

With Eyes of Faith, we can see a Transfigured New Person

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# Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Fifth Sunday of the Great Fast

March 21, 2010

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

+++ This Thursday is the solemn feast of the Annunciation to the Birthgiver of God. In anticipation, the vespertal Divine Liturgy will be celebrated Wednesday evening at 7:30 PM Confessions are heard prior to the celebration as well as afterwards. Please come and join us in prayer and praise.

+++ On Saturday is celebrated the feast of the Resurrection of Lazarus, the friend of the Lord. It is the prelude to the Palm Sunday celebration. The Divine Liturgy will be celebrated at 9:00 AM. Please join us in prayer and praise. Confession of sin before and after .

+++ We offer thanks to the Lord for inspiring generosity in the hearts of our faithful as they assisted to make the Spring Bake Sale a success. We invoke upon each participant and their loved ones the

+++ We invite and encourage our faithful to offer seven day lights during Holy Week and the following Bright Week after the Resurrection. Please use the appropriate envelope for the \$3.00 offering.

+++ A sponsor is needed for the candles which will be utilized for the coming Resurrection Feast Day. The offering is \$125.00 and may be made for any intention. Please see Father as soon as possible.

+++ 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 offering for flowers to beatify our parish church for Palm Sunday, all of Passion Week and for the glorious Resurrection is taken TODAY! Please use appropriate envelope and be generous in your offering.

+++ 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, ~~\$511.00~~; Candles, ~~\$26.00~~; Kitchen, ~~\$102.00~~; Great Fast Self Denial, ~~\$40.00~~; Diocesan Dues, ~~\$60.00~~; Building Fund, ~~\$1000.00~~; Christian Fellowship, ~~\$2.00~~; Candy Sales, ~~\$92.00~~; Pennies From Heaven, ~~\$3.00~~, for a total of ~~\$1836.00~~. 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, Kyle Pasquino, Robert Gorbich, Anna Zacharyczuk and Pani Buletza.

+++ We make a **PENNIES FROM HEAVEN** Canister available for our faithful to bring in pennies for our altar and its appointments. We are already in receipt of ~~\$1572.00~~ 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 **\$103, 715. 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.

+++ We acknowledge with gratitude the recent gift to our parish by Subdeacon Daniel and Marilyn Korba Family of the Storage Counter Cabinet in the Fellowship Hall Kitchen. We pray the gracious Lord continues to bless them and loved ones with good health for **Many & Blessed Years!**

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

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

+++ Please be certain to see **Helen Karpiak** or a member of the Parish Council if you would like to help our parish by using **Shop Rite Food Coupons** available in \$20.00 denominations. We invite **ALL** to be caring and supportive and use Grocery Coupons for food shopping as we have gratefully realized \$5050.00 on this project to date!

+++ We gratefully thank the generous souls who secured orders, came to prepare and make the pirohi and distributed the orders this past week. We continue to pray the good Lord blesses our devoted faithful and their loved ones for their devotion to the parish for **Many & Blessed Years!**

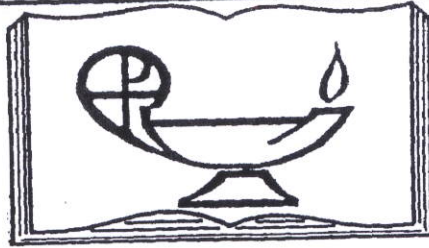
+++ We acknowledge the yeomen service rendered to the parish by Robert Gorbich and Miguel Garcia in assembling the newly bought storage cabinets and work tables in our parish hall kitchen, along with painting and assisting at the Pirohi Sale as well. May the bountiful Lord continue to infuse his grace in the lives of these devoted souls and their loved ones for **Many & Blessed Years!**

+++ Catalogues and order blanks are available for Spring Candy orders for the coming feast of the Resurrection. Please secure orders from friends and relatives to assist our parish. ***Deadline is TODAY!***

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

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

LORD



TEACH  
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## The Good Shepherd

*Because the Lord is my Shepherd, I have everything I need. He lets me rest in the meadow grass and leads me beside the quiet streams. He restores my failing health. He helps me do what honors him the most. Even when walking through the dark valleys of death, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me, guarding, guiding all the way* Psalms 23: 1 – 4.

*When the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away* 1 Peter 5: 4.

*For this is what the Lord has said: 'Truly I, even I, will go searching and looking for my sheep. As the keeper goes looking for his flock when he is among his wandering sheep, so I will go looking for my sheep and will get them safely out of all the places where they have been sent wandering in the day of clouds and black night* Ezekiel 34: 11, 12.

*Whoever does not enter the sheepfold through the gates but climbs in some other way is a thief and a marauder. The one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep; the keeper opens the gate for him; the sheep hear his voice as he calls his own by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all those that are his, he walks in front of them and the sheep follow him because they recognize his voice...I am the good shepherd the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep....I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep and my sheep know me in the same way that the Father knows me and I know the Father; for these sheep I will give my life* John 10: 1 – 4, 11, 14, 15.



## Dying To Save

The determination of non-believers to destroy Jesus was relentless. Their dislike for him had grown to madness, and as practical maniacs they emptied the vials of their vitriolic wrath, hate, and abuse on his holy head. Their feelings had not one whit abated when they saw him crucified. They continued to rail against him and blaspheme as He hung dying on the cross when it seems they should have already been content in their lunatic pursuit.

There is devilry, much of the beast in man today as well, but we sometimes question whether the worst among us would follow up an enemy to his very death, and in his dying moments, abuse him. Jesus, the Son of God had to endure what would have befallen no ordinary person; no man would be hated as was Jesus and that by the so-called people of God. They derisively spoke to him saying, "He saved others, himself he cannot save." Little did they realize what they were saying was preeminently true. He saved many of them in a physical sense by his signs, wonders and miracles. He saved them morally by preaching and example. He saved them all by his life, suffering and death on the cross whether they wanted it or not, whether they understood it or not, whether they appreciated it or not. This is above all a self-condemnatory confession, "He saved others, himself He cannot save."

Generally, men do not abuse or persecute so gentle and gracious a benefactor as was our Lord. But in that gentleness they thought they saw abysmal weakness and were therefore in their self-delusion, were even more encouraged to be denigrating. They could have responded to his first shown love in devoted charity in tender way, but instead castigated him. By their own admission, they mistreated and maltreated him and were now crucifying one who had been a special blessing to the people. By this they showed the extent of their limited smallness, the extent of their envy and hatred.

There is falsity in their statement. He saved himself repeatedly before the hour of suffering and death came. He filled his captors with awe when they came to arrest

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him in Gethsemane. He had twelve legions of angels who were ready at his bidding to intervene in his defense if He determined it became necessary. He that after death, could by his own power free himself from the last and greatest of all enemies, death, could also, beforehand save himself from such miserable rabble as these. He is Christ the Saviour, the Son of the living God.

But according to the plan of salvation, He could not in fact save himself. Suffering and death must be entered, must be experienced by Christ that He overcome it and its consequences for man. This plan and mandate of the Blessed Trinity, required the second Person of the Eternal Godhood through whom all was created and brought into being, including man, his chief tormentor and vilifier, and persecutor, should in detail fulfill the Father's entire plan and purpose. Thus He redeemed the world so that whoever believes in him as the Scriptures attest, shall be saved.

We look today at the Cross of Christ and there we behold the depth of human hatred and vilification of the divine. We see the only leverage for the uplifting of a collapsed world, the price of reconciliation between offended heaven and rebellious man, the only key to open the doors of paradise to guilty souls, the all-sacrificing God, to whom we must look and pray if we ever are to have a place in his eternal kingdom.

Dear friends in the Lord, the mangled and dying body of the Saviour was hanging on the Cross and has now been placed in the tomb. We know where He came from, how He lived, how He loved and what He did and taught, and how and why He finally accepted such a condition of shame, humiliation and suffering at our hands. The whole scene, with its momentous meaning comes fresh from such a vision today. And now in full view of the spectacle of today's sacred memories, with what sort of responsive feelings do you look upon this frayed body of our Lord?

O soul, does not contrition seize you for those sins of yours which require such sacrifice for their forgiveness? And as you see the terrible results in your heart to look upon him and pray, "Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Suffering Christ, have mercy on us, work in us living faith, enable us to receive the assurance of your precious cross so we may also hear fall from your lips, "Today you shall be with me in paradise."

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## Prayer Challenge

The heart of man is never in greater need than when the body is gravely ill. While every thing signifying love and pleasure on earth takes to flight away from the heap of bodily illness, the soul, alone, abandoned to its own weakness, sees before it two relentless enemies: its own conscience whose false lights begin to fade with the seeming, even real approach of absolute and eternal truth and the glimpse of God's supreme judgment against which there is no appeal.

And we as believers in the Lord, have an immense fortune granted by Christ and His Body, the Church in approaching someone who is ill with power through intercessory prayer to appease those enemies of his peace in that painful and at times inevitable last hour.

Do we genuinely have any esteem for this power we have as believers on behalf of the sick? Of all the responsibilities we share as followers of the Lord, there is none more favorable in opportunity to save souls. Both the souls of the sick person and for the soul fast approaching final moments of earthly life, we can make a difference. We can pray the soul is disposed to receive the sacramental Mysteries of the Church, that they repent and confess their sins, that they ask for the priest to come and enrich them with the Eucharist that the grace of healing be offered them in the sacramental Mystery of Anointing with Oil.

Thus these pious rites, these touching prayers recommend the sick soul to the care and love of God. By our own burning faith, by our earnestness and concern the charity of the Lord's servant who at the right moment acquits himself well, will secure heaven's blessings for those who might have no one else to be their advocate, to be concerned about them in the right and proper Christian way.

Others may come to visit the sick to offer some sort of earthly and worldly comfort; others may come to uplift the spirits of the sick person, but the believer comes with the positive message and witness of Christ which is to save the soul! So we must ask ourselves, do we have sufficient zeal and love for our neighbor, for our relative, for our loved one not to miss those opportunities that sickness offers, that come



around in the life of families once in a while and which leave such a deep mark on faith and the manner of life made altogether more fervent because when the illness began, it was not at all entirely Christian?

If we engage ourselves in this duty of service, we become more pleasing to the Divine Lover of the poor in soul, who will one day say, "Come you blessed of my Father...for I was hungry and you gave me to eat...I was sick and you comforted me" Matthew 20: 34. Especially dear to Him will it be if we can also add, "...for I was in agony and you accompanied me and came to my aid."

How grateful will our Lord be to us if we really come to someone who is ill and accompany them by our prayers in their soulful agony? When our Lord suffered and expired on the Cross amid the contempt and derision of His whole nation, two lips there were that spoke out for Him and consoled Him. And how handsomely Christ rewarded that act of loving mercy! "This day you will be with me in paradise" Luke 23: 43.

What a blessing if we are able to repeat that same act of real mercy thousands of times in our own lives not only to our Lord, but to those He created and who need our witness, those who suffer in illness, those who await the last moment of life in agony!

Did not the Lord grant us a great dignity when He said, "Whatsoever you do to the least of these my brethren, you did it to me"? So as a matter of our regular daily prayer life, let us carefully think about how to breathe life and practice into our prayers. Let us put them into action, let us provide opportunities for Christ to triumph when someone we know is ill.

Pray for them. Bring their name to us to pray for them. Commend them to the Lord. In this way we can learn how to assist the sick and the dying, how visitation of the sick in prayer, though their life may not actually be threatened, is to earmark as the most charitable and most personal of Christian services we can provide in the name of the Lord.

Come forward then at the end of the healing services with a new conviction, with a renewed spirit of faith in the Lord, to prayer for our own needs, for those who are sick and dying, so that as what need will finally arise for ourselves, we can rest assured, others will follow our example and pray for us and our own relief from sickness.

## Lord, Lord???

The most profound and enduring lesson we can derive from observance of this season of the Great Fast is our relationship with our God. In St. Luke's gospel, the Lord addresses us with a vital thought-provoking query:; "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" Luke 6: 46. In other words, we call him and identify him, and recognize him as "Lord," but are we in reality his faithful servant?

We learn from St Paul that "no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the grace of the Holy Spirit" 1 Corinthians 12: 3. This is far more than an insight; because it is a gift from God offered us by the Son of God himself! And what a gift indeed. With it comes purpose, meaning, direction for our lives. With it we can comprehend the world and separate ourselves from its values and associate ourselves with the cause of Christ, which is our own salvation. With this gift we are made true believers in a profound sense, because all the glorified saints of our blessed Church tell us the Lord awakens in the soul a true love for His glory.

Glorifying God rightly is of course, the very reason for our lives. Just to love the glory of God is not enough. When we take the Lord Jesus into the inner shrine of our lives, into our hearts and souls and meditate on the implications of his lordship, how can we but search for ways to share that insight with others who are lost and floundering? And before we relate to them the precious message of his presence, we must first give witness to his rule in our own lives!

St. Stephen the first martyr blesses us with a vivid example of one who indeed did what Jesus said. The way we face death sums up the person we are in life; therefore the first martyr of the Church proved to be not only a hearer of God's word, but most importantly, a doer and liver of the word. "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" Acts of the Apostles 7: 59, he prayed incessantly, even as they were stoning him. Just before expiring he imitated the Lord's own physical end on earth by pleading, "Lord do not hold this sin against them" Acts of the Apostles 7: 60. That event left a lasting impression on Saul the Pharisee, one of those present, encouraging and goading the attackers in their abuse. He became the renown St. Paul who would begin his precious epistle letters by referring to himself as the servant, indeed, the very "slave" Romans 1: 1, of Jesus Christ.

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God's revelation to us ends with a cry of the faithful, "Come, Lord Jesus!" followed by a blessing from the Source of life: "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen" Revelation 22: 20, 21. Many associate the apostle Thomas with skepticism. They recall the famous doubter's challenge to Christ's resurrection; "Unless I put my finger where the nails were..." John 20: 25.

We should be reminded, however, that it was this very same apostle who proclaimed Jesus Christ to be "...my Lord and my God!" John 20: 28. Our mission as believers is identical with that of the Holy Spirit: to have everyone we come in contact with accept, believe and live what St. Thomas proclaimed; namely the blessed insight that Jesus Christ is Lord in a direct, intimate and personal way, embracing and compelling and enriching our life.

If Christ is approached as if we were the only ones God ever created, so too each must acknowledge the Son as "My Lord and My God."

As we celebrate the triumph of the Church during this holy season, in saving the soul of the world, we must continue to emphasize the victory of the faith of Christ, the victory which always ultimately triumphs in God's time.

We are reminded daily that Christ, the perfect image of God the Father, the perfect icon of the Eternal Father and his manifestation in the world, calls us to personal victory by restoring within ourselves "the image and likeness of God" Genesis 1: 26, in which we were first created.

The icons we see about us in our parish church of the Lord, the Birthgiver of God, of the saints and angels, the events of salvation history are all images of true believing humanity, insights of what our eternal calling and vocation really is. They tell us that we are called to be living icons and imitators of the virtues and grace of Christ, bearing the likeness of God as gracious vessel of the Holy Spirit.

It will not do to impose a confession of faith just because the Church teaches and believes it and sings and celebrates it liturgically, or simply because the Scripture manifests it. Each believer must assume it, make it personal, render it his own along with every worship service, every homily, every church school session. All of these have their own agenda :the potential for cracking the crust this world forms over the hearts of its citizens and touching the sensitive nerve cells of souls with the glorious insight: that Jesus is Lord and God to the glory of the Father."

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# **WISDOM! BE ATTENTIVE**

*In you, O Mother Mary, the faithful divine likeness shone forth, for by taking up the cross, you followed Christ. You gave us an example to be not concerned with the flesh, but to be diligent over the eternal things of the spirit. Therefore, O Venerable Mary, you now rejoice with the angels Troparion, St. Mary of Egypt.*

*Once filled with all kinds of vices, today, through repentance, she appears as the bride of Christ. Leading an angelic life, she crushes the devil with the help of the cross. Therefore, O venerable Mary, you now rejoice with the angels Kontakion, St. Mary of Egypt.*

*O Christ God, You confirmed the resurrection of all before the time of Your passion by raising Lazarus from the dead; therefore we, as the children of Israel, carry the symbols of victory and cry out to You, the Conqueror of death: "Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord" Troparion, Lazarus Saturday.*

*Christ, the Joy of all, the Truth, the Light, the Life, and the Resurrection of the world appeared to those on earth. Because of His goodness, He became also the image of Resurrection, granting divine forgiveness to all Kontakion, Lazarus Saturday.*

*The Lord is my Light and my Salvation; Whom shall I fear? Prokimenon, Lazarus Saturday.*

*Let us gloriously honor the pure Mother of God. She bore the divine Fire and was not consumed. With ceaseless praise, let us extol her Hymn instead of "It is truly proper...", Lazarus Saturday.*

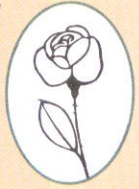
*Out of the mouths of babes and infants, You have fashioned praise. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia! Communion hymn, Lazarus Saturday.*

*All you who have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. Alleluia! Hymn Instead of "Holy God", Lazarus Saturday.*



## THE "INNER BEAUTY" OF A SAINT

**O**n the Fifth Sunday of the Great Fast, our Holy Orthodox Church annually commemorates the Venerable Mary of Egypt. Perhaps we can best describe her as being a "loose" woman in her early years. It is said that she was a beautiful young lady with many suitors. She lived a promiscuous and sinful life; in the true sense of the word she was not a prostitute, for she didn't accept money in exchange for sexual activity. For Mary, the sensual pleasure she received was payment enough.



Mary was living in Alexandria when she heard of a ship leaving for Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of the Elevation of the Cross. She went along -- not for any spiritual reason -- but rather to seek out young men to satisfy her needs. Out of curiosity, however, she decided to go to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to see the Life-Giving Cross. Three times, Mary tried to enter the church, and each time, an invisible force prevented her from doing so. She finally realized that it was her sinfulness that was keeping her out. Tearfully, Mary repented, and she heard the voice of the Lord giving her these instructions: "If you cross the Jordan, you will find peace." Obediently, Mary set out for the Judean wilderness, where she spent the next 47 years in prayer and fasting, totally isolated from the rest of the world. When she was next seen by anyone, age and the elements had ravaged her former beauty, but now, her REAL BEAUTY was just as evident. The ascetic life that she chose to embrace truly had brought her peace. Her story teaches us a great lesson in repentance. It also teaches us that "beauty is only skin-deep." While the world is obsessed and impressed with physical appearances, the Lord is much more concerned with our "INNER BEAUTY," which is developed by living a Christ-like life.

*Icon written in Greece by Miltiadis Afentoulis*

**The Orthodox Weekly Bulletin** . . . . . Vestal, Cliffwood, New Jersey . . . . . Litho in U.S.A.