves for worthy participation before they entered it, in the blessings of the Promised Land. It also is as natural as a bride and groom investing months getting ready for their wedding. Anything considered worthwhile has to be prepared for. The Church has simply placed this preparatory logic at the service of the most sacred event of all, the glorious Resurrection of Jesus which is a gift far greater than the Promised Land. It is a covenant, pledging a new way of life, eternal and never ending that meets our dignity as created in God's image.

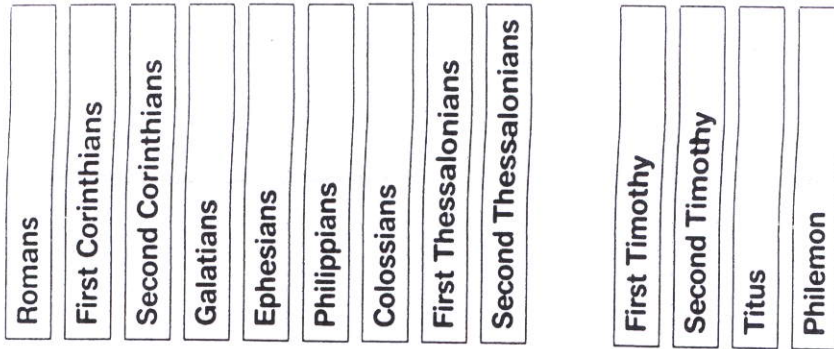
We make a special point of denying ourselves and fasting, investing more time and effort in meditation, worship and prayer in order to serve others and to develop a closer union with our heavenly Father. All the discipline of the Great Fast is meant to be appreciative, to understand what love and service really mean, by thinking about Christ's realistic loving methodology and approach to life as superior to a simply mundane existence on earth. It is a time for truthful living by placing and putting love and service into action.

This celebration and participation in the Great Fast can be different from any you have known before. It can be a time to enter the world of the gospels and meet and encounter the Jesus whose message promises that we can live and live abundantly. As we read and meditate on and pray about the prescribed readings each day, we journey with Jesus through the villages and cities of Israel. As we follow in his footsteps and listen to his conversations, we will find insights and courage that will shape us so that our reactions to life's trials will be the same as his.

We thus enter into and place ourselves at the side of the Lord, in his company. From this type of intimate involvement, we will find our faith in God and relationships with others becomes better than before. We are enriched by the episodes of encouragement and perseverance in faith commitment. They are springboards, helping us learn more about Christ, ourselves and our every day life. They deepen our understanding and help make our lives full.

Philippians

Letters by Paul



Letters to: Churches

Individuals

Purpose/Theme:

Another "prison epistle," this brief but powerful letter covers a number of issues, with the underlying theme of the importance of joyful faithfulness in the Christian walk, even in the face of suffering.

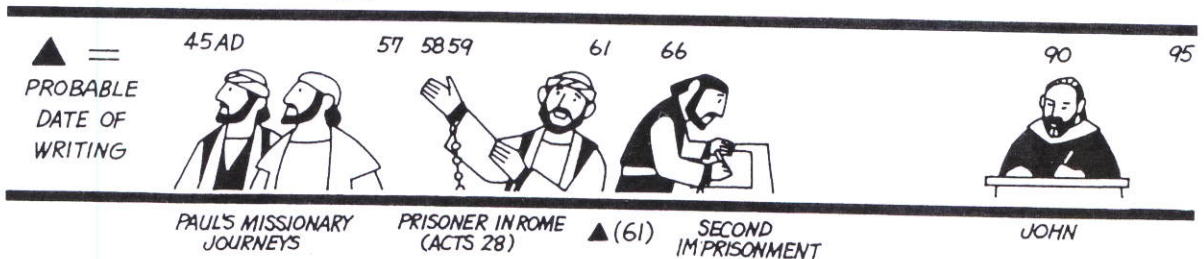
Key Verses:

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (4:6,7).

Key Thoughts:

- ☐ God can make negatives turn out positive (Philippians 1:12-19)
- ☐ The humiliation of Christ as an example (Philippians 2:5-9)
- ☐ The relative unimportance of fleshly achievement (Philippians 3:1-11)

When Events Happened

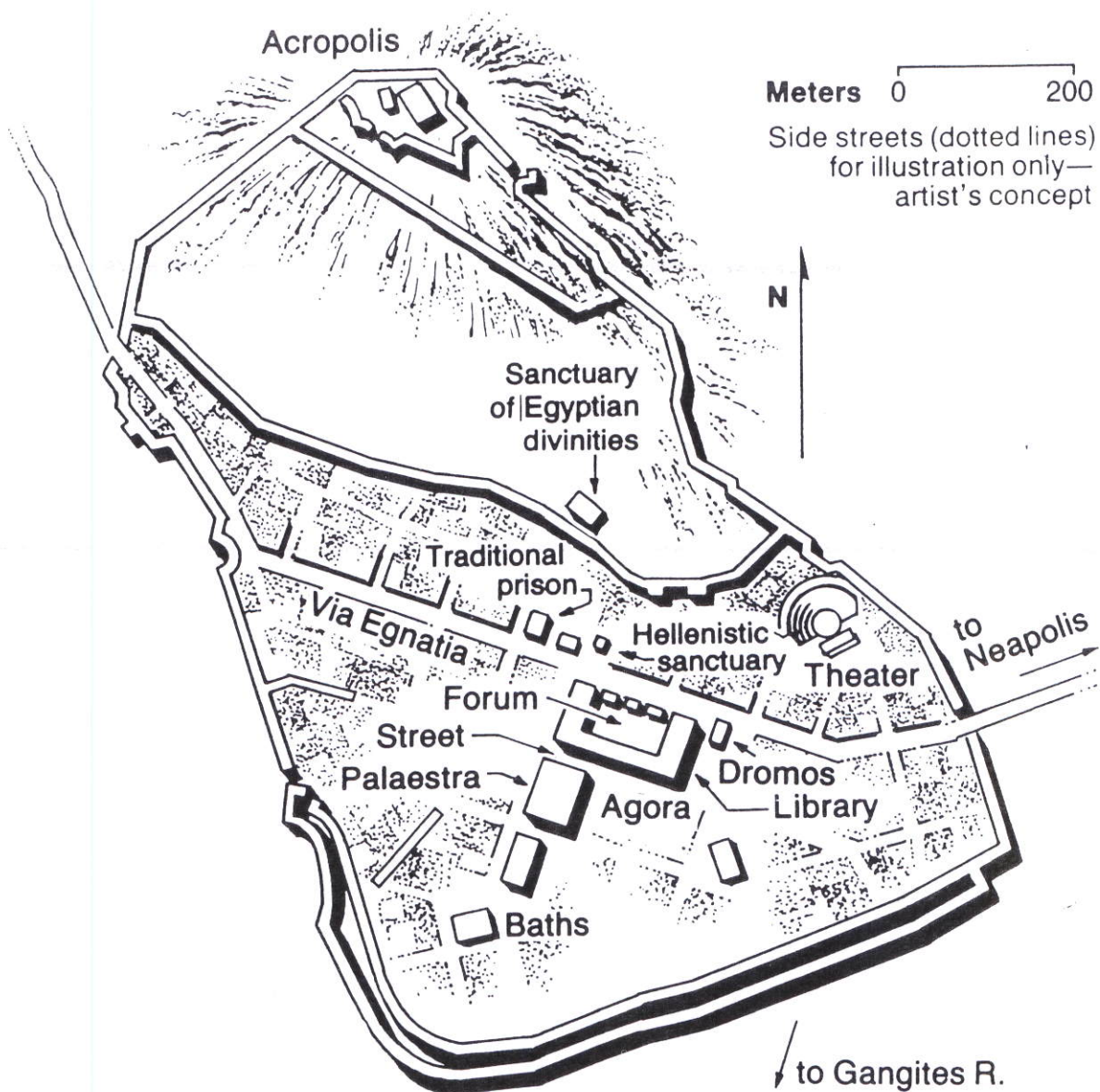


Philippi in the Time of Paul

The Roman colony of Philippi (*Colonia Augusta Julia Philippensis*) was an important city in Macedonia, located on the main highway leading from the eastern provinces to Rome. This road, the Via Egnatia, bisected the city's forum and was the chief cause of its prosperity and political importance. Ten miles distant on the coast was Neapolis, the place where Paul landed after sailing from Troas, in response to the Macedonian vision.

As a prominent city of the gold-producing region of Macedonia, Philippi had a proud history. Named originally after Philip II, the father of Alexander the Great, the city was later honored with the name of Julius Caesar and Augustus. Many Italian settlers from the legions swelled the ranks of citizens and made Philippi vigorous and polyglot. It grew from a small settlement to a city of dignity and privilege. Among its highest honors was the *ius Italicum*, by which it enjoyed rights legally equivalent to those of Italian cities.

Ruins of the theater, the acropolis, the forum, the baths, and the western commemorative arch mentioned as the "gate" of the city in Ac 16:13 have been found. A little farther beyond the arch at the Gangites River is the place where Paul addressed some God-fearing women and where Lydia was converted.



THE EPISTLE LESSON

Prescribed to be read at all Divine Liturgies and varied other services of the Church, the epistle lesson is worthy of our attention and meditation. The word itself is rather exciting and personal because it remains a letter of important message, an address in response to the particular needs of people. Containing as they do intimate and invigorating advice and challenging material for believers to consider and respond to, they are coordinated with the gospel prescribed reading to provide a full and notable learning experience for gathered worshippers. Many times believers in the pew do not pay as much attention to the epistle reading as they accord the gospel narrative being chanted.

Throughout the liturgical year, the Church has attempted to glean from the writings of the apostles notable lessons to enhance particular celebrations and themes which advance the cause of salvation. Certainly the apostles in spreading the gospel message encountered an entire variety of circumstances and difficulties as well as blessings which can be of benefit to believers at all times. Thus history is repeated and believers in whatever time and place can relive, through the written experience of ancient inspired writers, precisely the opportunities they face in life and be victorious in responding to them because of the encouraging words of the epistle writer.

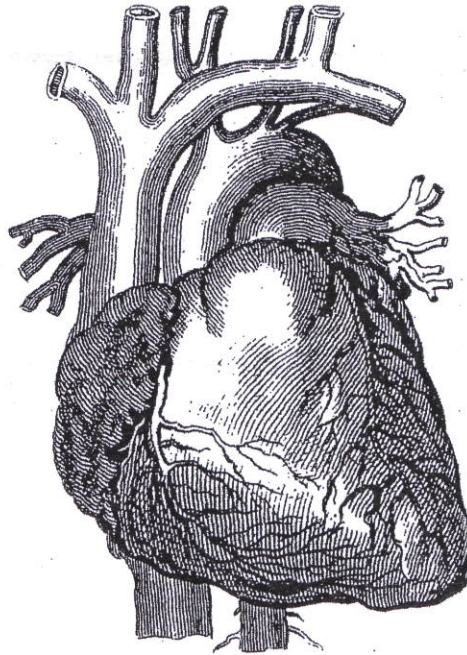
This glad news, these words of encouragement and solace, these words of learning and challenge need to be reconsidered more closely by believers in the pews. The message of Christ learned around the capital city of Jerusalem, then, goes out in rippled effect to the world. The voice and mind as well as heart and soul of the Son of God reverberates in the refined thinking of the apostles who are confirmed in faith by the Holy Spirit. The very self-same message of Christ comes to us through the eager eyes and receptive ears of his followers. It assists in making us participants as they were, in the same glorious gift of eternal life. The engaging and inviting words of the epistles show us we too can overcome as did the apostles, as did those who were privileged to be in his presence. The epistles make us ready listeners of the richness of his life-giving message.

We can just imagine in listening to them as we meditate on their prodigious richness, the particular joy in the hearts of the early recipients in Corinth, in Ephesus, in Philippi when the papyrus scrolls were delivered them by a faithful intermediary. How eager they must have been to gather the local faith community to sit quietly and listen as their message grew roots in their hearts and souls.

Because the human heart is the lifespring of every man, it is generally thought to be the seat of man's emotions, expressing the fact that with all his being, man should belong to God, intellectually, emotionally, spiritually.

But the emotions and feelings of man must be rooted in and disciplined by the mind, the intellect grounded in the faith of Jesus Christ.

Feelings alone, which continually change are not the guide of man's lifestyle.



*More torturous than all else is the human heart,
beyond remedy; who can understand it?*

Jeremiah 17: 9.

The fool says in his heart, there is no God

Psalms 14: 1; 53: 1.

*With close custody guard your heart,
for in it are the sources of life*

Proverbs 4: 23.

WISDOM! BE ATTENTIVE

We bow before Your sacred image, O gracious Lord, and beg forgiveness for our offenses, O Christ our God; for You, of Your own will, deigned to ascend the Cross in Your human nature to deliver from bondage to the enemy those whom You created. Wherefore we gratefully cry out to You: "Through Your coming to save the world, O Saviour, You have filled all with joy". Troparion, Sunday of the Holy Images.

O Mother of God, through you in the Incarnation, the indescribable Word of God became describable, for through the divine goodness the Word spoken from eternity became an Image. May we who believe in salvation clothe ourselves with the same Image both in word and deed Kontakion, Sunday of the Holy Images.

Blessed are You and worthy of praise, O Lord God of our fathers, and glorious forever is Your Name. Prokimenon, Sunday of the Holy Images.

In you, O Woman, full of grace, the angelic choirs and the human race - all creation rejoices. In you, O sanctified Temple, mystical Paradise and Glory of virgins, He Who is our God from before all ages became a child. For He made your womb into a throne and made it greater than the heavens. In you, O Woman full of grace, all creation rejoices. Praise be to you! Hymn Instead of "It is Truly Proper", Sunday of the Holy Images.

In truth, the Church of Christ is adorned with the finest ornament by the holy icons of Christ our Saviour, of the Holy Mother of God and of all the glorified saints. In keeping the icon of Christ which we praise and venerate, we do not risk being led astray. May those who do not believe this be put to confusion. For it is our kneeling before the incarnate Son and the veneration of His icon that is a glory for us Vesper Hymn, Sunday of the Holy Images.

Sunday Of Orthodoxy

Manifestation of Faith

People and Priest recite Together:

As the Prophets beheld, as the Apostles have taught,
As the Church has received, as the Teachers have dogmatized,
As the Universe has agreed, as Grace has shown forth,
As Truth has revealed, as Falsehood has been dissolved,
As Wisdom has presented, as Christ awarded,

Thus we declare, thus we assert,
Thus we preach Christ our True God,
 and Honor His Saints in Words, in Writings,
In Thoughts, in Sacrifices, In Churches, in Holy Icons,
On the one hand worshipping and reverencing Christ
 as God and Lord
And on the other, honoring the Saints as True Servants of the
 same Lord of All, and accordingly offering them veneration.

This is the Faith of the Apostles!
This is the Faith of the Fathers!
This is the Faith of the Orthodox!
This is the Faith which has established the Universe.

Fraternally and paternally we declare and say concerning those who faithfully preached and fought for the glory and honor of Godliness: pious rulers, holy patriarchs, bishops, priests, monastics, teachers, martyrs and confessors who lived and fought for the Body of Christ and the glory of Orthodoxy. May the merciful Lord create for them blessed repose and Eternal Memory!

Eternal Memory!

Asking God, who has prepared and strengthened them to preach, fight, and die for the sake of the faith, to make us imitators of their holy lives to the end, may we be deemed worthy to have our petition received, through the grace and compassion of the great and supreme High Priest, Christ our true God, through the intercessions of the most holy, pure, blessed, and glorified Theotokos and ever-Virgin Mary, the Holy Angels, and all the saints. Amen.

The people then sing:

Who is so great as our God;
You are the God who creates miracles, You are the God who creates miracles,
You are the God who creates miracles!

REPRESENTING THE DIFFICULTY OF BEING CHRISTIAN

The 1st Sunday of the Great Fast is commonly referred to as "Orthodoxy Sunday." It commemorates the Church's victory over the iconoclasts, who wanted to forbid the use and veneration of holy icons. But why did this great controversy develop anyway, and why did it cause division among believers for so long -- over 100 years?

It all began with the Byzantine Emperor Leo III, who ruled from 717 AD to 741 AD. Early in his reign, Leo proved to be a marvelous military strategist, defending Constantinople from a Muslim siege that threatened to crumble the government. Soon, however, the Emperor attempted to impose his will upon the Church as well. Under the guise of "religious reform," Leo issued a series of edicts forbidding the use of icons in worship. In reality, it appears that the Emperor and his followers were bothered by the lifestyle represented by those depicted in sacred images. It was a difficult existence for our Lord, His Blessed Mother and His saints. Removing icons would, in effect, remove the reminders of the sacrifices required of those who professed to be Christians. The Emperor's edicts were met with much opposition, and the defenders of the Faith were subjected to severe persecution. Upon his death, Leo's successors carried on his heretical policies. The controversy was temporarily resolved at the 7th Ecumenical Council in Nicea in 787 AD. The Holy Fathers declared that the veneration of icons was not "idol worship" as some maintained, pointing out that glory was given to who was represented on an icon, not on the object itself. Iconoclasm, however, would not die quietly. It was not until the 1st Sunday of Lent in 842 AD that the "orthodox" position on icons finally triumphed.