

Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Fourth Sunday in the Great Fast

March 22, 2015

**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 Saturday we celebrate All Souls' Day at which the Divine Liturgy and Memorial Service will be celebrated at 9: 00 AM. Please come and join us in prayer and praise.

+++ The Spring Bake Sale is this Friday and Saturday, March 27, 28. There will be no Pirohi Sale in April.

+++ Wednesday is the solemn feast of the Annunciation. In anticipation, the Divine Liturgy will be celebrated Tuesday evening at 7: 30 PM. Please come and join us in prayer and praise.

+++ The offering for flowers for the coming feast days will be taken next Sunday. Please be generous.

+++ We remind our faithful diocesan and parish dues are DUE. Please fulfill this obligation during this sacred season.

+++ Every Monday, we have prayerful devotions before the Myrrh bearing icon at 6:00 PM. Everyone is invited to be present in praise. The Birthgiver invites us to manifest our faith in response to her first shown love, to unite our prayers with hers for the salvation of our souls. Invite your friends and neighbors to join us.

+++ Please keep the intentions of these members of our parish intercession community in your daily prayers: Father George, Father Thomas, Barbara, Betty, James, Yevlogia, Nicholas, Maria, Cynthia, Pani Anna Marie and Andrea.

+++ 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, \$413.00; Candles, \$29.00; Parish Dues, \$25.00; Diocesan Dues, \$130.00; Kitchen, \$1777.00; Food Coupons, \$520.00; Great Fast Self-Sacrifice, \$28.00, for a total of \$2922.00. 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!

+++ 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, Maria Idronmenos, Anna Zacharyczuk, Bob Gorbich, Marilyn Korba 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 \$1819.00 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 \$5750 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

Stewardship

Tell those who are rich in this world's goods not to be proud and not to rely on so uncertain a thing as wealth. Let them trust in the God who provides us richly with all things for our use. Charge them to do good, to be rich in good works and generous, sharing what they have. Thus they will build a secure foundation for the future, for receiving that life which is life indeed 1 Timothy 6: 17 - 19.

Whatever you do, work at it with all your whole being. Do it for the Lord rather than for men, since you know full well you will receive an inheritance from him as your reward. Be slaves of Christ the Lord Colossians 3: 23, 24.

Make it your practice instead to store up heavenly treasure, which neither moths nor rust corrode nor thieves break in and steal. Remember, where your treasure is, there your heart also is Matthew 6: 20, 21.

Moreover, everyone who has given up home, brothers, or sisters, father or mother, wife or children or property for my sake will receive many times as much and inherit everlasting life Matthew 19: 29.

Jesus answered: "I give you my word, there is no one who has given up home, brothers, or sisters, mother or father, children or property for me and for the gospel who will not receive in this present age a hundred times as many homes, brothers and sisters, mothers, children and property - and persecution besides - and in the age to come, everlasting life" Mark 10: 29, 30.

FEAR OF GOD

Past generations taught their children to fear God. Sometimes today, we hear some say, "You're not really afraid of God, are you? I'd never believe in that kind of God." People many times say things like this because they hope they can change something about God by verbalizing such nonsense. Yes, fear of God is good and healthy, even necessary and no one should be afraid to admit it. One man said, "I also fear water. That does not mean I don't like to fish and enjoy swimming, simply that I respect it, because I never want to forget the life-taking power of a river, a lake or an ocean."

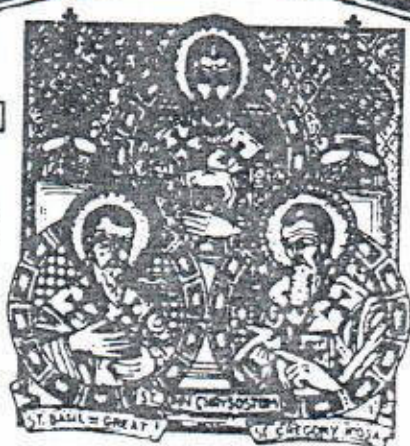
During the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, we are invited to approach "with fear...." to receive Communion. What the authors of the Divine Liturgy meant is that we should be so sensitive spiritually to God and our relationship with Him that we genuinely fear offending Him. We love Him so much we do not want to rupture our relationship with Him. That is the kind of fear, a healthy realistic fear every believer should have of God. It should not simply be a reaction to the fact that "Our God is a consuming fire" Hebrews 12: 29.

It should be the same kind of fear we have for our parents. We love them and understand they love us. But in respecting their authority over us for our good, we do fear the corrective measure, the admonishing words, the special look we receive from them when we have done something wrong. The very self same thing is true of our relationship with our heavenly Father. We stand in awe of His holiness. Because we do, we love Him and want to be close to Him. We desire to respond in love to His first offered love. We want to live with an awareness that He is to be feared more than anyone else. Satan and other people may destroy our body, but our God is One Who can "...destroy both soul and body in hell" Matthew 10: 28.

Only as we fear God do we truly respect and love Him. And only as that love grows and flourishes will it guarantee our fear of God is the proper and right kind of fear to possess because it produces reverence, trust and awe and it acknowledges His sovereignty in our lives. Fear God and you will have nothing else to fear! "Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" Proverbs 1: 7.



*Wisdom Of
The*



*Byzantine
Fathers*

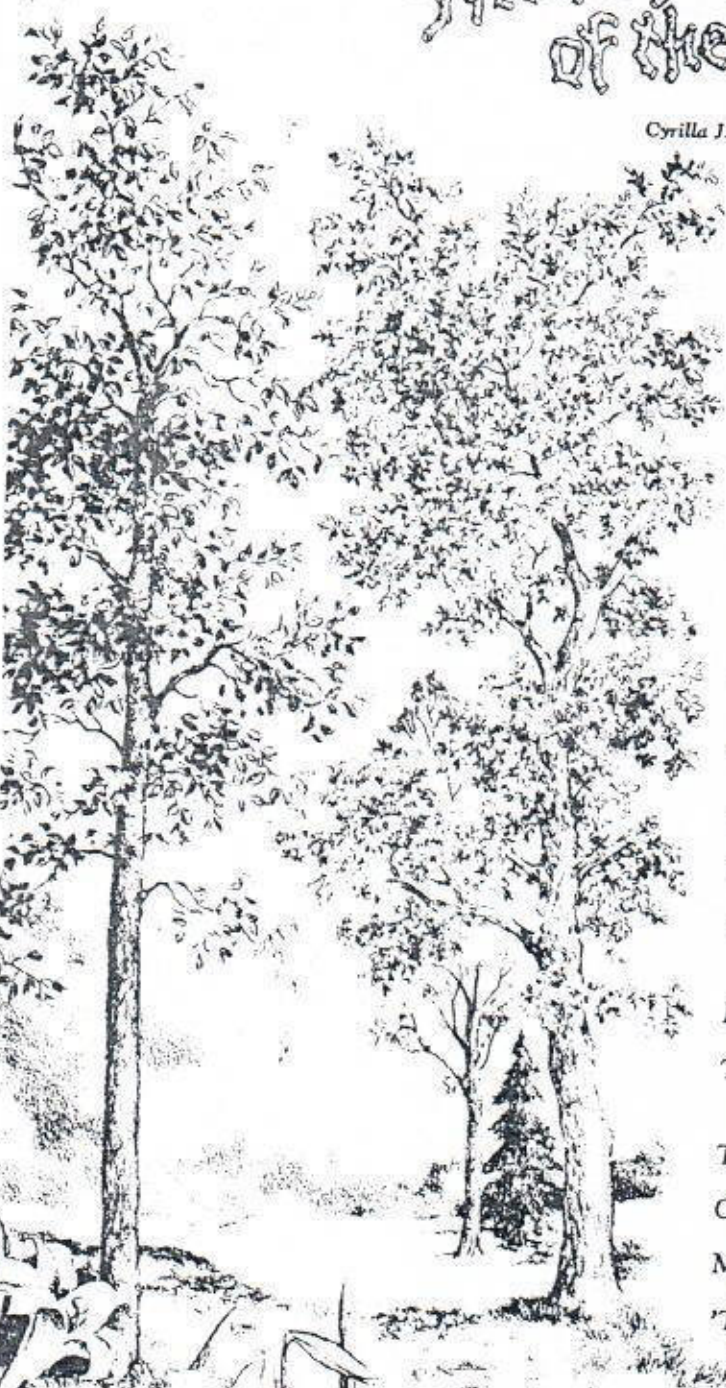
My dear fathers and brethren, as soon as I called to mind the beauty of God's love, its light suddenly appeared in my heart. I have been overcome with its delight. O Lord, how happy is he who has embraced You, for he will no longer have a passionate desire to embrace any earthly beauty.

Happy is he who is moved by Your love to cling to You. He will deny the whole world. Happy is he who caresses Your beauty and with infinite desire delights in it, for he will be spiritually fulfilled. Happy is he who embraces You, for he will be wondrously changed. In spirit and in soul he will rejoice, because You are ineffable joy. Happy is he who gains possession of You, for he will count the treasures of the world as nothing, for You are indeed truly inexhaustible riches. Happy and triply happy is he whom You accept, for though he be without any visible glory he will be more glorious than all that is glorious.

Blessed is he who is loved by You, received by You, taught by You, he who dwells in You and is fed by You with Christ, the immortal food, Christ our God St. Simeon New Theologian.

The Legend of the Dogwood

Cyrilla J. Mansmann



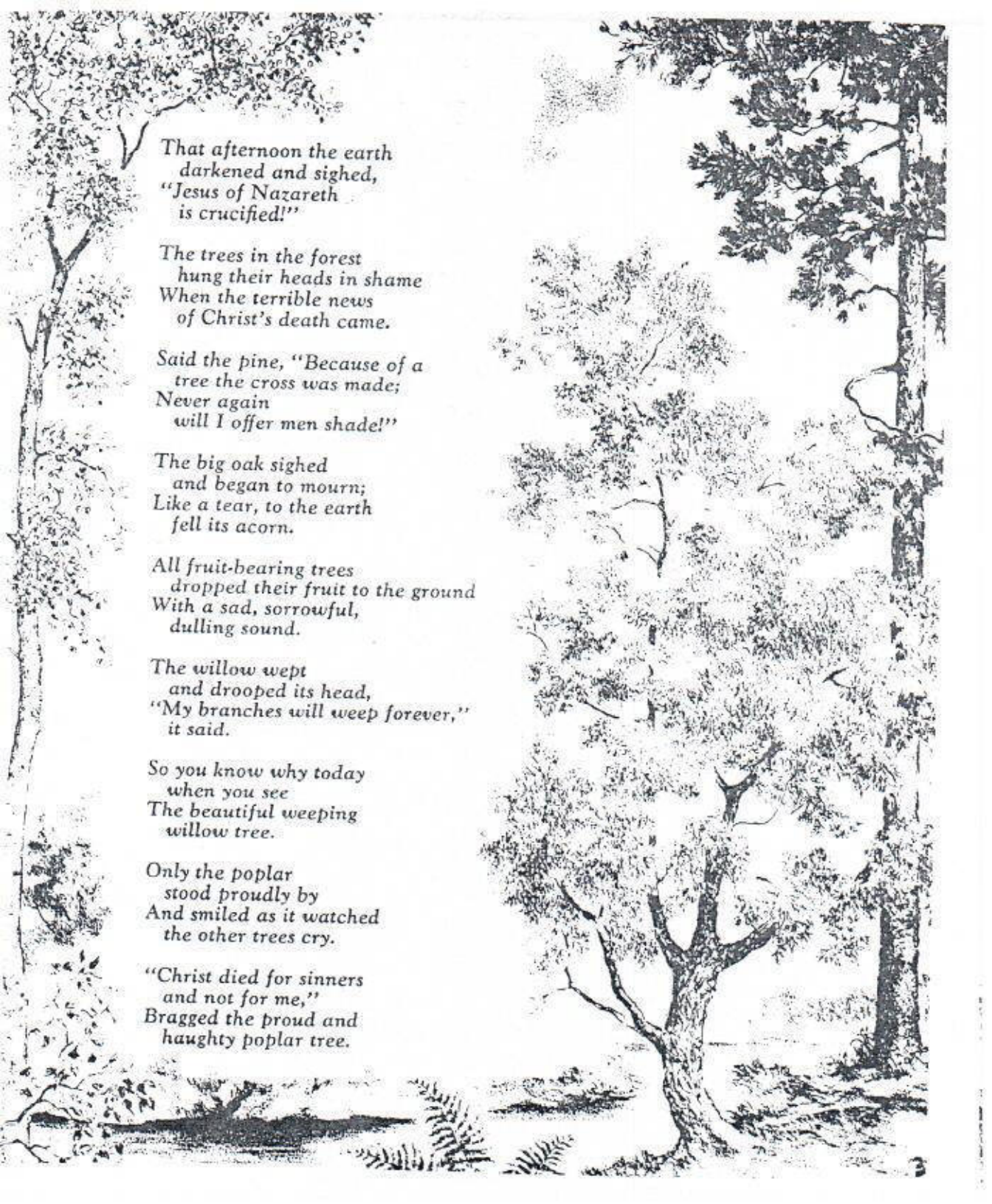
Deep in the forest
among sturdy tall trees
Grows one that is lofty,
the sturdiest of these.

With great majesty
and a stately air,
Near the oak and the elm,
the dogwood stands there . . .
Whispering softly
to the other trees,
Happy and gay
in the early spring breeze,
Waving its branches
high up to the sky,
Calling to the willow,
"How happy am I!"

To the woods one day
came several men
With a wicked gleam
in their eyes, and then
They said of the dogwood,
" 'Tis just right!"
They chopped and they hewed
with all of their might.

Down went the dogwood
with a crashing sound
That echoed through the forest
for miles around.

Then these men dragged
the dogwood away
Over long rough roads
to a place where they
Made a large cross,
both straight and broad:
'Twas the cross they used
to crucify God.



That afternoon the earth
darkened and sighed,
"Jesus of Nazareth
is crucified!"

The trees in the forest
hung their heads in shame
When the terrible news
of Christ's death came.

Said the pine, "Because of a
tree the cross was made;
Never again
will I offer men shade!"

The big oak sighed
and began to mourn;
Like a tear, to the earth
fell its acorn.

All fruit-bearing trees
dropped their fruit to the ground
With a sad, sorrowful,
dulling sound.

The willow wept
and drooped its head,
"My branches will weep forever,"
it said.

So you know why today
when you see
The beautiful weeping
willow tree.

Only the poplar
stood proudly by
And smiled as it watched
the other trees cry.

"Christ died for sinners
and not for me,"
Bragged the proud and
haughty poplar tree.



Just then an angel
came flying by
With a golden cup
for the Lord on High.

It was filled to the brim
with blood so red
That had dropped from the
Savior's side and head.
The angel heard the
proud poplar say
That the Lord had not died
for it that day.
As he turned to speak
to the poplar, tall,
The angel let a drop
of the Precious Blood fall.
Down deep to the roots
of the tree it went
And clear to the top
a shiver was sent.

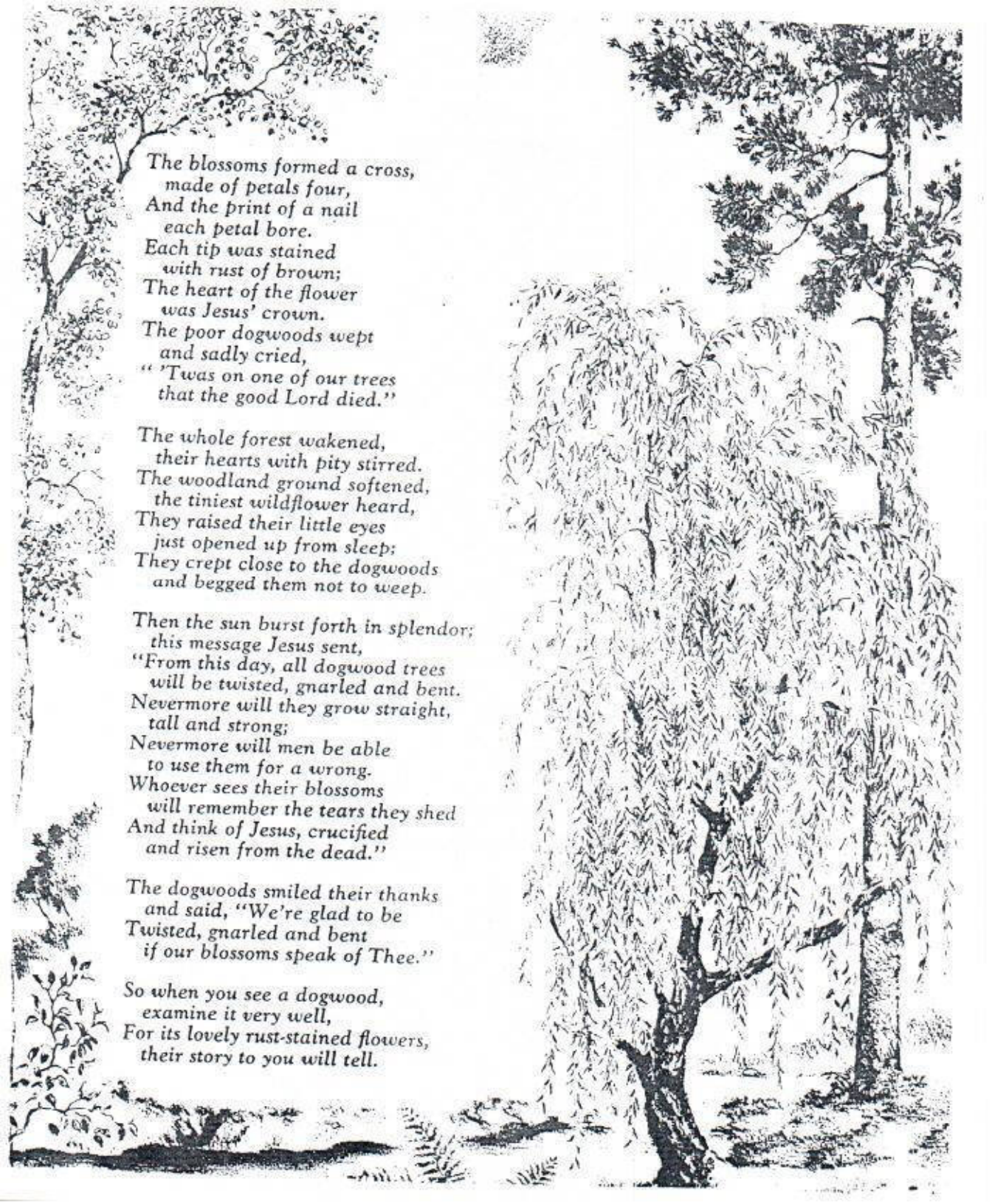
"For the bold remark
that you did make,
Your leaves will continue
to tremble and shake
Even on the calmest day;
in the heat of the sun
They will not be still,
not a single one."

After saying this
the angel flew away,
And the poplar leaves
tremble even today.

Now the dogwoods were
most sorrowful of all,
And down to the earth
they let their tears fall.

Then the forest became
a ghostly sight,
For every tear became
a blossom white.





The blossoms formed a cross,
made of petals four,
And the print of a nail
each petal bore.
Each tip was stained
with rust of brown;
The heart of the flower
was Jesus' crown.
The poor dogwoods wept
and sadly cried,
" 'Twas on one of our trees
that the good Lord died."

The whole forest awakened,
their hearts with pity stirred.
The woodland ground softened,
the tiniest wildflower heard,
They raised their little eyes
just opened up from sleep;
They crept close to the dogwoods
and begged them not to weep.

Then the sun burst forth in splendor;
this message Jesus sent,
"From this day, all dogwood trees
will be twisted, gnarled and bent.
Nevermore will they grow straight,
tall and strong;
Nevermore will men be able
to use them for a wrong.
Whoever sees their blossoms
will remember the tears they shed
And think of Jesus, crucified
and risen from the dead."

The dogwoods smiled their thanks
and said, "We're glad to be
Twisted, gnarled and bent
if our blossoms speak of Thee."

So when you see a dogwood,
examine it very well,
For its lovely rust-stained flowers,
their story to you will tell.

WISDOM! BE ATTENTIVE

O John our father, God-bearer, hermit of the desert and angel in the flesh; you received heavenly gifts by your fasting, vigils, and prayers. You healed the sick and those coming to you with faith. Glory be to the One Who gives you strength; glory be to Him Who crowned you; glory be to the Lord Who heals all through your intercession Troparion, Fourth Sunday of the Great Fast.

O John, our leader and father; the Lord has placed you on high as a true guiding star lighting the ends of the earth with the truth of your virtue Kontakion, Fourth Sunday of the Great Fast.

Let the faithful exult in glory; let them sing for joy and take their rest Prokimenon, Fourth Sunday of the Great Fast.

Having heard the Gospel of the Lord, O venerable Father John, you left this world, counting as nothing the riches and glory that it offered. Then you cried out to everyone: Love the Lord and you shall find eternal favor, for nothing is preferable to His love. And when He shall come in glory, you will find repose with all the saints. Through their prayers, O Christ, grant great mercy to our souls Vesper Hymn, Fourth Sunday of the Great Fast.

We now behold a new mother, greater than the wonders of old. For who has ever known a mother to bear a child without the help of man? Who has known a mother to hold within her arms the Source of all creation? It was God's own will to be born in this manner, and you, O most pure Virgin, carried Him as an infant in your arms. Because of this, you can approach God with the boldness of a mother. Therefore, we venerate you and ask you to always beseech Him to have mercy on us and save our souls Vesper Hymn, Fourth Sunday of the Great Fast.

Traversing the path of this life, I have been sorely wounded by the thievery of passions; lift me up, O Christ, I beseech You. My soul has been stripped by thieves; they have left me half dead along the path, wounded by the blows of my sins; now deign to heal me, O Lord. By my passions, O Christ our Saviour, I have been stripped of Your commandments; sensual pleasures have struck me down; pour out the oil of Your love upon me Matins Hymn, Fourth Sunday of the Great Fast.

ST. JOHN CLIMACUS: THE PRIDE OF ASCETICS

When we think of Lent, the disciplines of prayer and fasting immediately come to mind. It is no wonder, then, that the Church annually dedicates the Fourth Sunday of the Great Fast to the memory of a saint who lived a life of true asceticism: ST. JOHN CLIMACUS.

Very little is actually known about the life of this saintly man. He is thought to have been devoted to monasticism, spending the majority of his years at the famous Monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai. Although he rose to the rank of abbot, St. John treasured the solitude of his simple cell, where he wrote extensively.

St. John is best remembered for his book entitled: "THE LADDER OF DIVINE ASCENT." The Greek word for ladder is "KLIMAKOS", which explains the term that forever will be associated with the saint's name. In this spiritual masterpiece, John compares our journey from sinfulness to perfection with climbing a ladder. The 30 chapters of his book illustrate the great degree of difficulty involved with this "climb", for as John points out, many sins must be conquered and virtues perfected before our goal can be reached. This ascent, Climacus warns, will not be an easy one, and many will fall from the "ladder", succumbing to the temptation of the pleasures and passions of this world.

St. John Climacus died in 649 A.D. Truly he will be remembered as a "guiding star of abstinence", as he is described in the Kontakion hymn for this Sunday.

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