

Η ΔΙΑ

ΦΙΛΟΘΕΗ  
Η ΑΘΗΝΑΙΑ.

# Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Sunday of Pharisee & Publican

February 24, 2013

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

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

+++ 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, \$223.00; Candles, \$19.00; Parish Dues, \$50.00; Kitchen, \$84.00; Diocesan Dues, \$65.00; Energy, \$20.00, for a total of \$461.00. 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, Pani Lucas, Eleni Pallas, Anna Zacharyczuk, Marilyn Korba, Eleanor Korba, Michael George, Maria Garcia 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 **\$1694.00** 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 \$5550.00 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.**

+++ **The Luncheon prior to the Great Fast will be held after the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, March 10 and will be followed by Forgiveness Vespers. The Food Listing Sheet is available today.**

+++ **Please pray the Lord our God grants us an enrichment of our spiritual lives for his glory.**

+++ **The next Pirohi Sale will this Saturday, March 2 and the Bake Sale will be March 15 and 16. Preparations will be made Thursday morning at 7:00 AM. Please secure orders by Wednesday.**

+++ **May all glory, adoration and worship be accorded our God in the Holy Trinity by all the faithful of our parish with one mind, one soul and one heart each day of the week!**



## Strength

*Honor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary Psalms 96: 6.*

*O my strength, I will watch for you, for you, O God are my fortress Psalms 59: 9.*

*You are their glorious strength. Our power is based on your favor Psalms 89: 17.*

*The joy of the Lord is your strength Nehemiah 8: 10.*

*The Lord God is my strength, and he will give me the speed of a deer and bring me safely over the mountains Habakkuk 3: 19.*

*Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you, who walk in the light of your presence, O Lord. They rejoice in your name all day long; they exult in your righteousness. For you are their glory and strength and by your favor they exalt your horn Psalms 89: 15 – 17.*

*Have you no knowledge of it? Has it not come to your ears? The eternal God, the Lord, the Maker of the ends of the earth, is never feeble or tired; there is no searching out of his wisdom. He gives power to the feeble, increasing the strength of him who has no force. Even the young men will become feeble and tired, and the best of them will come to the end of his strength; but those who are waiting for the Lord will have new strength, they will get wings like eagles, running, they will not be tired, and walking, they will have no weariness Isaiah 40: 28 – 31.*

*The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life, of whom shall I be afraid Psalms 27: 1?*

# WISDOM! BE ATTENTIVE

*Let us bring to the Lord the sighs of the Publican and as sinner let us approach the Lord. He desires the salvation of all mankind; He grants forgiveness to all who repent. For us He became man while remaining God, co-eternal with the Father. Kontakion, Sunday of the Pharisee and Publican.*

*The Pharisee, overcome with his pride, and the Publican, bent down in repentance, came before You, the only Lord: the first trusted in himself and was deprived of Your blessings; the other spoke but a few words and received Your blessings in abundance. Behold my tears and strengthen me, O Christ our God, for You are indeed the Lover of mankind. Vesper Hymn, Sunday of the Pharisee and Publican.*

*Open to me the doors of repentance, O Giver of life. As we worship in your temple this morning, teach us how to purify the temples of our bodies, and in Your compassion, purify me by the goodness of Your mercies. Matins Hymn, Sunday of the Pharisee and Publican.*

*In parables Christ invites us to correct our life. He raises up the Publican in his humility and shows us how the Pharisee was brought down by his vanity. Seeing the dignity to which the humble are raised and the deep abyss into which the proud fall, let us imitate the virtue of the Publican and despise the sins of the Pharisee. Vain pretensions deprive us of every good deed, while humility purifies us of every evil. O faithful, let us embrace the ways of humility and totally despise the ways of vainglory. Wishing to find humility in the hearts of His disciples, the King of the universe charged them to imitate the Publican and his humble sighs for pardon. I sigh as the Publican, O Lord, and my groaning does not cease. Thus do I find the path to Your heart. Have mercy on me who now seeks to live in humility. Matins Hymn, Sunday of the Pharisee and Publican.*

*Vainglory brings to nothing both justice and its treasures, while humility scatters a multitude of passions. O Saviour, grant that we may imitate the Publican. O Faithful, let us vie with each other in zeal, and let us seek to do good. Let us live together in humility, and may our hearts sigh with tears and prayer so that we may obtain forgiveness from God. Matins Hymn, Sunday of the Pharisee and Publican.*

*Raised up by his humility, the Publican who formerly lamented now was justified for having said: Lord be merciful to me a sinner. He is the one whom we imitate from the abyss into which our hearts have driven us. From the depth of our heart we say, Spare us for we are sinners, O Saviour, Who alone loves mankind. The Word has shown us the best path to exaltation; it is the way of humility. For He Himself was lowered to take the form of a servant. By following His humility, we shall be exalted. Matins Hymn, Sunday of the Pharisee and Publican*

## Pharisee & Publican

There is an aspect of prayer which may certainly elude so many of us. So we must say, O Lord, when we experience our own finitude, the weakness of our flesh, the uncertainty of the future, the overwhelming feeling of our fragility, we turn to you in prayer to ask NOT for a miracle but for patience, not for freedom from suffering, but for the strength to bear it. That is what the Pharisee overlooked and sadly ignored in his own life.

Perhaps he never had the consolation of hearing from the very lips of the Saviour, *I have told you all this so that you may find peace in me. In the world you will have trouble, but be brave, I have conquered the world* John 16: 33.

Our mission as devoted followers of the Lord demands that we go as Jesus went. When there were services in the temple or the local synagogue, our Lord was present. Scripture attests to it that both his parents provided him with an example to follow in worship. They were where they were supposed to be when they were supposed to be there. Thus if we do what is expected of a believer, of a disciple, of a follower of the Lord, we will more avidly expect our faith to be enriched and anticipate without question that He will do for us what He promises, what we expect of him as our God and Saviour. We have to be disposed to receive because He is always disposed to share with us. If we are luke-warm, to say the least, in fulfilling his expectations of us, we are not going to be fervent in our expectation of Godly response from him.

Our original and fundamental mission as believers is to be present when He is present for us. That means every Sunday, every holy day without exception. And it often amazes me when people say they are too sick, or not feeling up to it to come into his presence! There is no more appropriate time than when we are feeling out of sorts, when we are ill, when we are overwhelmed, to want the presence of Christ in our living! What about the stooped-over lady who was looking for a cure? What about the blind man, the one who had leprosy, the one who needed assistance to be pushed into the pool at Siloam?

The best place, the ideal place, the only place for us to want to be when we are out of sorts is in the presence of our God! What good will a restful bed do without the presence of Christ? That is the kind of faith we need to manifest, that is the kind of mission we need to make public. That is the sentiment of heart and soul that must be exhibited if we want to save our souls. Since our God cannot save us without us, we

have to have more eagerness, an empowered response to his first shown love. We have to have at least as much concern to save ourselves as He does! If it is too dark outside for us to overcome and praise our God, then why do we need a God? If God is not going to protect us, is not going to strengthen and affirm us, is not going to make up what is lacking in us to glorify his name, then why do we need a God? If we are afraid of driving in the dark, we do not place ourselves in his care! If we are frightened something bad is going to happen to us, then we ought to remind ourselves of the affirmation of St. Paul who loudly and dramatically announced, *The man who observes the day does so to honor the Lord... None of us lives as his own master and none of us dies as his own master. While we live we are responsible to the Lord and when we die we die as his servants. Both in life and in death we belong to the Lord. That is why Christ died and came to life again that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living* Romans 14: 7 - 9.

We have evening liturgies here so that all have an opportunity to worship, even those who are employed and might otherwise not be able to come and thus be deprived of God's blessing if they are celebrated during the day. We have people in our parish who do not know what a holyday Liturgy is. So that no one have an excuse their spiritual needs are not being met, we make available heavenly worship for all. Do you think it is easy for me to drive 45 minutes or an hour here, celebrate and then drive home again? All I ask of the Lord is to provide me with the grace to be able to celebrate in his honor and for his glory. Thus whatever problems I encounter because of age or whatever, are overcome and I do what He expects of me. In fulfilling my personal mission as a priest of Jesus Christ, I am encouraged by words of our Saviour: *If one of you had a servant plowing or herding sheep and he came in from the fields, would you say to him, 'Come and sit down at table? Would you not rather say, 'Prepare my supper. Put on you apron and wait on me while I eat and drink; you can eat and drink afterward'? Would he be grateful to the servant who was only carrying out his orders? It is quite the same with you who hear me. When you have done all you have been commanded to do, say, 'We are useless servants. We have done no more than our duty'* Luke 17: 7 - 10.

The problem with the Pharisee is that He felt he was doing God a big favor coming to the temple and praying, even attempting to praise him with flowery words. The praise should have come from his activity, from his faith-filled actions because words are cheap and can be spitted out by anyone, particularly one who knows how to flatter. The mistake the Pharisee made is thinking our God is a dumb dumb, so desperate to hear good things falling even from evil lips that He accepts them joyfully.

The God of heaven requests the honor of our presence at his table every day of Sabbath and praise; every holyday. And of course we are all busy with our daily schedule, so do we muster up enough interest? Do we plan ahead with great anticipation? Do we share the excitement of our heart and soul with the special Meal of the living Body and Blood of the Saviour? Do we try to make the best impression for our gracious host, the Lord, God, Creator and Saviour of the universe?

By our words and lifestyle, do we join the repentant publican who glorifies the God of the universe with the sobering words of St. Paul in the Roman epistle, *...to God be glory forever* Romans 11: 36?

Today we are called upon to ask the Lord to say with our presence the words we cannot say with our lips. Help us to accept in trust what we cannot change by fear. Lord, permit the reassuring words you offered your disciples be ours today: *Be not afraid* Matthew 14:27, for I am with you always until the end of time. Be not afraid, entrust your entire life to me, for I am with you, no matter what!

Today we are called upon to remember that life is not meant to avoid pain and that to genuinely live and love means to accept the risk of suffering for the sake of the Lord! Above all, perhaps it is best for us to remember in our mission journey to eternity that our life is not a destiny, but a journey that leads to our rightful destiny in eternity. So we must be kept open to whatever destiny our God in heaven prepares for us. We know and see all around us that our God never takes away the joy of his children without preparing them for a more lasting and complete never-ending experience; He is with us, He is in us, the Lord abounds in those who express their need for him. This is the lesson we learn once and for all from the Pharisee. Our life is not our own; our life mission is true as St. Paul expressed it, to live for the sake of Jesus Christ our Saviour.

**BE A WINNER,**  
*Not a Whiner!*

Join our Great Fast Training Program!



## **Optina Monastery Prayer**

**My Lord, grant to me that with your peace I may greet all today brings to me.**

**Grant me grace to surrender myself completely to your holy will.**

**In every hour of this day instruct and guide me in all things.**

**Whatever tidings I may receive during this day, teach me to accept tranquilly in the firm belief that your holy will governs everything.**

**Govern my thoughts and feelings in all that I do and say.**

**When unforeseen things occur, let me not forget that all can be used for your glory.**

**Teach me to behave sincerely and reasonably toward everyone that I may bring confusion or sorrow to no one.**

**Bestow on me, Lord, strength to endure the fatigue of the day and to bear my part in its many events.**

**Gude mmy will aand teachme to pray, to belive, to hope, to suffer, to forgive and to love above all else.**

# Are You Faithful?

**How much time do you invest seeking after our heavenly Father and his will for your life?**

**Do you know that He is looking for someone who is faithful, trustworthy and reliable to his revealed Word in the life of his Body, our blessed Church?**

**In our parish church, you will learn**

Why faithfulness is required of God's people

How faithfulness can lead to promotion and financial increase in the temporal world.

How to be an asset to the kingdom of God.

The step-by-step process for developing fidelity to God.

Why faithfulness in little things is crucial.

How to honor our heavenly Father with all your life.

**Begin cultivating this vital facet of the fruit of the Spirit in your life today and experience the power of God working in your life!**

## His Own Cross

*They took Jesus, and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called the  
Place of the Skull  
John 19: 16, 17.*

There are many who might imagine that Jesus must have despised the heavy rugged wooden cross He was forced to carry. But then on thoughtful introspection, we come to the conclusion He didn't. The Cross would come to represent his great compassion and awesome victory. It would become a symbol that would span the ages to come; it would represent God's kingdom; it would be seen as our awesome banner. At the Resurrection, the instrument of humiliating defeat would become the image of ever lasting victory over death.

While He certainly knew at the time all the pieces of jewelry, icons, weapons of faith that would bear the image of the cross, even though he "...despised the shame" Hebrews 12: 2, Jesus knew the meaning and significance of what He was doing. Not only was the cross necessary, but because of this, He heartily embraced it as well as endured and conquered it.

Man has come in the life of the Body of Christ, to understand our regard and affection for the cross are not merely human. What the crucifiers meant for evil, our gracious God turned to good. "Even though you meant harm to me, God meant it for good, to achieve his present end, the survival of many people" Genesis 50: 20. This is its meaning in each of our lives because now even in the face of death we can face and find new life.

May our heavenly Father ever remind us of the sacrifice Christ Jesus made for us. May we offer unending thanks for the promise of eternal life because the cross always reminds us that God uses anything and everything for our good.

Eternal Father, give us a greater awareness of the greatness of Christ's sacrifice on the cross for each of us!

## Breaking the Silence

*I did not restrain my lips, as you, O Lord, know*

Psalms 40: 10.

If only the Pharisee had taken seriously and lived the words of the Old Testament Psalmist, "To do your will, O my God, is my delight, and your law is within my heart. I announced your justice in the vast assembly; I did not restrain my lips as you, O Lord, know. Your justice I kept not hidden within my heart; your faithfulness and your salvation I have spoken of. I have made no secret of your kindness and your truth in the vast assembly" Psalms 40: 10, 11.

A believer speaks of learning about the death of a dear friend who accidentally fell to his death from a seventeen story building. The survivor felt terrible shock and grief. Soon after, a deeper, more inconsolable sadness settled over him as he began to think about the life of his friend in eternity. Both had been good friends since high school. They talked many times about many things and cemented their relationship. Suddenly it occurred to the survivor the one thing he never shared with his now dead friend was Jesus Christ. Now it seemed that all they talked about for years did not matter at all. The one thing they did not talk about was all that mattered as thoughts recurred about the lost friend.

Today in these circumstances we are reminded we can sin just as seriously by omission as we can by commission, actually doing something evil and sinful. By omission; we mean failing to do the upright, the moral, the praiseworthy thing which can bring about huge blessings. If we see an opportunity to advance the cause of the Lord and neglect putting it into effect, we sin by omission. When we determine we can do something positive, but figure someone else can do it, we sin by omission. When circumstances are such that our contribution to the success of an endeavor will promote it and assure its far-reaching well-being, but we just do not follow through, our neglect is sinful.

For a follower of Christ, one of life's most haunting regrets is to realize that we never shared our faith in Jesus with others. We cannot alter the past. But we can ask our God to forgive our silence and turn our regret into determination to tell people within our reach about Christ and how He affects and inspires our life.

We ought to daily pray our Lord will grant us the courage to share the simple message of salvation and his love and goodness. To be bold in witnessing our love for Christ, think now of the best friend you can talk to about faith response to Christ's first shown love.

## PARABLES

Parables are stories in word-pictures, revealing spiritual truth. The Hebrew and Aramaic words for *parable* also mean "allegory," "riddle," or "proverb." The Scriptures, especially the Gospels, are filled with parables—images drawn from daily life in the world to represent and communicate the deep things of God. Parables give us glimpses of Him whose thoughts are not our thoughts and whose ways are not our ways (Is 55:8, 9).

The truth communicated by Jesus' parables, however, is not evident to all who hear them. The listener must have spiritual ears to hear, and even then not all have the same degree of understanding.

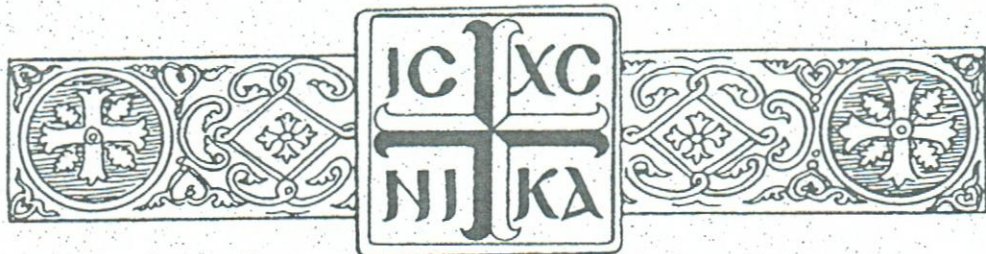
Thus, Jesus' statement that "to those who are outside, all things come in parables" (Mark 4:11) may be translated, "... all things come in riddles." Jesus' quotation of Isaiah 6:9, 10 (Mt 13:14, 15) does not mean He used parables to blind the people or to lead them to punishment. On the contrary, it demonstrates that the people are responsible for their own lack of receptivity: having grown dull and insensitive, they are unwilling to accept the message of the parables. As the mission of Isaiah in the Old Testament was to open the eyes of Israel to see the acts of God, so the parables of Jesus are intended to open the eyes of His hearers to the truth and lead them to produce the fruit of righteousness.

Parables challenge the hearer and call for faith to perceive the mysteries of the Kingdom. Insight into God's Kingdom does not come simply through an intellectual understanding of the parables. Spiritual enlightenment is essentially a communication of faith in the Person, words, and deeds of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The use of parables was known in Jewish culture long before Jesus (2Kg 12:1-4; 3Kg 21:35-42; Is 5:1-7). Jesus, however, brought the art of parables to perfection, relating aspects of the Kingdom and speaking of God Himself through vivid stories. His purpose was not only to reveal truth to those with hearts prepared. He wished to draw responsive hearts past the entrance and into the very reality of God's Kingdom which He proclaimed and inaugurated.

Among the familiar parables read on Sundays throughout the church year are those of the Sower (Lk 8:5-15); the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37); the Rich Man and His Crops (Lk 12:16-21); the Great Supper (Lk 14:16-24); the Talents (Mt 25:14-30); the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Lk 18:10-14); and the Prodigal Son (Lk 15:11-32).

In opening to us the door to the Kingdom of heaven, the parables help us to love God and to know Him, to understand and believe His grace, mercy, and forgiveness, and to order our lives according to His Holy Word.



# Eternal Significance

*Whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord...  
knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward*  
Colossians 3: 23, 24.

A friend and colleague of physicist Gerald Schroeder was celebrating his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday some years ago. As he thought about his age, he was struck with the realization that most of his life was behind him. For decades he had been helping farmers in developing countries. His efforts had kept thousands of people from starving, and this gave him a great deal of satisfaction. But now he longed for a sense of meaning much beyond our time-and-space world. He knew that although science has accomplished wonders in improving the quality of life for millions, it cannot provide anything to satisfy the actual hunger of the soul. So he began a search for inner peace.

Our Lord teaches us that to find eternal meaning and significance we must know God and live for him. A good deed done to gain the applause or attention of our fellow human beings has no ultimate value, but the same deed done with our heavenly Father in view brings eternal rewards (Matthew 6: 1 – 18). Even the smallest kindness like giving a cup of cold water has eternal value when done in his name and for his sake (Mark 9: 41).

Are you looking for, even longing for significance? The first step is to trust our Lord. Then do everything for him. If you do that, one day, you will stand before him, hear his commendation and receive the much sought after eternal reward. Only one life which soon will be past; only what's done for Christ will last!

## A "DAUGHTER" OF ATHENS BECOMES A "MOTHER" TO ALL!



**S**AIN T PHILOTHEI is recognized by our Church as being one of the most influential monastic saints. She was born into a wealthy, but devout Christian family in Athens in 1522. As was common in those days, Philothei -- whose given name was Revoula -- was given in marriage at the age of 12 to a man who proved to be cruel and abusive to her. She endured her suffering patiently, and when her husband died three years later, she sought solace and comfort in a life of prayer and fasting. Although she had inherited a substantial estate when her parents died, Philothei embraced the monastic way of life and used her fortune for works of charity. One of her first projects was overseeing the building of a women's monastery outside of Athens, dedicated to the Apostle Andrew.

Philothei not only cared for her fellow sisters in the monastery, she extended herself to help many women throughout the region that were being enslaved and oppressed by the Turks. She was able to use her resources to free a goodly number of them from captivity. Once four women escaped from their evil masters and sought refuge in Philothei's monastery. When the Turkish authorities learned of this, they stormed the monastery, dragging Philothei from her cell. She was imprisoned, but later released when a crowd of Christians implored the local magistrate to spare her life. A few years later, however, Philothei was, once again, physically removed from her monastery and was beaten severely, and left lying in the street. She was taken back to her beloved monastery, where she died from her wounds a few days later. Her relics are enshrined in an Athens Cathedral. Because of her strong witness for Christ in such perilous times, St. Philothei is considered one of the patron saints of the city of Athens.