



Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Myrrhbearers Sunday

May 4, 2014

**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

+++ The next Pirohi Sake will be this Saturday, May 10. Please secure orders to assure its success. Helping hands are needed.

+++ 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.

+++ We acknowledge with deep gratitude the recent gift by Robin Pasquino of the altar candles for the Resurrection feast days in thanksgiving for the many blessings received by her family loved ones. We pray the Lord continues to bless this devoted soul and her loved ones with good spiritual and physical health for Many & Blessed Years, Christ Is Risen!

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

+++ 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, \$239.00; Candles, \$168.00; Holyday, \$45.00; Food Coupons, \$260.00; Resurrection, \$120.00; for a total of \$832.00. 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, Anna Zacharyczuk, Eleanor Korba, Daniel & Marilyn Korba, Debra Szmaida, Maria Idromenos, Kyra & Joseph Choti, Sophia Choti, Pani Lucas, Betty Samaris, Robert Gorbich, Frank & Maria Pashos, Eleni, Pallas and Pani Buletza.

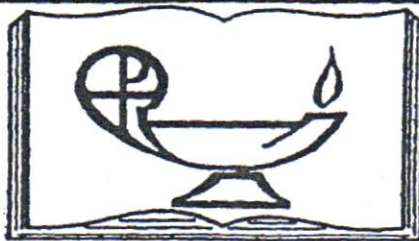
+++ We make a **PENNIES FROM HEAVEN** Canister available for our faithful to bring in pennies for our altar and its appointments. We are already in receipt of **\$1809.00** from this apostolate. Even your pennies can help and are a blessing to our parish.

+++ 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.

+++ We invite all pray the Lord our God grants us an enrichment of our spiritual lives for his glory. May we all be so enriched that this Passion Week is particularly rewarding for each of us, to triumph in Resurrection joy!

LORD



TEACH
US

Cherubim

When he expelled man, he settled him east of the garden of Eden; and he stationed the cherubim and the fiery revolving sword, to guard the way to the tree of life Genesis 3: 24.

Make two cherubim of beaten gold for the two ends of the propitiatory, fastening them so that one cherub springs directly from each end. The cherubim shall have their wings spread out above, covering the place of offering with them; they shall be turned toward each other, but with their faces looking toward the propitiatory. This propitiatory you shall then place on top of the ark. In the ark itself you are to put the commandments which I will give you. There I will meet you and there, from above, the propitiatory, between the two cherubim on the ark of the commandments, I will tell you all the commands that I wish you to give the Israelites Exodus 25: 18 – 22.

With the cherub I placed you, you were on the holy mountain of God, walking among the fiery stones, blameless you were in your conduct from the day you were created, until evil was found in you Ezekiel 28: 14, 15.

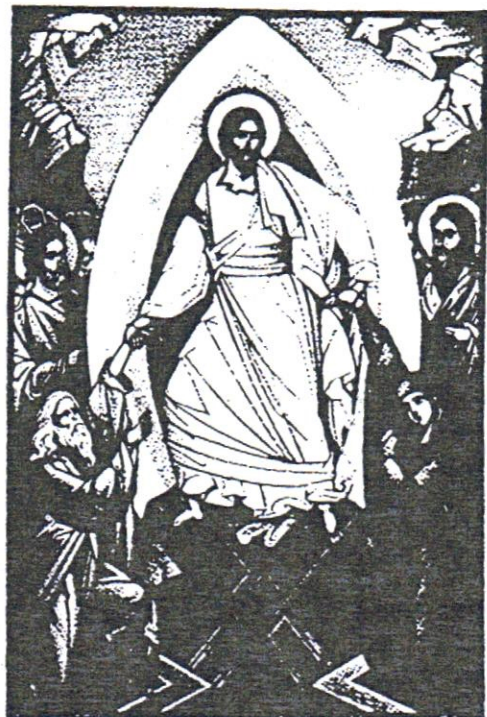
They knew by revelation that they were providing, not for themselves but for you, what has now been proclaimed to you by those who preach the gospel to you, in the power of the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Into these matters cherubim long to search 1 Peter 1: 12.

He mounted a cherub and flew borne on the wings of the wind 2 Samuel 22: 11.

I saw there the glory of the God of Israel, like the vision I had seen in the plain. The cherubim were stationed to the right of the temple; these were the living creatures I had seen beneath the God of Israel...whom I now recognized as cherubim Ezekiel 10: 4 – 7.

The Resurrection Icon

None of the four canonical Gospels record the actual Resurrection of Christ—they only relate the discovery of the empty tomb by the myrrh-bearing women and His later appearances to the disciples. Traditional Byzantine icons faithfully follow the Gospels by not picturing the precise moment of Christ's emergence from the tomb. Instead it is the "Descent into the Abyss" that has become the Resurrection Icon. Christ descended into the Abyss (Hell or the Underworld) to free the souls of all the righteous men and women who lived before he opened the gates of Heaven through His Cross. This event is described in the first hymn of Resurrection Matins: "When You descended to death, O Immortal Life, You Destroyed the Abyss by the radiance of Your divinity. And when You raised the dead from the depths of the earth, all the heavenly powers cried out: 'O Giver of Life, Christ, our God, glory be to You.'" (Resurrection Troparion 2)



In the center of the icon against the black background of the Abyss, stands Christ, clothed in shining white garments and surrounded by a radiant halo of blue. His divinity overcomes the darkness of the realm of Death. He stands upon the shattered gates of the kingdom of death. Scattered around are the broken locks and chains that used to bind fallen mankind; they show that "Death has no more power over Him." (Romans 6:9)

In the Icon, Christ grasps the hands of Adam and Eve, drawing them to the immortality that they lost in the Garden of Eden. The raising of Adam and Eve foreshadows the resurrection of all flesh. "Just as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will come to life again." (1 Cor. 15:22)

Christ also frees all those who put their faith in His coming. That is why prophets and kings stand on either side, pointing out the promised Messiah and Savior they eagerly awaited. In Christ all humanity is raised. Through our baptismal union with Christ, our own death is only the passage to eternal life.

The Resurrection Icon proclaims the divinity of Christ who conquered Death by His death. It is a comforting promise of our own victory over death through the power of God.

It means to grasp in understanding.

It is steady perception

Determined reflection

Inspired living faith

Comprehension more than sight.

The holy women, and through them the disciples, arrived at the conclusion the unshakable, unassailable, certain conviction that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead! To him be all glory, honor and adoration now and forever. Amen.

**Prayer is the Road to Heaven, but Faith
opens the door!**



*If following Jesus seems difficult, do not be afraid;
trust him.*

*Be confident that He is close to you;
He is with you and He will give you the peace
you are looking for and the
strength to live as He would have you do.*

Sunday of the Myrrh-Bearers

Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; He is risen
Luke 24: 5, 6.

The holy women in their devotion had planned to anoint the remains of our Lord with spices and ointments after the manner of Jewish burial preparation. They had seen him die on the cross and be carried to a newly hewn-out-of-rock tomb. They certainly knew the place. But as they arrive they discover Jesus is gone! In his place stand two angels who remind them of the prediction of Jesus that He would be crucified and then on the third day be raised from the dead.

If they had listened carefully, understood without hesitation and believed without condition in the first place, they would not have expected to find his body in the tomb. But none of the followers of our Lord understood his prediction; they were all astoundingly surprised by his resurrection from the dead. Breathless and with excitement, the women rushed back with the wonderful news, but the eleven disciples and the others did not believe their report.

So our most important question on this Sunday is "Do we believe?" "Do I believe?" "Do you believe?" Simply because Christ rose from the dead, we do know our world is heading for redemption, not disaster. We do know without equivocation that death is conquered and overcome and that we, too, will be raised from the dead to live and reign forever with Christ. We know the Saviour and Redeemer lives, ruling his kingdom and that God's power which brought Jesus back from the dead is also available to us so that we can join him in everlasting life when we leave this evil world forever.

So we do not seek the living among the dead! Of him who once was slain, we now hear the angels sing, "He lives!" We fervently believe what He himself predicted that He would rise! What a joyful sound the words of the angels echo for us! What a glorious hour the early morning resonates! By his almighty reverberating power, He rose and leaves behind an empty tomb! That is why we sing so frequently, often and triumphantly, "Christ Is Risen!" we wish to imprint on our conscious and subconscious psyche the reality and shattering truth of our own victory, our own triumph, so that we make it our personal own and so it can guide in daily living our destiny. The songs of the Church tell our triumph, celebrate him who burst the boundaries of death, overcame the forsaken place of hell and forever lives to save. The first-begotten of the dead, as our glorious head introduces us to never-ending life once again. The

Resurrection causes us to share the victory of our Leader to triumph with the eternal King! We sing Alleluia today, over and over again. Because it means "Praise God!" we see death no longer as a threat or possessed of a sting. Death has lost its power and the grave no longer has victory. Since He shares with us our human nature and body, so like him, we too will rise and share victory with him. That is why for us the celebration of Resurrection Day is not equaled anywhere. Hail, we sing, Resurrection glory, Alleluia!

Those women who were eager to serve the Lord even in his death, at the tomb make the grandest discovery of all: the risen Christ! The startling account reveals they went to proclaim the glorious news to the disciples themselves. It is through women that the most important, most exciting and riveting news of Christianity is made known to the eagerly awaiting world. "Rabboni," is a term which carries the most respect, utmost respect, reverence and loving devotion. It is a more emphatic and honored term than the simple "rabbi" or "teacher."

It is not enough that we ascribe to Christ titles of respect and tradition. We must know him and experience him as our risen Lord. We have a mandate and a mission to proclaim the Good News from personal experience just like the women in today's gospel narrative, "I have seen the Lord." We must be able to repeat and echo their conviction. Only a vibrant encounter with the risen Christ and a recognition of his mighty power leads us to know him as He truly is and to share his message with others. In that discovery is our destiny.

Upon invitation from the holy women, the disciples arrive. The grave clothes lay like the shriveled, cracked shell of a cocoon, left behind when the moth has emerged and hoisted its bright sails in the sunshine, or, more accurately, like a glove from which the hand has been removed, the fingers to which still retain the shape of the hand.

In that manner, the grave clothes were lying, collapsed a little, slightly deflated, because there was between the rolls of bandage-like cloths a considerable weight of spices and ointments, but there lay the linen cloth that had been wound around the body of the Lord.

It was when they secondarily saw that, that the disciples believed. The Greek word here for "see" – *theorei* – is not to behold as one looks at a spectacle, not to see as the watchmaker who peers through his magnifying glass up close.

It actually means to see with inner light that leads one to an unshakable conclusion.




Now is the time to remember
that God enfolds you in his
healing love. Know that you
are not alone, God is with you
always, and so are the prayers
of those who care about you.
The hope of the Resurrection
be yours.

*I am the
Resurrection and the Life;
whoever believes in me, though he should die,
will come to life;
and whoever is alive and believes in me
will never die
John 11: 25, 26.*



A Crown of Stars

Oh, spare me all trouble and save me from sorrow,
May each happy day bring a brighter tomorrow.
May I never know pain or taste bitter woe,
Sadness and suffering I care not to know.
But if I should meet Him sometime face to face,
Will I feel oddly strange and a bit out of place,
When I look at the marks where the nails went in
As He hung on the cross to save us from sin?
Will He think me unworthy to be one of His own
And too weak and untried to sit at His throne?
Will I forfeit my right to a crown set with stars
Because I can show Him no "battle scars"?
Will the one who suffered and wept with pain
Be the one He will welcome to share His domain?
Will the trials of life make a crown of stars
Unfit to be worn by one without scars?



Wisdom, Be Attentive!

The noble Joseph took down your most pure body from the cross. He wrapped it in a clean shroud, and with fragrant spices, laid it in burial in a new grave. But You arose in three days, O Lord, bestowing great mercy upon the world Troparion, Sunday of the Myrrh-Bearing Women.

The angel stood by the grave and cried out to the women bearing ointment: "Ointment is for the dead, but Christ has shown himself not subject to corruption. So now cry out: 'The Lord is risen, bestowing great mercy upon the world!'" Troparion, Sunday of the Myrrh-Bearing Women.

When You descended to death, O Immortal Life, You destroyed the Abyss through the radiance of your divinity; and when You raised the dead from the depth of the earth, all the heavenly powers cried out: "O Giver of Life, Christ our God, glory to You!" Troparion, Sunday of the Myrrh-Bearing Women.


By your resurrection, O Christ God, You told the women bearing ointment to rejoice and you stilled the weeping of Eve, the first mother. You instructed the women to announce to your apostles, "The Saviour is risen from the tomb!" Kontakion, Sunday of the Myrrh-Bearing Women.

Although You descended to the grave, O Immortal One, You destroyed the power of death; You arose again as a Victor, O Christ God! You announced to the women bearing ointment, "Rejoice." You gave peace to your apostles and resurrection to the fallen Kontakion, Sunday of the Myrrh-Bearing Women.

Save your people, O Lord, and bless your inheritance Prokimenon, Sunday of the Myrrh-Bearing Women.

Receive the Body of Christ! Drink the Source of immortality! Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia! Communion Hymn, Sunday of the Myrrh-Bearing Women.

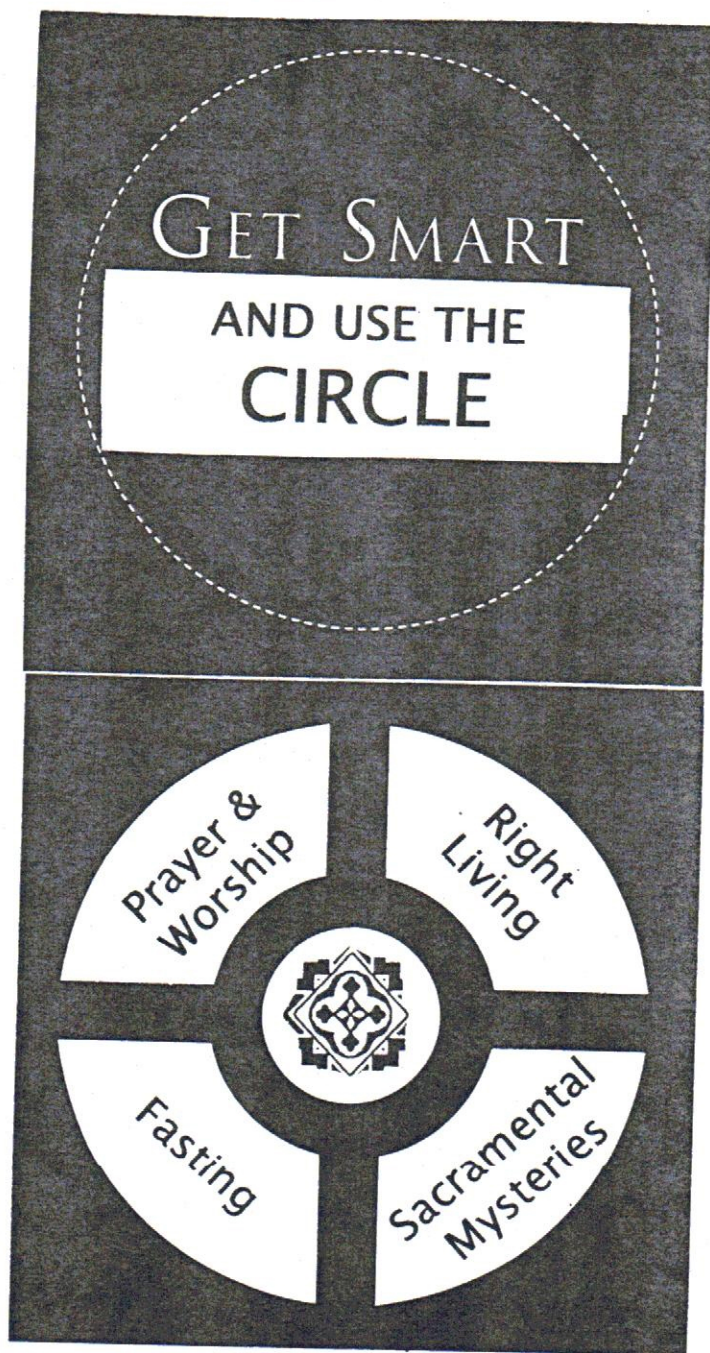
Don't be Square; it's the reason your life is not fulfilled.



**Don't Be
Square**

Don't be Square; are you going along from day to day perfectly satisfied with your existence?

Get in the circle of never-ending life. Get smart about spiritual checkups and daily life screenings! Ask yourself soul-searching questions.



Come to our Church every Sunday
and holyday to learn the correct
way to pray and worship.

Come to our Church and learn how
to put into practice Christ's challenges.

Come to our Church and learn how
to integrate the ascetic life into daily
living.

Come to our Church and learn the
indispensable value of Christ's
Sacramental Mysteries.

The correct and rightly lived life is in the embrace of the
Orthodox Church!



GET SMART

What importance does
Christ's death on the Cross
have for you?

Aren't you excited and grateful
the Lord rose from the dead for
you?



Birthday
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:

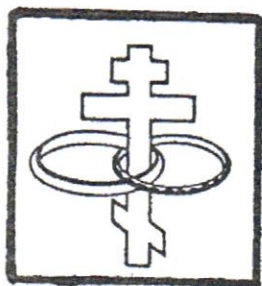
April 26 Stephen & Mary Demyan

May 22 Frank & Maria Pashos

May 24 Robin & Louis Pasquino

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 9 Maria Garcia

April 16 Sophia Idromenos

April 19 Kyra A.Choti

May 3 Bety Samaris

May 9 Rachel Marie Korba

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

GOD
WILL
CARRY
YOU
THROUGH

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It is the signature theme of God's revelation to us in Scripture and the life of Christ's Body, the Church, that our heavenly Father always comes to the aid of his children. Isaac's last minute reprieve from certain death at the hand of obedient Abraham. The children of Israel rescued from the brick pits of Egypt. Saul became Paul, liberated from a path of hatred and violence. And all the redeemed, delivered from destruction souls by the gift of the Saviour.

Again and again, stories of heavenly oversight and divine rescue capture our imagination and help build our trust that the same God will do the very same for each of us in our time and place. In stories of old, our heavenly Father demonstrates his might with divided seas, guiding clouds, blinding lights, miraculous healings, unquenchable fires

The same God who stepped in and rerouted history cares about our own struggles, fears, tears, pains and hopes. Facing financial woes, relationship dead ends, problems of faith or health crises? You will get through these trials. It will not be easy or quick or painless, but our God will carry you through. Trust him!

Revelations in the life of the Chosen People, both in the Old and New Covenants, of brothers and sisters who face challenges in need of Red Sea parting power encourage us as we walk through our own struggles.

What God has done for others, He will do for you.



GOD
CARRIES US
THROUGH



You will get through this.

It may not be painless.

It will not be quick.

But God will use the mess in your life for good.

Do not be foolish or naïve.

But do not despair either.

With God's help, you will get through this.



You will get through this.

You fear you will not. We all do. We fear that the depression will never lift, the yelling will never stop, the pain will never leave...We wonder: *Will this gray sky ever brighten? This load ever lighten?* We feel stuck, trapped, locked in. Predestined for failure. Will we ever exit this pit?

Yes!

Deliverance is to Scripture what jazz music is to Mardi Gras, bold, brassy and everywhere. Deliverance:

out of the lion's den for Daniel,
the prison for Peter,
the belly of the whale for Jonah,
Goliath's shadow for David,
the storm for the disciples,
disease for lepers,
doubt for Thomas,
the tomb for Lazarus,
shackles for Paul.

Our heavenly Father carries us through this stuff:

through the Red Sea onto dry safe ground (Exodus 14: 22),
through the wilderness (Deuteronomy 29: 5).
through the valley of the shadow of death (Psalms 23: 4),
through the deep sea (Psalms 77: 19).

Through is a favorite word of God.

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you Isaiah 43: 2.

It will not be painless.

Have you wept your final tear or received your last round of chemotherapy? Not necessarily. Will your unhappy marriage become happy in a heartbeat? Not likely.

Does our God guarantee the absence of struggle and the abundance of strength? Not in this life. But He does pledge to reweave your pain for a higher purpose.

It will not be quick.

Joseph was seventeen years old when his brothers abandoned him. He was at least thirty seven when he was with them again. Another couple of years passed before he saw his father.

Sometimes God takes his time:

One hundred twenty years to prepare Noah for the flood;

Eighty years to prepare Moses for his work.

God called young David to be king, had Samuel anoint him, but returned him to the sheep pasture. He called Paul to be an apostle and then isolated him in Arabia for perhaps three years. Jesus was on earth for three decades before He built anything other than a kitchen table.

How long will God take with you? He may take his time. His history is redeemed not in minutes, but in lifetimes.

But God will use your mess for good.

We see Satan's tricks and ploys. Our God sees Satan tripped and foiled.

Let us be clear: You represent a challenge to Satan's plan. You carry something of God within you because you are created in his image, something noble and holy, something the world needs: wisdom, kindness, mercy, skill. If Satan can neutralize you, he can mute your influence for good.

What Satan intends for evil, our God, the Master Weaver and Master Builder, redeems for good.

The story of Joseph is in God's revelation to us that we benefit from it as it teaches us to trust in God to trump evil.

Good days.

Bad days.

God is in all days.



I look up to the hills, but where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. He will not let you be defeated. He who guards you never sleeps...As the mountains surround Jerusalem, the Lord surrounds his people now and forever...You are my help. Because of your protection, I sing Our help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

Psalms 121: 1 – 3; Psalms 125: 2;
Psalms 63: 7; Psalms 124: 8.



Hope In The Midst Of Tough Times

*So it came to pass when Joseph came to his brothers,
that they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the tunic of many
colors that was on him. Then they took him and cast him
into a pit. And the pit was empty there was no water in it.
And they sat down to eat a meal*

Genesis 37: 23 – 25.

It was an abandoned cistern. Jagged rocks and varied roots extended from its sides as if desperately looking for nourishment. The seventeen year old boy lay at the bottom. At least he looked to be a boy: down beard, spindly arms and legs. His hands were bound, ankles tied. He lay on his side, knees to his chest, cramped in the small place. The sand was wet with spittle where he had drooled. His eyes were wide with fear. His voice was hoarse from screaming. It was not that his brothers did not hear him. Twenty two years later, when a famine had tamed their swagger and guilt had dampened their pride, they would confess, *We saw the anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us and we would not hear* Genesis 42: 21.

Joseph did not see this assault coming. He did not climb out of bed that morning and think, "I'd better dress in warm padded clothing because this is the day I get tossed in a hole in the ground." The attack caught him off guard.

So did yours. Joseph's pit came in the form of a cistern. Maybe yours came in the form or guise of diagnosis, or a foster home, or a traumatic injury. Joseph was thrown into a hole and despised. And you? Thrown into an unemployment line and forgotten. Thrown into a divorce and abandoned. Into a bed and abused. The pit. A kind of death, waterless and austere. Some people never recover. Life is reduced to one request: get out and never be hurt again. Not simply done. Pits have no easy exits.

Joseph's story got worse before it got better. Abandonment led to enslavement, entrapment and finally imprisonment. He was sucker punched. Sold out. Mistreated. People made

promises only to break them, offered gifts only to take them. If hurt were a swampland, then Joseph was sentenced to a life of hard labor in the Everglades.

Yet he never gave up. Bitterness never staked its claim. Anger never metastasized into hatred. His heart never hardened; his resolve never vanished. He not only survived; he thrived. He ascended like a helium balloon. An Egyptian official promoted him to chief servant. The prison warden placed Joseph over the inmates. And Pharaoh, the highest ruler on the planet, shoulder tapped Joseph to serve as his prime minister. By the end of his life, Joseph was the second most powerful man of his generation. It is not hyperbole to state that he saved the world from starvation.

How did he flourish in the midst of tragedy? We do not have to speculate. Some twenty years later the roles were reversed, Joseph the strong one and his brothers the weak ones. They came to him in dread. They feared he would settle the score and throw them into a pit of their own making. But Joseph did not. And in his explanation we find his inspiration:

As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive Genesis 50: 20.

In the hands and sight of our gracious God, evil becomes eventual good. Joseph tied himself to the pillar of this promise and held on for dear life. Nothing in his story glosses over the presence of evil. Quite the contrary. Bloodstains and tearstains are everywhere. Joseph's heart was rubbed raw against the rocks of disloyalty and miscarried justice. Yet time and time again God redeemed the pain. The torn robe became a genuine royal one. The pit became a palace. The broken family grew old together. The very acts intended to destroy God's servant turned out to strengthen him.

You meant evil against me. Joseph told his brothers, uses a Hebrew verb which traces its meaning to "weave" or "plait." "You wove evil," he was saying, "but God rewove it together for good."

God is the Master Weaver. He stretches the yarn and intertwines the colors, the ragged twine with the velvet strings; the pain and the pleasures. Nothing escapes his reach or ability. Everything, despot, weather pattern, and molecule are at his command. He passes the shuttle back and forth across the generations, and as He does, a design emerges. Satan weaves. God reweaves.

And God, the Master Builder. This is the meaning behind the words of Joseph: "God meant it for good in order to bring about...." The Hebrew word translated here is bring about as a construction term. It describes a task of building project akin to the ones that we see so many places about us almost everywhere. Three lanes are reduced to one, transforming a morning commute into a daily stew. Workers hold signs and shovels and cranes hover overhead. Far too many grumble, how long is this going to last?

But one such man's neighbors had a different attitude toward such projects. They are highway engineers, consultants and they endure the same traffic jams and detours as the rest of us do, but with a better attitude. Why? They know how these projects develop. "It will take time," they respond to the grumbles of others, "but it will get finished. It is doable." They have seen the plans, so they grasp the meaning.

By giving us stories like that of Joseph, God allows us to study his plans. Such disarray! Brothers dumping brother into a hole in the ground. Entitlements,. Families and family feuds scattered about like nails and cement bags on a vacant lot. Satan's logic was sinister and simple: destroy the family of Abraham and thereby destroy his seed of the future, Jesus Christ. All of hell, it seems set its target on Jacob's boys.

But watch the Master Builder at work. He cleared debris, stabilized the structure and bolted trusses until the chaos of Genesis 37: 24: *They cast him into a pit* became the triumph of Genesis 50 20: *for the life of many people..*

God as Master Weaver, Master Builder. He redeems the story of Joseph. Can't He redeem your story as well?

*Lord, even when I have trouble all around me,
you will keep me alive.
When my enemies are angry,
you will reach down and save me by your power*

Psalms 138: 7.

Joseph would be the first to tell you that life in the pit stinks. Yet for all its rottenness, doesn't the pit do at least this much? It forces you to look upward. Someone from up there must come down here and give you a hand. God did that for Joseph. At the right time, in the right way He will do the same for you.



**We cannot
always see what
God is doing,
but can't we
assume He is up
to something good?**

God Is In The Crisis

*Now there was no bread in the land, for the famine was very severe,
so that the land of Egypt and land of Canaan languished because of the famine*
Genesis 47: 13.

During the time Joseph was struggling to reconcile with his brothers, he was also navigating a catastrophe. It had been two years since the last drop of rain. The sky was endlessly blue. The sun relentlessly hot. Animal carcasses littered the ground, and no hope appeared on the horizon. The land was a dust bowl. No rain meant no farming. No farming meant no food. When people appealed to Pharaoh for help, he said, *"Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, do"* Genesis 41: 55.

Joseph faced a calamity on a global scale.

Yet contrast the description of the problem with the outcome. Years passed, and the people told Joseph, *You saved our lives; let us find favor in the light of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants* Genesis 47: 35

The people remained calm. A society that was ripe for bedlam actually thanked the government rather than attack it. Makes person wonder if Joseph ever taught a course in crisis management. If he did, he included truth and reality in the words he spoke to his brothers: *God sent me before you to preserve life. For these two years the famine has been in the land, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. And God sent me before you* Genesis 45: 5 – 7.

Joseph began and ended his crisis assessment with references to our heavenly Father. He assumed God was in the crisis.

Then he faced the crisis with a plan. He collected grain during the good years and redistributed it in the bad years. When the people ran out of food, he gave it to them in

exchange for money, livestock and property. After he stabilized the economy, he gave the people a lesson on money management, *Give a fifth to Pharaoh, and four fifths shall be your own, as seed for the field and as food for yourselves* Genesis 47: 24.

Joseph never raised the dead, but he kept people from dying. He never healed the sick, but kept sickness from spreading. He made a plan and stuck with it. And because he did, the nation survived. His family survived and was reconciled. He triumphed with a calm methodical plan.

*Since we are surrounded by so great
a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside
every weight, and the sin which so
easily ensnares us, and let us run with
endurance the race that is set before us*

Hebrews 12: 1.

High above us is a crowd of witnesses, They are the Abrahams, Jacobs and Isaacs and Josephs from all generation and nations. Listen carefully and you will hear a multitude of God's children urging you on, "Run," they shout. "Run." God will carry you through this!"

*Just as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts higher than your thoughts*

Isaiah 55: 9.

*Do not let any crisis paralyze you.
Do not let the sadness overwhelm you.
Do not let the fear intimidate you.
To do nothing is the wrong thing.
To do something is the right thing.*

And to believe in God is the highest thing.

PRIVILEGED WITNESSES OF THE RESURRECTION

The story of the MYRRH-BEARING WOMEN is a tale of boldness and bravery. Their loyalty to their Lord knew no limits. While others betrayed, deserted and abandoned Him, these women sadly looked on as Christ was crucified, taken from the Cross and finally placed in a tomb. How crushed they must have felt as they witnessed the huge rock rolled into place, seemingly sealing forever the tomb of their Master!

The Gospel tells us, however, that even the prospect of encountering a band of Roman soldiers did not deter these saintly women from going back to the tomb to do what their religious laws said they must: properly prepare and anoint Christ's Body for burial. What they saw in those early morning hours certainly must have astounded them: the guards were gone . . . and so was the Body of Jesus! HE IS

RISEN! HE IS NOT HERE!

This is the angelic message that they received! Except for Christ's linen burial cloth, the tomb was empty. Thus, these faithful women earned the honor of being the first witnesses of the Resurrection.



The Gospel accounts of the number of women vary. St. Luke gives no specific number. The Evangelist Matthew mentions 2 women, while St. Mark speaks of 3 being present. Matthew and Mark give testimony of 1 angel, while the contention of Luke and John is that 2 were present. Church Fathers have theorized that the joy and excitement of the realization that Christ had truly risen may have clouded the recollections of the Gospel writers. NOTHING, however, can overshadow the significant contributions these humble and pious women made to the greatest event in the history of mankind.