



# Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Fifth Sunday of the Great Fast

April 21, 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

+++ We are in the Great Fast. We encourage our faithful to observe the spirit of this holy season by fasting, practicing charity and increased prayer life. Please observe the penitential prescriptions of the Church during this entire period.

+++ Next Sunday palms and pussy willows will be blessed. A special offering is taken after the homily. Please be generous.

+++ The special offering for flowers to beautify our church for the coming holy days takes place today. Please be generous with your offering.

+++ At 2:00 PM this coming Saturday, April 27 we will have a guest priest to hear confessions. Please plan on being with us for the penitential service.

+++ Tuesday is the simple feast of St. George the Martyr. The Divine Liturgy will be celebrated Tuesday evening at 7: 30 PM. Please join us in prayer and praise.

+++ Saturday is Lazarus Saturday. The Divine Liturgy will be celebrated at 9: 00 AM. Please join us in prayer and praise.

+++ 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.

+++ 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, \$848.00; Candles, \$6.00; Self Sacrifice Great Fast Offering, \$65.00; Food Coupons, \$400.00; Flowers, \$25.00; Kitchen, \$1045.00; Parish Dues, \$25.00, for a total of \$2414.00. 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 Douglas, 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.

LORD



TEACH  
US

## Man To God

*So be very careful to keep on loving him* Joshua 23: 11.

*Oh, love the Lord, all of you who are his people, for the Lord protects those who are loyal to him, but harshly punishes all who haughtily reject him* Psalms 31: 23.

*O my son, trust my advice...* Proverbs 23: 26.

*Get behind me satan, Jesus told him, for the Scripture says worship only the Lord God and obey only him* Matthew 4: 10.

*Then he added, Anyone who obeys my Father in heaven is my brother, sister and mother* Matthew 12: 50!

*Just so, if you merely obey me, you should not consider yourselves worthy of praise, for you have simply done your duty* Luke 17: 10.

*Really, he remarked, this poor widow has given more than all the rest of them combined. For they have given a little of what they do not need, but she, poor as she is, has given everything she has* Luke 21: 3.

*If you love me, obey me. The one who obeys me is the one who loves me and because he loves me, my Father will love him* John 14: 15.

*But Peter and the apostles replied, We must obey God rather than man* Acts of the Apostles 5: 29.

## When God Is Late

*Lord it has already been four days; surely by now he stinks*

John 11: 39.

The account of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead stirs our emotions and causes us to stand in awe of the power of God. He certainly is the Lord of Life!

Perhaps this passage is so powerful to us because we can visualize it so clearly in our minds. All the senses are employed in being present mystically at this somber event. We can see ourselves trudging through the crowded streets of Bethany with Christ and his disciples. As we near the outskirts of town, we hear from up the dusty path a sound of sobbing and wailing. Then from the direction of the house of Lazarus, Martha comes running to Jesus. Flooding ears are still running down her face and we can experience her pain and loss and hopelessness as she cries out her frustration to the Lord. "If only you had been here, my brother would not have died."

How many of us have so often felt that God is "four days late" when a loved one dies from an illness or when our plans or dreams do not work out? Do we trust our God can heal a friend, but fail to trust in his wisdom when that dear one dies? Do we trust He can guide our lives, but fail to trust him when things do not go as we hoped or planned? Do we trust our parish priest when he acts as the reassurance of the promise of Christ and pardons and absolves our sins in the sacramental Mystery of Reconciliation, but question him in all other areas?

Wandering back to that gravesite scene, we can feel the expectation as some men remove the stone from the burial cave. The women stop their weeping and there is a death-like silence until Jesus cries out, "Lazarus, come forth!" More astounding still is the sound of shuffling feet within and we are overcome with joy and wonder as Lazarus appears at the mouth of the grave/cave. The Son of God has uttered a command, not an invitation! And the once dead Lazarus submits and responds to it!

How could we ever have doubted? How could we have felt disheartened? How could we have placed a limit on the power of our God? Jesus was not "four days late!" As always, He was right on time, his time!

# A LIVING EPISTLE

Positive reinforcement is essential in training your children. It teaches them that through God they have the power to rise above challenges and temptations.

**One evening a family was watching their favorite television show, *Kids Say The Darndest Things*. What caught the father's attention in the episode was Bill Cosby's exchange with one of the little girls. He asked her who her hero was. Dr. Cosby began to name famous actors and athletes, but this young lady consistently answered "No" each time. When he finally asked her again, she looked him in the eyes and confidently replied, "My dad."**

**This is rare, to say the least, in today's society which looks to celebrities as role models, particularly the Hollywood hooligans and questionable athletes. Therefore, it is important that parents understand their responsibility to not only raise their children according to what our God expects, according to His instructions found in His revelation to us, but also to be godly examples to them. Since parents are the most influential forces in their children's lives, it is critical they walk in a manner worthy of admiration and respect. We are challenged "...to train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it" Proverbs 22: 6. What parents impart to their children will determine their successful, in the sight of God, futures.**

If we are looking only for temporary, worldly success, we can follow any sort of pattern and we will have received our goals. But young people are surrounded by many negative influences ranging from music and movies to misguided peer pressure. Unfortunately, they spend more time around negative outside influences than they do with their families. Think about it. Teenagers spend an average of seven to eight hours a day at school where they will most likely come in contact with things their Christian parents do not agree with. Parents, however, can counter these influences by having integrity and high moral standards. By consistently walking in these qualities, a pattern will be set for young people to follow that will reach beyond the confines of their homes and counteract the diabolical influences of the world.

There are no better examples than Mom and Dad. Have we not been instructed to "...teach the word of God to your children, speaking of it when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up" Deuteronomy 11: 19? As a parent, you must insure that you put God's Word, God's way first in your household. If you are free to abuse and interpret it any way you wish, your children will learn they also have that freedom, which is not freedom at all, but license which leads to servitude to evil forces. Permit your children to see you making decisions based on the authority of God which is revealed to us in Scripture and the tradition of the Church. When they observe you conducting your life by God's standards, it will become second nature to them and they will grow up enjoying its security and blessing.

**Be certain that  
you put God's Word  
*first* in your household.**

Positive reinforcement is essential in educating and rearing your children. It teaches them that through and with God they have the power to rise above challenges and temptations. "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord." 2 Corinthians 3: 18.

Simple words of encouragement not only motivate young people to achieve their goals in life, but they also contribute to building the positive self-image that God created them with. After all, are not our children, also. Like their parents, created in the image of God? Parental role is critical because you as the first person to whom they look for guidance and instruction, should provide good example for them. Unfortunately, many young people turn to their peers or other adults for guidance on how to live their lives because their parents are not there for them, or are not worthy of being parents because of their disinterest in forming souls for heaven. You can keep this from happening by consistently being an active force in your children's lives.

Ultimately, how your children perceive themselves will dictate their success or failure in life. As you build them up, they will begin to recognize that they are reflections of Jesus Christ, destined to be citizens of God's eternal kingdom and understand their self-esteem comes from their association with Him.

God rewards those who diligently seek Him. "Anyone who comes to God must believe that he exists, and that he rewards those who seek him" Hebrews 11: 6. The use of reward is another way, a godly way to reinforce positive values in children. Parents often discipline their children when they are wrong and neglect to reward them for doing good. Make a point to look for the good in your children and praise them when they achieve their goals. Challenge them with godly behavior and notice and celebrate it when it is achieved. Let them know that you love them, especially when they mess up. When you have to discipline your child, make sure you relate it to God's revelation and expectation of you as a parents to mold and sculpture their personality so it will be pleasing to Him for all eternity. God is infallible, meaning He alone makes no mistakes and is incapable of error. If we follow His pattern, we then, do not err. Human beings, including parents can and do make mistakes. It should be pointed out we have high expectations of them because we believe God's promises to us as parents and to them as faithful children. They should understand that lying is wrong, for instance, because it is forbidden by God. We only uphold God's teaching when we frown upon it as well. We can explain to them what God thinks of their actions and why they should or should not participate in certain activities because they violate or are contrary to God's requirements for us who faithfully follow Him.

Webster's dictionary defines reinforce as "to strengthen or make stronger." Our primary job as parents is to make our children stronger and prepare them for life ahead, when no parental supervision will be provided. Before we can reinforce them, however, you must insure you're your child's life is honorably a Christian one. "The Lord is my strength and my salvation, my heart trusted in him, and I am helped; therefore my heart greatly rejoices and with my song I will praise him" Psalms 28: 7. God is our strength, the strength of parents and of children. He will grant parents the ability to positively reinforce Christian values in children and offer them the assistive grace to live up to the challenge.

Here are some examples which will help parents become a living epistle, a message from God to them:

1. Show them unconditional love, despite their choices. This is how our God relates to us, even when we separate ourselves from Him.
2. Share God's Word with them and be a living example of what it says and teaches.



3. See to it they have your example of always being eager, without complaint, to be in the presence of God each Sunday and holy day for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. Make certain they are properly prepared and instructed in living a worthy Eucharistic life because it is not only vital for you as a parents, but equally important for them as your children.

4. Learn about their world by listening to them carefully and discerning when negative influences might take hold.

5. Lead them in all you do by example and activity, to lead a fulfilling life in Christ.

6. Pray for them constantly without fail.

St. Paul, our heavenly patron, admonishes believers to be examples for others in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity. "Let no one look down on you because of your youth, but be a continuing example of love, faith, and purity to believers" 1Timothy 4: 12. If this is true in general for the Orthodox believer, how much more does it apply to parents and their children. Though parenting is not an easy task, with the help of the Holy Spirit, you can successfully raise your child and be the example they should follow to succeed in life, both here and for eternity!

If we dearly love our children in this world and wish to see their success here and now, how much more should we live so that they are a success for all eternity, so they can be with as parents in the presence of our God.

**We must teach our children how valuable they are to us  
and how important they are in the sight of God,  
that the eternal Father sent His Son into the world  
to love and redeem them!**

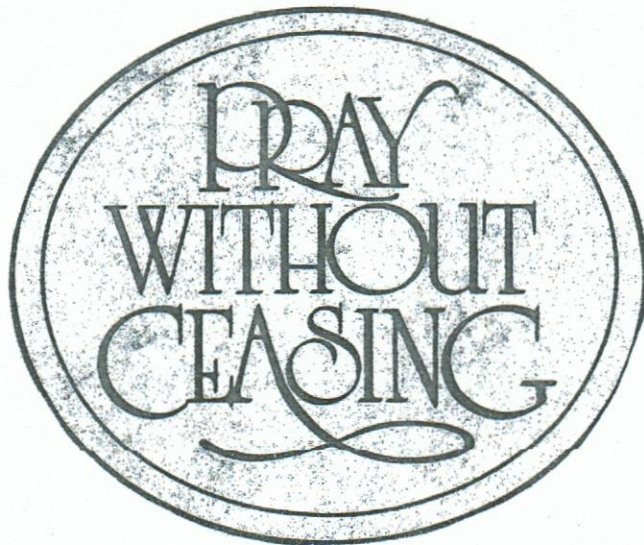
**One of the most important indices and critical manifestations  
of our parental love is how they are spiritually formed and nurtured.  
This will determine their eternal destiny and ours as parents.**



## The Old Country Priest says...

Healing begins when we receive forgiveness and pursue the future God's way, not our own. The way to life is through the Cross and the Cross alone. There, hearts are changed one at a time, and life and peace replace death and hate. Those who seek life his way find it. Those who seek it their own way lose it. In that sense we can know the future.

I said to the man at the Gate of the Year, "Give me a light that I may walk safely into the unknown." He said to me, "Go out into the darkness, and put your hand into the hand of God, and it shall be to you better than the light and safer than the known."





A crown was made from thorns, and was placed on the head of Jesus at his crucifixion to deride, to inflict pain and humiliate the Saviour of mankind.

*Weaving a crown out of thorns they fixed it on his head and stuck a reed in his right hand. Then they began to mock him by dropping to their knees before him, saying, "All hail, king of the Jews" Matthew 27: 29!*

Thorns and prickly thistles are spiny plants that were used as boundary bushes and many times, firewood, in Scripture, because, dried out, they burned rather well and served to ignite larger pieces of wood. Thorns were also used in salvation history to be a teaching tool.

*Then all the trees said to the thorn bush: "Come, you reign over us! But the thorn bush replied to the trees, "If you wish to anoint me king over you in good faith, come and take refuge in my shadow. Otherwise, let fire come from the thorn bush and devour the cedars of Lebanon"* Judges 9: 14, 15.

*Like a thorn stick brandished by the hand of a drunkard is a proverb in the mouth of fools* Proverbs 26: 9.

*In the place of the thorn bush, the cypress shall grow; instead of nettles and pickers, the myrtle. This shall be to the Lord's renown, an everlasting imperishable sign* Isaiah 55: 13.

*King Jehoshaphat of Israel sent this reply to the king of Judah: "The thistle of Lebanon sent word to the cedar of Lebanon, 'Give your daughter to my son in marriage,' but an animal of Lebanon passed by and trampled the thistle underfoot"* 2 Kings 14: 9.

*King Joash of Israel sent this reply to King Amaziah of Judah: "The thistle of Lebanon sent a message to the cedar of Lebanon, saying, 'Give your daughter to my son for his wife.'" But the wild beasts of Lebanon passed by and trampled the thistle down* 2 Chronicles 25: 18.

*...for the sins of Israel, thorns and thistles shall overgrow their altars. Then shall they cry out to the mountains, "Cover us!" and to the hills, "Fall upon us"* Hosea 10: 8!

*You will know them by their deeds. Do you ever pick grapes from thorn bushes or figs from prickly plants* Matthew 7: 16?

*Again, part of the seed fell upon thorn bushes, which grew up and choked it* Matthew 13: 7.

*Each tree is known by its yield, Figs are not taken from thorn bushes, nor grapes picked from brambles. A good man produces goodness from the goodness in his heart an evil man produces evil out of his store of evil* Luke 6: 44.

*But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless; it is soon cursed and finally is burned* Hebrews 6: 8.

## Fifth Sunday Of Great Fast

Today our Lord gives us a fair warning about his impending passion and death. He wants to be prepared. It is apparently not enough that He is transfigured before them on the mount forty days prior to being glorified on the cross. He desires we maintain our faith inviolable. So he speaks of the inevitable constantly, to them and to us, which is why the Church echoes his words today.

Scripture attests in the words of St. Luke, "The crowd watched..." Luke 23: 35. So we no we look at the cross? The impact of the final hours of Jesus on our imagination depends on our perspective. Do we approach the cross in derision and doubt or do we come near to its base in humble adoration and gratitude? Do we recognize the transforming power of the cross? Do we stand back in fear or despair, sharing the incredulity of those who expected one things from the Lord and got something else they did not quite understand? Or do we stand back in awe, continually amazed by the meaning and significance of the suffering of God the Son?

Are we like St. Paul, our heavenly patron, who expresses his incredulity by sharing with us, "For if the blood of goats and bulls and the sprinkled ashes of a heifer sanctify the unclean into the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the Holy Spirit offered himself unblemished before God, cleanse our conscience from dead works to serve the living God" Hebrews 9: 13, 14?

Deliberately changing our place of view we can alter and improve our understanding of the cross. Drawing near or stepping away can help us see the cross in a new light. One dimension open to our soul puts us above the cross, viewing events and people, most importantly ourselves, from the perspective of our God and Creator. We note, for instance, that the statements of Jesus move out in concentric circles, rippling out into the world in richest pregnant meaning, beginning with the soldiers at his feet and moving outward to reach the finish line in eternity. If we learn to alter our position as well as view, we will alter our perspective of the cross in our lives. This is literally a crucial meditation and worship opportunity which inspired and uplifts us to be present with our Lord in the coming days as we relive the moments of our salvation and redemption.

We are challenged today to remember the value of right belief. It is profitable for us to know that Christ bore my diseases of flesh and soul, that for our sake, He submitted himself to the power of our lusts. He became sin and a curse for us. He was humbled and became a servant for our sake. He becomes the sacrificial Lamb, the Vine, the Roc, the Servant/Slave, and the

Son of a handmaiden because we needed it. He does not know the Day of Judgment, but for our sake is not only ignorant of the day and hour, but makes it superfluous since He redeems us by the power of his death if we only access and utilize his costly-won grace to enrich our souls from the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil.

What a glorious remedy is the passion and cross of the Saviour! What an enormous comfort in Christ! He bears all things with astounding patience for our sake, so we definitely cannot bear them just for the glory of his name with common patience. They actually touch our lives. Who would not easily learn to forgive an enemy when the events of the cross are contemplated? Whose heart will not melt before the redeeming words of our Saviour from the cross? Christ prays especially for those who persecute him! Do we not recognize that the so-called weaknesses of Christ are precisely our strength? So why do we need to ask him about remedies for ourselves? He has already provided them. His tears wash us; his example elevates us, his weeping cleanses us. So many doubt and thus despair. For the greater the insult we offer to our God and which if we are repentant, He gladly forgives, the greater, deeper and profounder is the gratitude due.

So today we learn the perfection of love. To love even our enemies and to love them so that they might become fellow believers in Christ with us is our inspired task, because in reality actual love is not simply limited or fleshly. To wish people temporal, physical well-being is certainly good. But when this fails, hope and pray and provide the kind of atmosphere in which souls are safe. Do you wish a good life for your friend? You do well. But better yet, wish and work for the salvation of their soul! Do you rejoice at the death of a perceived enemy? Then you do evil. Have you aspired to a notable and praiseworthy vocation? You sin when you lay aside that pursuit. However, we must understand that even the good life we wish for friends may not be good for them. And the death of your enemies we rejoice in thinking may have been for the good of them because in some instances they may sin worse and endanger their soul more profoundly by living. But yet, in life there is hope, always for repentance. It is uncertain whether this present life will be profitable or unprofitable for someone, but without doubt, life with God is profitable. Love your so called enemies by making it impossible for them not to become Christians and follow the path of the Lord. Love your enemies so they might enter into fellowship with us as believers. This is the way Christ loved and the way, while hanging on the cross said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." Christ did not simply say, "Father grant them a long healthy life even though they kill me, let them live prosperously." He was taking eternal death of their soul away from them by his merciful prayer and by the supreme strength of God. Unquestionably, today if we have learned to pray for our enemy, we walk in the way of the Lord." That is the power of the passion and the cross of which our Lord speaks today.

## **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.







***“He  
put  
mud  
on  
my eyes.  
I washed it off  
and now  
I can see.”***

## Physical Illness

As everybody knows, the human body is a remarkable organism. Consisting of billions of cells, numerous chemicals, hundred of muscles, miles of blood vessels, and a variety of organs, the body can grow, heal itself, fight disease, adapt to temperature changes, react to environmental stimulation, and survive a host of physical abuses. Centuries ago, the psalmist praised our heavenly Father because we are "...fearfully and wonderfully made" Psalms 139: 14. And the more we learn about the amazing human body, the more we can stand in awe of both the body's complexity and the Creator/God who made us. How amazed we are when we stop to think about being made in God's image!

But the physical body does not last forever in its present state because of what we ourselves, through Adam and Eve introduced into the world. Sometimes it is injured beyond repair. It can break down if it is not cared for and eventually bodies begin to wear out.

Of course, we do not think much about this when we are healthy. When there are no physical problems, we take our bodies for granted as much as we take for granted the God who created us. Colds and periodic bouts with the flu are annoying but usually only temporary interruptions to the activities of life we assume are always going to be the usual healthy same for us. When sickness is more serious, painful or longer lasting, however, we are forced to recognize our own limitations. Physical suffering vividly confronts us with the stark reality that each of us inhabits a body that is destined to die. Sometimes, most of us try to avoid thoughts of illness and sometimes we even ignore symptoms. It becomes more difficult to tolerate and accept sickness when it does catch up with us. Sickness inhibits our activities, slows us down, makes life more difficult, and often seems to have no meaning or purpose. If the illness persists, we start to ask hard, largely unanswerable questions like, "Why me?" or "Why is this happening to me now?" Often the sickness is accompanied by anger, discouragement, disappointment, loneliness, helplessness, bitterness, and confusion. Counseling, prayer for the physically sick is a major challenge for believers in Christ because the effects of illness need not always be entirely negative.

In many instances it is difficult to separate the effects of sickness from the causes. Pain, feelings of helplessness emotions, and family reactions to an illness can all be as much the effects of sickness as they are causes of additional physical and adjustment problems. Many reactions, such as guilt or

anger, can complicate the sickness and cause the physical illness to get worse. This leads to more guilt or anger, and a vicious circle develops.

It is easy to focus on the negative effects of an illness but most fail to see the more possible benefits. When we grumble about our illnesses and blame others for them, citing problems in the family, for example, or stress at work, there is a much greater likelihood of morbid thinking and certainly prolonged and continued illness. If we instead change our spiritual approach, alter our religious views and work to improve interpersonal relationships with others and most importantly, with our God, take better care of our bodies, the result can be there will be a better quality of lifestyle and fulfillment. If we seek after virtue and as we slowly respond to God's grace in attaining it, we will have a more positive life style and our moments of fulfillment will be increased so that negativity is brought to a far lower level. Regretfully, however, the effects are often more negative than positive. The following reactions to illness are seen frequently and may have to be dealt with soulful sensitivity.

*Defense and Denial.* Since sickness is unwelcome, there is a tendency to deny its seriousness and sometimes its presence. This is true if the illness is serious or likely to be terminal. At least for a while and with some, right up to the time of death, there is an attitude that says, "It can't be me. I am sure the diagnosis is wrong. God will surely heal me if anything threatens my life." A number of defense mechanisms have been devised. These are ways of thinking that enable us to deny reality and pretend that a frustration or a conflict is of little importance. Such thinking is very common and is used automatically, without prior deliberation and often without our even being aware of what is taking place. It has as its purpose to protect us from anxiety. We like magical thinking and the gimmick can be helpful if it gives us time to gather strength and acquire the knowledge needed to cope realistically with reality. When defenses and denial persist, however, the patient or family member may be rudely awakened later.

*Withdrawal.* When we are sick, we need to let others help and love us. For many people, however, this is not easy. They feel threatened by their dependence on others, weak and misunderstood. As a result they withdraw, sometimes in an attitude of self-pity and subsequent loneliness.

*Resistance and Anger.* Some patients come out fighting. Since it is not easy to fight disease, they direct their anger to doctors, nurses and family members and health care professionals. Criticism, and noisy protests characterize their relationships with others.

*Manipulation.* Some people go through life attempting to control and manipulate others by subtle or more blatant steam-rolling tactics. When such persons become ill, it is not surprising that they use their sickness to control others or to get attention or sympathy.

*Malingering and Hypochondriasis.* Sickness sometimes brings benefits, like attention and sympathy from others, an opportunity to do nothing, having freedom from responsibility and socially sanctioned permission to stay home from work and get up late. Some people enjoy benefits of being sick. As a result they never get better or they experience a series of physical symptoms for which there is no organic basis and little relief.

Malingering has been defined as a "voluntary fabrication or exaggeration of physical or psychological symptoms in order to achieve a tangible goal distinct from the gain of being in the patient role." Some times it is brief like when the student feigns illness to avoid going to school for a particular purpose, or long lasting like when the worker attempts to get some sort of compensation while out of work. Suspicion of malingering often angers family and friends and physicians often fear lawsuits if they fail to treat a supposed malingerer who really does not have an illness or injury.

Hypochondriasis is an assumed illness, but there is no conscious effort to appear sick. These tend to be preoccupied with disease or illness so they look for physical symptoms and assume that even the most minor physical changes are indicators of illness. When physicians find nothing wrong, these individuals get angry and seek new doctors to confirm their imaginary and perceived illnesses.

Regardless of the causes or characteristics it is helpful to recognize sickness is a way of life for some people. Such individuals find it easier than living life without any physical complaints.

*Hope.* Sometimes illness has the effect of stimulating hope in patients and their families. Whenever a patient stops expressing hope, death soon follows. Even seriously ill people who have realistic views of their condition find that hope sustains and encourages them, especially in difficult times. Medical and non-medical counselors found that patients get along better when there is at least a glimmer of hope. This does not mean doctors and others must lie about a patient's condition, but does mean that we share with them the hope that something unforeseen may happen, that they may have a remission, that they may live longer than they expected, and if they place their faith in God, there can be even greater hope in the knowledge that the loving sovereign God of the universe is concerned about us both now in difficulty and then for all eternity.

So we come each time healing services are available and we have hope in God's loving mercy and concern. We place ourselves realistically in his care and trust He will do what is best for our body and our soul. May hope always fill our souls with the certainty of God's love.

## Scripture and Physical Illness

Sickness is an issue that runs through the pages of Scripture. The physical illnesses of Miriam, Naaman, Nebuchadnezzar, David's new-born child, Job, and the variety of others are described with clarity both in the Old and New Testaments. When Jesus came to earth his concern for the sick was so important that almost one-fifth of the Gospel is devoted to the topic of healing. The disciples were expected to carry on his healing ministry of service Mark 7: 7 -13; Matthew 10: 5 – 8; Luke 9: 1 – 2, 6.

The *Acts of the Apostles* records how the early Church cared for those with physical illnesses.

Scriptural emphasis on physical illness points to several conclusions that can be helpful for the Christian believer.

*Sickness has become an expected part of life.* Few people, if any, go through life without experiencing at least periodic illness. It seems that sickness entered the human race as a result of the Fall and since that time people have known what it is like to be unhealthy, even though Adam and Eve lived in perfect health before sinning. Their sin caused damage to the body as well as to the soul. Scripture makes no attempt to diagnose, categorize or systematically list the symptoms of mental and physical illness, but it does mention symptoms in passing and refers directly or indirectly to alcoholism, blindness, boils, deafness, muteness, dysentery, epilepsy, fever, hemorrhaging, indigestion, infirmity, inflammations, insanity, leprosy, palsy, speech impediments and a number of other illnesses. It is implied that each of these causes psychological as well as physical stress and all seem to assume that sickness is an expected part of life in this sin filled and inundated world.

*Care, compassion, and healing are important for Christians.* By his words and actions, Jesus taught that sickness, while commonplace, also is undesirable. He spent much of his time helping the sick. This healing power proved his superiority over the influences of satan and revealed his messianic dignity. He encouraged others to do likewise and He emphasized the importance of compassionate caring for those who were needy and unhealthy. Even to give someone a drink of water was considered praiseworthy, and Jesus indicated that helping a sick person was the same as ministering to the Saviour himself. "The king will assure them, 'I assure you, as often as you did it for one of my least brothers, you did it for me'" Matthew 25: 40. Clearly, then, the Christian has a responsibility to care for those who are not well. "Is there any sick among you? He should ask for the priests of the church. They in turn are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. This prayer uttered in faith will reclaim the one who is ill, and the Lord will restore him to health" James 5: 14, 15.

Thus we have in the life of the Body of Christ, from its very inception, institutions for the care of the sick and indigent. But unfortunately here in the United States, the richest of all local Orthodox Churches we do not have the strength to even operate one health care facility or hospital!

*Sickness, Sin and Faith are not necessarily related.* When Job lost his family, possessions, and health, a trio of well-meaning but ineffective comforters argued that all these perils resulted from the victim's sin. Job discovered, however, that sickness does not always come as a result of individual sin, a conclusion that Jesus himself taught us. "His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, was it his sin or that of his parents that caused him to be born blind?' 'Neither' answered Jesus, 'It was no sin, either of this man or of his parents. Rather, it was to let God's works show forth in him'" John 9: 2 - 4.

This becomes clearer as we examine the healing miracles of the New Testament. Sometimes people's health improved because they personally believed that Christ would heal them. The woman with the issue of blood is a good example. "As they were going, a woman who suffered from hemorrhages for twelve years came up behind him and touched the tassel of his cloak. 'If only I can touch the tassel of his cloak,' she thought, 'I shall get well.' Jesus turned around and saw her and said, 'Courage, daughter! Your faith has restored you to health.' That very moment the woman got well" Matthew 9: 20 - 22. There were other times, however, when a person other than the patient had faith. Several parents came to Jesus, for example, told about their sick children, and saw the children healed. (Mark 7: 24 - 30; 9: 20 - 27; Matthew 9: 18 - 19, 23 - 26). Then in the Garden of Gethsemane, a servant's ear is healed even though no person had faith in the crowd except Jesus. In contrast, there was Pail, a man who had great faith in Christ but whose "...thorn in the flesh" never left him. Still others had no faith and no healing. "And he did not work many miracles there because of their lack of faith" Matthew 13: 58.

God's relation to us in Scripture gives no support to those who proclaim that sick people are always out of God's will or simply lacking in faith. Our heavenly Father has never promised to heal all of our diseases in this life, and it is both incorrect and cruel to teach that instant health will always come to those whose faith is strong.

*Sickness raises some difficult and crucial questions about suffering.* We can easily summarize two basic questions that face anyone who suffers. If God is good, why does he permit suffering? If he is all powerful, why doesn't He stop suffering? Entire volumes have been written to grapple with these questions but it seems probably that our limited minds will never completely comprehend the reasons for suffering.

For most of us, pain and suffering do not make any sense. We do what we can to reduce pain in ourselves and others, and we pray for pain to go away. Scripture lifts off the veil of confusion slightly

when it teaches that suffering keeps us humble, refines our faith, conforms us to Christ's image, teaches us about God, and produces patience, maturity, perseverance and character. Suffering also teaches us to be more compassionate and caring. 2 Corinthians 3: 7 – 10; 1 Peter 1: 6, 7; Romans 8: 28; Hebrews 12: 11; Psalms 119: 71; James 1: 2 – 4; Romans 5: 3 – 5). Many who have been in pain and suffered illness severely have been enabled to better understand and counsel with others who suffer now. We also are aware suffering does not always serve clear and noble purposes. More often people in sickness trouble become severe doubters in God's gracious mercy because they lack so much in spiritual life.

*Serious Illness often Raises Issues about the Right to Die.* For reasons that are not clearly understood, some people seem to reach a time when they let go of life and die even though they have not been sick. For these individuals, it seems that a healthy cardiovascular system is less important than their delusionary conclusion that life is no longer worth living, so they die, thwarting the will of God who alone has sovereignty over life and death. More common, however, are those who develop such severe, painful and lingering illness that they want to die, but cannot. A gravely sick woman once said, "You cannot imagine how hard it is to die." There are people who sometimes beg to die and urge their doctors and relatives to withdraw all support systems, including food. These increasing requests in our pagan society for "assisted suicide," and the willing compliance of some seemingly compassionate relatives and medical personnel have thrown the legal and medical professions into a great debate. It is a debate that some so-called Christians try to ignore and some theologians find frustrating because they find no unequivocal guidance in Scripture. The problem is very much complicated by confusing laws and astoundingly advanced technology which can keep a gravely sick person alive while all other indications show it is apparently futile. Modern machinery has tempted medical personnel to play Creator God. Our nation is seemingly moving quickly into the direction to give medicines to hasten death and is fast moving in the direction of making this publicly acceptable.

The Church must respond to the issues if it genuinely believes that all life comes from God and is taken from us as He alone wills. Euthanasia, a word that the current debate tends to shun is opposed to those who value and cherish human life. Surely there is no Scriptural support for an attitude that hastens death because the patient wants to die, that condones starving someone to death because they are difficult to care for, or that withholds health care from someone who is comatose or brain death. Yet do we use every technical and medical means available to keep someone alive and in genuine continuing pain who in past years would have died of natural causes? These questions have no simple answers, but believers in Christ need to be aware of these and related-health care issues which arise in times of serious physical illness. The power of prayer cannot be emphasized enough to reach morally acceptable conclusions in individual cases with the counsel of one's spiritual father relating Christ's will to the particular set of circumstances faced.

## Counseling and Physical Illness

It is very interesting that our Lord did not set up a separate space or an office in the temple or the various synagogues He prayed in and visited regularly and wait for people to come to him for prayer, healing and counseling. Instead He went to them, to the homes of the most notorious sinners, to the places where He would most likely encounter the handicapped, the sick, the needy, the outcasts of society. In counseling the sick, in leading them to salvation in desperate circumstances, it is necessary that not only the parish priest, but concerned and devoted believers in the parish arouse within themselves a general interest in the souls and bodies of those who succumb to illness from time to time. This is an excellent time for restoring to good health, but also advancing the cause of Christ by returning the individual person to a responsive condition by the grace of Christ.

In counseling and being concerned about the sick, it is often necessary to go to them. As we move away from the parish church to enter their homes or the places where they recover, it is important to remember the basic principles that apply to all counseling circumstances; the necessity of warmth, empathy, and genuineness, the value of listening patiently and encouraging the patient without pushing, to talk about fears, anxieties, anger, the illness itself, one's family, the future and similar issues. There is a deep need for confidentiality and the importance of showing acceptance, understanding and compassion without being gushy or condescending. In contrast to the physically healthy, sick people often are more sensitive to these counselor characteristics. As a result, the responsibility should not be relegated to the parish priest alone, to visit, pray for and encourage people who are sick. Every conscientious believer can assume at least some of the characteristics of the Christian counselor and witness to the concern of the Lord and respond to the actual command to visit the sick. "I was ill and you comforted me" Matthew 25: 36.

When a person is found to have terminal illness, doctors, nurses, even priests and family members tend to withdraw and leave the patient to face the problem alone. It has been found that some of the best counseling is actually done in these situations by cleaning women who are cheerful, regular visitors, willing to both listen and talk and who have no direct interest or benefit from the illness and circumstances of the ill person at all.

This sad observation points to the fact that most of us do not like to face sickness, especially serious illness, so we avoid people who are ill. Perhaps we are threatened because these people remind us



that we are all susceptible to illness. Maybe we are uncomfortable because we do not know what to say, are not sure how to react to the patient's anger and discouragement, or feel incapable of dealing with difficult questions such as "Why me?" or "Do you think I am going to die?" The sight of severely injured persons, perhaps with physical deformities or tubes and machines attached to their bodies, can create discomfort in the counselor/visitor and display sometimes involuntary reactions of shock that the patient is quick to detect.

For some, the more illness is faced and accepted, the easier it becomes to deal with the sick. If the counselor has been ill in the past, they have a greater understanding of patients now. This however does not always happen, and some never become accustomed to hospitals or illness. If this is the case, the counselor/visitor should take some time, perhaps to discover there reasons for this discomfort felt in the presence of sick people so that its examination would assist in making caregivers visiting more effective. Central to all is the issue of prayer and spiritual preparation for visiting the sick. Since Christians are instructed to care for one another. "...that there may be no dissension in the body, but that all the members may be concerned for one another. If one member suffers, all members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all members share its joy" 1 Corinthians 12: 25, 26.

The important apostolate of visiting and praying with the sick is vital and necessary in the life of the Church. Not only are healing services vital that God's glory is made known, but the on-going daily life of preserving precious faith in all circumstances of life, especially in sickness, not only appropriate but necessary.

## Guidelines for Visiting the Sick

### For All Patients

Visit frequently but keep the visits brief.

Let the patient take the lead in shaking hands.

Stand or sit where the patient can see you easily—the side of the bed is more suitable than the foot of the bed.

Give the patient freedom to talk freely, and listen carefully as he does so.

Use your resources as a Christian: prayer, Scripture, encouraging comments, etc. Whether you pray audibly should be determined by the Holy Spirit and the situation—the patient, his spiritual background, the people present, etc. Suggest prayer rather than ask if it is desired, and keep it short.

Take appropriate precautions against contagious diseases.

Leave some devotional material.

Evaluate each visit to determine how they could be improved in the future.

### For Patients at Home

Telephone the home before the visit to make sure you call at a convenient time.

Try to call when there will be time for private discussion.

### For Hospital Patients

Upon arrival, check at the reception desk, introduce yourself and make sure that a visit at this time is acceptable.

Do not enter a room that has a closed door or a "no visitors" sign.

Try to call when there are not a lot of other visitors present.

### Do:

Be friendly and cheerful.

Be reassuring and comforting.

Help the patient relax.

Recognize that anxieties, discouragement, guilt, frustrations and uncertainties may be present.

Give reassurance of divine love and care.

Promise to pray for the patient during his illness—and act on your promise.

### Don't:

Speak in an unnatural tone of voice.

Talk about your own past illnesses.

Force the patient to talk. Your silent presence can often be very meaningful.

Promise that God will heal them. Sometimes in his wisdom God permits illness to persist.

Visit when you are sick.

Talk loudly.

Sit, lean on, or jar the bed.

Visit during meals.

Whisper to family members or medical personnel within sight of the patient.

Share information about the diagnosis.

Question the patient about the details of the illness.

Tell the family how to decide when presented with medical options (but help them to decide).

Criticize the hospital, treatment or doctors.

Spread detailed information about the patient when you complete your visit.

**SURVIVING  
A HOTEL  
FIRE**



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## **Fires Do Occur in Hotels**

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Fires can and do occur in hotels and motels, as they do in all types of buildings. Being in a hotel fire is a frightening experience, so you should plan how to react when you check-in. You won't have time to think about it in a fire.

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## **Find Two Exits**

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Count the doorways in the hall. Note the turns, offsets and other landmarks between your room and the exits. Be able to find those exits in a dark, smokey corridor. Open exit doors. Make sure they're unlocked and not blocked. Does a stairway exit door lock on the stair side? This could prevent reentry back to the floor if you encounter smoke on the stairs.

Your first choice of stairway exit should be one reached by passing through a balcony or vestibule open to the outside. Normally, it will remain free of smoke.

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## **Investigate Fire Safety**

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Does building have automatic sprinklers in hallways, public areas, guest rooms? Are there smoke detectors in rooms or hallways? Are floors and walls fire resistive or of masonry construction...or are they of combustible wood construction? Locate the fire alarm "pull box".

Avoid a room located in a corridor that dead-ends or has an open stairway. Read emergency procedures which should be posted in the room or provided at check-in.



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## Know Where Your Key Is

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Always keep your room key in the same accessible place so you can find it quickly. If you leave your room, take the key. You may need it to return; your room may be the safer place.



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## Check Your Room Window

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Does it open? How? Is there an adjacent roof or other means of escape? Don't consider jumping more than two floors.



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## If Awakened, Investigate

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Fire alarms sometimes are not activated. If awakened at night, investigate a commotion before going back to sleep. Be ready to act.

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**NEVER  
USE  
ELEVATORS  
DURING  
A FIRE**

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## Smell Smoke! Call the Fire Department

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If you smell smoke, call the Fire Department and then the hotel operator. The hotel may send a security guard. Fire Depts. send firemen. Tell the Fire Dept. what hotel and what room you're in.

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## If There's Smoke, Crawl

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If you awaken to smoke in your room, don't stand up. Roll off your bed and crawl on the floor. Fresh air will be near the floor.



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## Your Room May Be Safest

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Sometimes your room may provide refuge which is safer than attempting to evacuate. Feel your room door and knob before opening. If it feels warm, don't open.

If building has fire resistive floors and walls, consider staying in your room if: 1) there is fire or smoke in the corridor or exits, or 2) the building height or your physical condition prevent exiting to the ground.

Evacuate if floors and walls are combustible wood or conditions become too bad.

In other situations, use common sense and good judgment on whether to stay or evacuate. Follow the directions of the Fire Dept.

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## **If You Stay In Your Room**

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Open window if there's fresh air outside. Don't break window unless you have to—you may need to close it. An open window may draw smoke into your room.



Fill bathtub with water. Put wet towels around the door and other openings to keep smoke out. Bail water on the floor to keep it cool. Be careful of air conditioning and bathroom vents; they may draw smoke into the room. If smoke enters through a vent, block it with a wet towel.

Use phone to tell hotel operator and Fire Dept. where you are. Hang a sheet outside window to signal for help. Stay low where fresh air is.

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## **If You Evacuate Your Room**

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Don't try to fight the fire. Take your room key with you. Close room door behind you. Pull corridor manual fire alarm on way to exit. Follow exit plan you decided upon when you arrived.

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## **Avoid Smoke-Filled Stairs**

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If you encounter smoke in a stairway, do not continue down. Check other stairway; it may be free of smoke. Beware of stairway doors which lock from the stairway side. Consider walking up to a floor free of smoke which can be used as an area of refuge.

**St. Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church**  
**24 Burke Road**  
**Freehold, NJ 07728**

**Telephone 732-780-3158**



## The Church Fathers on Forgiveness

The injunction to forgive one's neighbors—friends as well as enemies—is an absolute in the Christian Gospel. As the Orthodox Church keeps the beginning of Great Lent with a rite of mutual forgiveness (on the day commemorating the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise, but more commonly referred to as 'Forgiveness Sunday'), we provide here a small sampling of comments from the Fathers of the Church and other patristic-era sources, as well as a few more recent Fathers and Saints, on the nature and need of forgiveness in the Christian life.

### St John Chrysostom

As it is not to be imagined that the fornicator and the blasphemer can partake of the sacred Table, so it is impossible that he who has an enemy, and bears malice, can enjoy Holy Communion. [...] I forewarn, and testify, and proclaim this with a voice that all may hear! 'Let no one who has an enemy draw near the sacred Table, or receive the Lord's Body! Let no one who draws near have an enemy! Do you have an enemy? Do not approach! Do you wish to draw near? Be reconciled, and

then draw near, and only then touch the Holy Gifts!’ (Homily 20)  
Thou dost not so much desire thy sins to be forgiven, as He desires to forgive thee thy sins. In proof that thou dost not so desire it, consider that thou hast no mind either to practice vigils, or to give thy money freely: but He, that He might forgive our sins, spared not His Only-Begotten and True Son, the partner of His throne.

### St Cyril of Jerusalem

‘And forgive us our debts as we also forgive our debtors.’ For we have many sins. For we offend both in word and in thought, and very many things we do worthy of condemnation; and ‘if we say that we have no sin’ (1 John 1.8), we lie, as John says. [...] The offenses committed against us are slight and trivial, and easily settled; but those which we have committed against God are great, and need such mercy as is His only. Take heed, therefore, lest for the slight and trivial sins against you, you shut out for yourself forgiveness from God for your very grievous sins. —*Catechetical Lectures, 23.16*

For God seeks nothing else from us, save a good purpose. Say not, How are my sins blotted out? I tell thee, By willing, by believing. What can be shorter than this? But if, while thy lips declare thee willing, thy heart be silent, He knoweth the heart, who judgeth thee. Cease from this day from every evil deed. Let not thy tongue speak unseemly words, let thine eye abstain from sin, and from roving after things unprofitable.

—*Procatechesis*

### St John Cassian

Hence, in whatever state a person is, he sometimes finds himself making pure and intense prayers. For even from that first and lowest sort, which has to do with recalling the future judgment, the one who is still subject to the punishment of terror and the fear of judgment is occasionally so struck with compunction that he is filled with no less joy of spirit from the richness of his supplication than the one who, examining the kindnesses of God and going over them in the purity of his heart, dissolves into unspeakable gladness and delight. For, according to the words of the Lord, the one who realizes that more has been forgiven him begins to love more. —*The Conferences*



## St Nikolai Velimirovich

If your heart has been softened either by repentance before God or by learning the boundless love of God towards you, do not be proud with those whose hearts are still hard. Remember how long your heart was hard and incorrigible. Seven brothers were ill in one hospital. One recovered from his illness and got up and rushed to serve his other brothers with brotherly love, to speed their recovery. Be like this brother. Consider all men to be your brothers, and sick brothers at that. And if you come to feel that God has given you better health than others, know that it is given through mercy, so in health you may serve your frailer brothers. —Prologue, 31 March

## Elder Sampson of Russia

The drunkard, the fornicator, the proud—he will receive God's mercy. But he who does not want to forgive, to excuse, to justify consciously, intentionally [...] that person closes himself to eternal life before God, and even more so in the present life. He is turned away and not heard.

## St John of Kronstadt

Often during the day I have been a great sinner, and at night, after prayer, I have gone to rest, justified and whiter than snow by the grace of the Holy Spirit, with the deepest peace and joy in my heart! How easy it will be for the Lord to save us too in the evening of our life, at the decline of our days! O save, save, save me, most gracious Lord; receive me in Thy heavenly Kingdom! Everything is possible to Thee!  
—*My Life in Christ, Part 1, p. 27*

O Lord, who hast mercy upon all,  
take away from me my sins,  
and mercifully kindle in me  
the fire of thy Holy Spirit.  
Take away from me the heart of stone,  
and give me a heart of flesh,  
a heart to love and adore Thee,  
a heart to delight in Thee,  
to follow and enjoy Thee, for Christ's sake, Amen  
*St. Ambrose of Milan (AD 339-397)*

IT IS  
YOUR  
GLORY  
TO HAVE  
MERCY





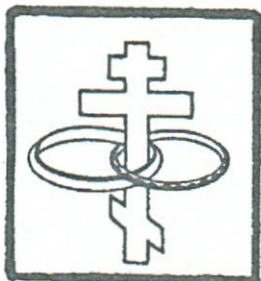
Birthdays  
Wishes!

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

April 9 Maria Garcia  
April 16 Sophia Idromenos  
April 19 Kyra A. Choti

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

**Many and Blessed Years!**



## WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

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

### **April 26 Stephen & Mary D. Demyan**

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

### **Many and Blessed Years**

## **“MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER”**

**W**hen our Lord entered Jerusalem that first Palm Sunday, He caused quite a stir. The streets of the ancient city were filled with visitors from all over the world who had come to celebrate the Feast of the Passover. Everyone was eager to catch a glimpse of the Miracle-worker from Nazareth, Who even had the power to raise the dead, as evidenced by His ability to restore life to His friend Lazarus, who had been in the tomb for 4 days. That “stir” however, was nothing in comparison to what unfolded in the Temple soon after His much-heralded entrance into the Holy City.

The Gospels tell us that Jesus went to the Temple to pray and was immediately incensed by what He saw. There Jesus witnessed first-hand the “business side” of His Father’s House: those who were buying and selling animals to be sacrificed and the money changers who traded Roman coins for Jewish ones, since Roman coins bore the image of Caesar, and would be considered “defiling” the Temple if they were used. In a fit of righteous indignation, Christ overturned their tables and drove them out with a whip He had fashioned from cords. “My house shall be called a house of prayer,” Jesus exclaimed, “but you have made it a den of thieves.” (Matt 21:13)

It is no wonder that soon after this, the high priests and scribes would plot against Jesus and devise a plan to bring about His arrest and ultimate death. His dramatic gesture had offended and humiliated them. How dare He cleanse the Temple? On whose authority was He acting? Christ was a threat to their control over their people. He was perceived as being “dangerous.” Indeed, in their eyes, there was no other alternative: before things got out of hand, this “threat” had to be eliminated. Jesus had to die.