



# Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

St. Thomas Sunday

May 12, 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 have festal anointing today on the occasion of our Lord's Triumphal and Victorious Resurrection. The customary greeting is "Christ Is Risen!" to which we reply, "Indeed He Is Risen!"

+++ Today we remember, honor and pray for our beloved Mothers living and departed. A blessed happy family celebration of Mothers' Day to all our faithful!



+++ We have learned from a priest of the diocese that our former shepherd, +Father Charles Lehman went to his eternal reward and was laid to rest on Holy and Great Thursday. We will announce a Memorial Service for the repose of his soul.

+++ We will have no Pirohi Sale this month. On Friday, May 24, we will have a Memorial Day Bake Sale for Nut, Poppy, Apricot and Prune rolls. The last Pirohi Sale for the season will take place on Saturday, June 1. Please secure orders for both events. Order Sheets are available in the kitchen today.

+++ Please keep the intentions of these members of our parish intercession community in your daily prayers: Anna, Ryan, Betty, Mary, Beth, Ann Helene, Delores, 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: Tithing Offering, \$405.00; Candles, \$131.00; Self Sacrifice Great Fast Offering, \$42.00; Flowers, \$1.00; Kitchen, \$57.00; Holy Day \$304.00; Resurrection, \$2656.00; Food Coupons, \$200.00, for a total of \$3796.00. 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, Debra Szmaida, Marilyn Korba, Nina Harrison, Sophia Choti, Alexander Choti, Eleanor Korba, Michael Douglas, Robert Gorbich, 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.

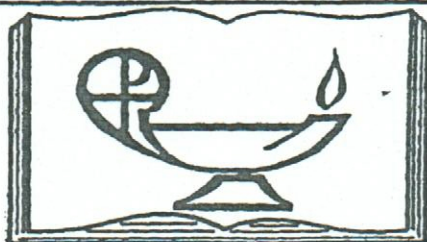
+++ Please be certain to see a member of the Parish Council if you would like to help our parish by using **Shop Rite Food Coupons** available in \$20.00 denominations. We invite **ALL** to be caring and supportive and use Grocery Coupons for food shopping as we have gratefully realized \$5550.00 on 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.

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

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

LORD



TEACH  
US

## Unending Happiness

*Like sheep they are herded into the nether world; death is their shepherd and the upright rule over them. Quickly their form is consumed; the neither world is their palace. But God will redeem me from the power of the nether world by receiving me* Psalms 49: 15, 16.

*Nothing deserving a curse shall be found there. The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be there, and his servants shall serve him faithfully* Revelation 22: 3.

*No longer shall your sun go down, or your moon withdraw. For the Lord will be your light forever, and the days of your mourning shall be at an end* Isaiah 60: 20.

*Have no fear of the sufferings to come. The devil will indeed cast some of you into prison to put you to the test; you will be tried over a period of ten days. Remain faithful until death and I will give you the crown of life* Revelation 2: 10.

*He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, crying out or pain, for the former world has passed away* Revelation 2: 4.

*The night shall be no more. They will need no light from lamps or the sun, for the Lord God shall give them light and they shall reign forever* Revelation 22: 5.

*No longer shall the sun be your light by day. Nor the brightness of the moon shine upon you at night. The Lord shall be your light forever, your God shall be your glory. No longer shall your sun go down, or your moon withdraw. For the Lord will be your light forever and the day of your mourning shall be at an end* Isaiah 60: 19, 20.

*I saw no temple in the city. The Lord God the Almighty is its temple, he and the Lamb. The city had no need of sun or moon, for the glory of God gave it light and its lamp was the Lamb* Revelation 21: 22, 23.



## What Is The Most Frequently Used Name For Jesus?

It is *Son of Man*, which appears 82 times in the New Testament; 81 times in the gospels and just once in the book of Acts of the Apostles. The name *Son of Man* first appears in the Old Testament, in the book of Daniel as a messianic prophecy: "I saw the night visions, and, behold one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven" Daniel 7: 13. *Son of Man* is taken to signify the human nature He espoused by being born of the Every Virgin Mary, in contradistinction to Son of God, which refers to His divinity.

### What Are The Other Names Of Jesus?

Jesus is called by 154 other names in the New Testament, including these:

The Advocate - *John 2:1*

Alpha and Omega - *Revelation 1:8, 22:13*

The Bridegroom - *John 3:29*

The Chief Shepherd - *1 Peter 5:4*

The Chosen One - *Luke 23:35*

The Eldest of Many Brothers - *Romans 8:29*

The First and the Last - *Revelation 1:17, 2:8*

Firstborn of All Creation - *Colossians 1:15*

Glory - *John 12:41*

God of Glory - *Acts 7:2*

Greater Covenant - *Hebrews 7:22*

Head of Every Man - *1 Corinthians 11:3*

Hidden Manna - *Revelation 2:17*

Hope - *1 Timothy 1:2*

Image of the Unseen God - *Colossians 1:15*

Inexpressible Gift - *2 Corinthians 9:15*

Israel's Comforting - *Luke 2:25*

King of Kings - *Revelation 17:14, 1 Timothy 6:15*

Lamb Without Spot or Stain - *1 Peter 1:19*

Last Adam - *1 Corinthians 15:45*

Light of the World - *John 8:12*

Lion of the Tribe of Judah - *Revelation 5:5*  
Living Bread - *John 6:51*  
Lord of All Men - *Acts 10:36*  
Main Cornerstone, - *Ephesians 2:20*  
The Man - *John 19:5*  
Morning Star - *2 Peter 1:19, Revelation 2:28*  
Only Son of the Father - *John 1:14*  
Perfect Copy (of God's nature) - *Hebrews 1:3*  
Power for Salvation - *Luke 1:69*  
Precious Cornerstone - *1 Peter 2:6*  
Prince of Life - *Acts 3:15*  
Radiant Light of God's Glory - *Hebrews 1:3*  
Righteous Judge - *2 Timothy 4:8*  
Rising Sun - *Luke 1:78*  
Ruler of All - *1 Timothy 6:15*  
Second Adam - *Romans 5:12-21*  
Son of the Blessed One - *Mark 14:61*  
Spiritual Rock - *1 Corinthians 10:4*  
True Vine - *John 15:1*  
The Way - *John 14:6*  
Word Was Made Flesh - *John 1:14*

When St. Thomas finally placed his hand into the wounded side of the Lord and saw His risen glory, he said in response, "My Lord and my God!" *John 20: 28*. This is the usual way we approach our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, but God's revelation to us in Scripture has a rich diversity of descriptions and names for Him. Each of them helps us better understand Him as the Son of God, Messiah and Lord and Saviour.

We who are communicants of His Body, the Church, can come to a new understanding and appreciation of our Risen Saviour by prayerfully reading and seeing how He is looked upon, approached and understood in Scripture. That is the challenge of this triumphal Resurrection feast!



# LIFE EVERLASTING

“Here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city which is to come” (Heb 13:14). All of God’s created plan and all salvation history aim at a final fulfillment. Even now the glory of Christ’s ultimate victory is at work in this world. The kingdom of God is already beginning to be manifest. It ever so surely grows. Yet it must await the final action of God that brings down the curtain on this act of Creation — our worldly existence — and opens onto life everlasting.

Our belief in everlasting life is proclaimed solemnly in the Creed and is practical evidence in the prayer of commendation in our funeral service. Following a sequence of ritual and liturgical action that witnesses the Church speaking for the last time Christ’s words of pardon and absolution to the dying Christian, a proclamation of its hope of salvation. It is a preparation and a message of the Body of Christ to Christ in preparation for the final journey, who, strengthened, hopefully with the Body and Blood of the Saviour so that heaven will readily recognize its own citizen come home.

Having prayed over the Christian physical remains, the Church in her prayers now offers gentle assurance as if to say, “Go forth Christian soul from this world... May you continue to live in peace... may your home be with the Father in Zion... may you see your Redeemer face to face...”

There is a sense in which we have made death entirely natural, although it is alien and foreign to the faithful believer. How

many of us have neatly acculturated ourselves to a “time” to be born, and a time to die” Ecclesiastes 3: 2. Our lives are measured in time. We change, we grow old and death seems appropriate after a full life. “And the dust returns to the earth as it once was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it” Ecclesiastes 12: 7. But the very reality of death admits inexorable finality and gives an urgency to our lives. Death puts an end to human life as the time open to either accepting or rejecting divine grace manifested in Christ

With death comes the particular judgment of which the New Testament speaks primarily in its aspect of the final meeting with Christ in His second coming; it also repeatedly affirms that each will be rewarded immediately after death in accordance with his works and faith.

Implicit in the defined teaching of the Church is the recognition that the death of an individual marks an end to this period of trial. Then we are no longer



pilgrims, for our journey is over. Christ's judgment comes upon us. It is the constant teaching of the Church that those who die in grace and in need of no further purification have an immediate foretaste of eternal beatitude promptly after death. It is also the defined understanding of the Church that those who die in sin enter into an unending foretaste punishment which will be solemnly enunciated at the last and final judgment. Thus each person receives eternal retribution in his immortal soul at the very moment of his death in particular judgment.

Because the particular judgment comes before the end of the world, the Church distinguishes between it and the final or last judgment in the Resurrection of all the dead when Christ returns to claim His own and to present His kingdom to the heavenly Father.

What awaits us in the particular judgment? Perhaps the simplest way to answer this question is to reflect that all of us at the moment of our death are everything that we have made ourselves to be by our own free acceptance or free rejection of the divine call and God's gracious gifts. In this sense we are already fashioning this judgment each day of our lives. By each free choice we make and by each decision we exercise for good or for evil, we mold out a character and fashion our preferences. We become the result of the choices and decisions we make with our free will. God will not intervene to make us something other than what we have chosen to be.

God will not force His friendship on us any more than He will violate our free will to turn us from evil choices. If in this life we choose to live without God, always thinking-first of only ourselves and rejecting the presence and love of God in our lives, are we not already declaring our ultimate preference?

God's judgment will clearly indicate to each of us what we have made ourselves to be. What will follow in one sense is more a confirmation by Christ that an actual judgment that will perhaps catch us by surprise.

Some die in grace and in the friendship of God but burdened with some imperfections that mar the spiritual life. The Church teaches that our prayers, our alms, our sacrifices for their intention and in their name can cleanse them if it is God's will. The wholesome tradition of offering prayers for those who have died that they might be cleansed of their sins is affirmed. "Therefore Judas Maccabeus made atonement for the dead, that they might be delivered from their sin" 2 Maccabees 12: 46. All the Fathers of the Church affirm and recommend this precious practice. However, much better is the practice of the believing Christian to seek cleansing and purification in this life so that our Creator God is glorified.

Far more frightening is the possibility of eternal damnation. Hell is reality. Scripture speaks of this eternal punishment and warns us against the deliberate malice that destroys a person from within and leads to eternal death.



Christ spoke often of hell. When He spoke of "hell...the unquenchable fire" Mark 9: 43; Matthew 25: 31; Luke 16: 23, the Lord spoke with compassion, to warn us away from the ultimate tragedy (Mark 9: 43 – 50), this "second death" Revelation 21:8, with its permanent separation from the everlasting life in God for which we were created (Matthew 25: 31). Jesus spoke forcefully in the images used in that time of "hell, where the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched" Mark 9: 47, 48. In using these images our Lord called us to conversion and to warn that those who deliberately persist in malice face a horrible end.

We cannot be united with God unless we freely choose to love Him and serve Him. To die in deadly sin without repenting and accepting God's merciful love means remaining separated from Him forever by our own free choice. This state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with God and the blessed is called hell.

Faith teaches that God is just and merciful, that no one is punished more harshly than he deserves. Yet the mystery of hell remains disturbing. We have every good reason to dread the possibility that persons created for eternal life could shape their wills in such a way as to forever reject God. We have as our one great consolation the recognition that Jesus, God's Son, chose to die on the cross to save us from such punishment if we are willing before death to choose Him and set aside what would separate us from Him.

Those who come to eternal life will enjoy every manner of blessing, but at the core of their joy will be the possession of God Himself. No longer shall we see Him merely by faith, but we shall see God "face to face" 1 Corinthians 13: 12. "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" 1 John 3: 2.

In describing the joys of heaven, we come to realize that according to the general disposition of God, the souls of all the saints and other faithful who died after receiving Christ's baptism, provided they were not in need of purification from deadly sin when they died, or if they did need some purification, when they have been finally purified will begin a foretaste of the heavenly kingdom and celestial paradise, joined to the company of the holy angels. And those who are destined for eternal life see the divine essence intuitively and face to face with no creature acting as a medium of vision for what they see, but with the divine essence showing itself to them plainly, clearly and openly. There they are truly happy and have life and eternal rest.

The blessed union with God that brings perfect peace is far more than simply seeing or knowing God. In His gracious gift to us of life everlasting, we rejoice in God's infinite goodness. It is in expectation that we pray we will hear these words of our Lord at our own judgment, "Enter into the joy of your Master" Matthew 25: 21.

# THE GREAT “I AM”

The apostle John states, “Jesus worked many other miracles for his disciples, and not all of them are written in this book. But these are written so that you will put your faith in Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God. If you have faith in him, you will have true life” (John 20:30–31).

We can see that John’s aim is two-fold. On one hand, he seeks to demonstrate that Jesus is “the Messiah, the Son of God.” On the other, he wants people to know the true identity of Jesus, so that “you will have true life.”

When God commanded Moses to lead Israel out of slavery in Egypt, Moses asked what God’s name was. God replied, “tell them that the LORD, whose name is ‘I Am,’ has sent you” (Exodus 3:13–15). Jesus shows that he has been in God’s plan from the beginning when he said: “even before Abraham was, I was, and I am” (John 8:58).

In John’s Gospel, Jesus uses the term “I am” to connect himself to aspects of God’s nature and to identify himself as the one who

- supplies all needs
- brings the knowledge about God to all people
- is the way for people to find God and become God’s people
- promises that all who believe in him will have eternal life
- invites everyone to share in the common life as the new people of God



## I AM the bread that gives life!

I tell you for certain that everyone who has faith in me has eternal life.

I am the bread that gives life! Your ancestors ate manna in the desert, and later they died. But the bread from heaven has come down, so that no one who eats it will ever die. I am that bread from heaven! Everyone who eats it will live forever. My flesh is the life-giving bread that I give to the people of this world.

JOHN 6:47-51

## I AM the light for the world!

Once again Jesus spoke to the people. This time he said, "I am the light for the world! Follow me, and you won't be walking in the dark. You will have the light that gives life."

JOHN 8:12

## I AM the gate for the sheep.

Jesus said: "I tell you for certain that I am the gate for the sheep. Everyone who came before me was a thief or a robber, and the sheep did not listen to any of them. I am the gate. All who come in through me will be saved. Through me they will come and go and find pasture. A thief comes only to rob, kill, and destroy. I came so everyone would have life, and have it fully."

JOHN 10:7-10

## I AM the good shepherd.

I am the good shepherd, and the good shepherd gives up his life for his sheep. Hired workers are not like the shepherd. They don't own the sheep, and when they see a wolf coming, they run off and leave the sheep. Then the wolf attacks and scatters the flock. Hired workers run away because they don't care about the sheep.

I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep, and they know me. Just as the Father knows me, I know the Father, and I give up my life for my sheep. I have other sheep that are not in this sheep pen. I must also bring them together, when they hear my voice. Then there will be one flock of sheep and one shepherd.

JOHN 10:11-16

## I AM the one who raises the dead to life!

Jesus then said to Martha, "I am the one who raises the dead to life! Everyone who has faith in me will live, even if they die. And everyone who lives because of faith in me will never really die. Do you believe this?"

"Yes, Lord!" she replied. "I believe that you are Christ, the Son of God. You are the one we hoped would come into the world."

JOHN 11:25-27

## I AM the way, the truth, and the life!

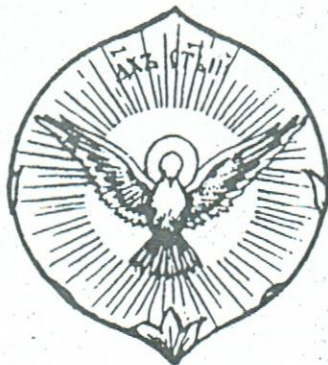
I am the way, the truth, and the life! ... Without me, no one can go to the Father.

JOHN 14:6

## I AM the vine.

I am the vine, and you are the branches. If you stay joined to me, and I stay joined to you, then you will produce lots of fruit. But you cannot do anything without me. If you don't stay joined to me, you will be thrown away. You will be like dry branches that are gathered up and burned in a fire. Stay joined to me and let my teachings become part of you. Then you can pray for whatever you want, and your prayer will be answered.

JOHN 15:5-7





## Sunday of St. Thomas



Saint Thomas was one of the Twelve Apostles of our Blessed Lord. St. Thomas is truly one of the most beloved of all the Disciples of Christ. It was he who doubted the Resurrection of Christ and demanded proof. The story which is told in the Gospel of St. John Chapter 20:19-29, relates how Thomas was missing when Jesus visited the other disciples. Jesus returned and showed Thomas His hands and His pierced side. Thomas fell to his knees and said, "My Lord and My God!"

St. Thomas preached the word of God in the Far East in what is now known as India. In the section of India called the Malabar Coast, there is a magnificent Church dedicated to St. Thomas. Almost every Christian male child born there is called Thomas, after the Patron Saint of the province.

Because of his preaching, St. Thomas angered King Misdai, the ruler of India, who ordered his soldiers to lead St. Thomas up to the highest mountain in Malabar. They all ran their spears through his saintly body. Saint Thomas, also called "the doubter" not only believed the truth about Christianity, but gave his life for its preservation as so many other martyrs of the Christian Church.

Although the feast of St. Thomas Apostle is October 6th, he is also solemnly commemorated on the first Sunday after the glorious Resurrection, the Sunday of St. Thomas.





# WISDOM! BE ATTENTIVE

*Though the grave had been sealed, from the grave You arose, O Christ our God, our Life, and though the door had been locked, You appeared among the disciples, O Resurrection of all, thus You restored for us an upright spirit according to Your great mercy Troparion, Sunday of St. Thomas.*

*Thomas placed his own restless hand into Your life-giving side, O Christ God, and since You entered although the doors were locked, he cried out to You with the other apostles: "You are my Lord and my God!" Kontakion, Sunday of St. Thomas.*

*Great is the Lord and mighty in power: to His wisdom there is no end Prokimenon, Sunday of St. Thomas.*

*When the doors were closed and the disciples were gathered together, You suddenly appeared in their midst, O Jesus our Almighty God. You granted them peace and filled them with the Holy Spirit; You commanded them to wait and not depart from Jerusalem until they were clothed with power from on high. Therefore, we cry out to You, O Lord: Glory to You, our Light, our Resurrection, and our Peace Vesper Hymn, Sunday of St. Thomas.*

*Even though the doors were closed, You came to Your disciples, O Christ, and Thomas called the Twin, was not with them. Therefore, he did not believe what they told him. You did not deem him unworthy for his lack of faith, but in Your goodness, You confirmed his faith by showing him Your pure side and the wounds in Your hands and feet. He touched them, and when he saw You, he confessed You to be neither an abstract God nor merely human; and he cried out: My Lord and My God, glory to You! Vesper Hymn, Sunday of St. Thomas.*

*On the eighth day the Saviour came to the doubting disciples. He granted them peace and said to Thomas: O Apostle, come and touch My hands which were pierced by nails. How wonderful is this doubt of Thomas! It brought the hearts of believers to the knowledge of God. Therefore, he cried out with fear: My Lord and my God, glory to You! Vesper Hymn, Sunday of St. Thomas.*



# PEACE BE TO YOU ALLELUIA

Bright Week: This is the week of joy, for Christ has destroyed the kingdom of death and the power of sin, and has established the Kingdom of God. Death no longer reigns over human life, and paradise is re-opened to all, symbolized by the Royal Doors of the iconostas remaining open throughout the week. Through the power of the Spirit, all of humankind and the whole cosmos are renewed. In the ancient tradition, the newly-baptized, having entered into a new life in the hope of Resurrection, wore their white garments of joy and purity throughout the week. We do not chant for the departed during this week, for Christ has destroyed the power of death.



# Did You Know That ...

...clever sayings are as easily lost as pearls slipping from a broken string, but a kind word endures?

...great ideas need landing gear as well as wings?

...you can never do a kindness too soon because you never know how soon it will be too late?

...no one is useless in this world who lightens the burden of another?

...the person with a new idea is a crank until the idea succeeds?

...our purpose in life is not to get ahead of others, but to get ahead of ourselves, to outstrip ourselves, to break our own records?

...you cannot do much about the length of your life, but you can do very much about its depth and width?

...most people want meaning in their lives and it is our responsibility to show them it can be found in our church?

...if we cannot offer great goals, great objectives, profound meanings, then people will settle for shallow and trivial substitutes?

...life is like a ten speed bike; most of us have gears we never use?

...there are but two aims in life; first to get what you need; and after that to enjoy it but only the wisest of people achieve the second?

...it is all right to hold a conversation, but is wise to let go of it once in the while?

...nature has arranged it so that we can't shut our ears, but that we can easily shut our mouths?

...too often we under estimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn life around?

## Mothers' Day

Today over the length and breath of our nation, people gather in their churches to honor mothers on this their national day of recognition. Our spiritual mother, the Church, the Body and bride of Christ, too, joins us in honoring and recognizing mothers, true Christian loving mothers who neglect no part of their children's upbringing, particularly that which concerns the Christian life here and for eternity.

No matter what her other virtues – a generous nature, a gift for hospitality, beauty, intelligence, culinary expertise, an excellent wife to her husband or mother to her children, a community leader – nothing makes a woman more extraordinary than her faith response to God's first shown love. This is true in times of God's revelation to us in Scripture and it still applies today.

Today we pause to see how many women of the Bible still offer extraordinary lessons for mothers today. Not every woman is an unwavering example of Godly virtue. In fact, most of them have significant flaws. But they all are distinguished by their faith, or in a few cases, by their lack of it. Most of them are mothers in giving birth. A few are mothers by behavior. How many of them waited long years for our heavenly Father to grant them children. Some reared and provided example for children of great faith; others were disappointed. Some great mothers are even unnamed, but certainly recognized for their virtue. But all of them can teach us something valuable about what makes a woman – particularly a mother – truly extraordinary.

Today we take a journey with our mothers to see and consider the blessings available from their example as we grow in our own faith and in how we are able to nurture the Spirit of God in our own families, in our community and in our parish faith family community.

Lets take a moment to consider the "other woman," Hagar, an Egyptian. After many childless years, Sarah resorted to the custom of the day by which a barren wife could get a child through one of her maid servants (Genesis 16: 2). Abraham disregarded God's response to his earlier attempts to appoint an heir (Genesis 15: 2 – 5) and sinfully yielded to Sarah's insistence. After conceiving Ishmael, Hagar regarded Sarah with contempt and consequently, Sarah treated her so badly that Hagar ran away. During this time on the run Hagar was given an extraordinary gift, a message from the Angel of the Lord, who is often identified as the pre-incarnate Christ. Hagar recognized that in seeing this angel, she had encountered God (Genesis 16: 13). Others who had similar



experiences came to the same conclusion (Genesis 22: 11 -18; 31: 11 – 13; Exodus 3: 2 – 5; Numbers 22: 22 – 35; Judges 6: 11 – 23; 13: 2 – 5; 1 Kings 19: 5 – 7).

“Now the angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur; and he said ‘Hagar, Sarai’s maid, where have you come from and where are you going?’” She said, “I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress, Sarai” “The angel of the Lord said, ‘Return to your mistress and submit yourself to their authority.’” Then the angel of the Lord said, ‘I will multiply your descendants exceedingly, that they be too many to count. Behold you are with child, and you shall bear a son and you shall call his name Ishmael. Because the Lord has heard your affliction...To the Lord who spoke to her she gave a name, saying, ‘You are the God who sees’ she meant, ‘Have I really seen God and remained alive after my vision?’ So Hagar bore Abram a son and Abram named his son whom Hagar bore, Ishmael” Genesis 16: 7 16.

In this encounter, the angel makes it clear to Hagar that rebelling against Sara is not the solution to her troubles (v. 9). Instead, she is to return to Abraham’s encampment and trust that our heavenly Father will take care of her. The angel promises Hagar that she will be the mother of innumerable descendants, people whom we today know as Arabs. Recognizing the angel as God’s messenger, Hagar ascribes a new name to him, “You are the God who sees everything” She is astonished at being the object of God’s gracious attention. The theophany and revelation also leads her to call him “The One Who Lives and Sees Me” (v. 14).

Hagar obeys God by returning to Sarah and Abraham and Abraham gives their son Ishmael every opportunity to live in God’s blessing. Sure enough, Isaac is born the next year to Sarah and Abraham and Ishmael loses hope of being Abraham’s heir. When Ishmael is about seventeen years old, Sarah casts him and his mother into the wilderness. As their water is used up and it seems certain they would die, Hagar again receives a miraculous visitation.

“The angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven and said to her, ‘What ails you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the young man and hold him with your hand, for I will make him a great nation.’” Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. And she went and filled the container with water and gave the young man a drink. So God was with the young man and he grew and lived in the wilderness and became an archer. He lived in the Wilderness of Paran and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt” Genesis 21: 17 – 21.



No doubt Ishmael was raised as part of a Godly household, but he failed to establish a Godly legacy in his own personal and particular family line. Despite her two encounters with heavenly visitors, despite that fact our heavenly Father encounters her, despite the personal and direct attention shown her, nothing in God's revelation to us in Scripture suggests that Hagar nurtured her son's faith in God. Although worldly judgment in the person of Sarah weighed heavily against her, our heavenly Father goes to great length to affirm and assure her and the young man of heavenly support and blessing. Hagar chooses to listen to the louder voice of criticism by worldly standards and she muffles the affirming echo from heaven. The fact that Hagar found an Egyptian wife for Ishmael suggests she herself rejected the Lord who sustained her and promises great blessings for her son. Perhaps she thought that God would bless Isaac more than Ishmael, so that Ishmael then would have no reason to put God first in earthly life.

The consequence is that millions of descendants of Isaac and Ishmael still despise each other today, four thousand years after their mothers parted in anger, after their mothers ignored the love of our heavenly Father and instead established a firm and unchanging foundation of vitriol in the world.

Hagar's example offers this warning to mothers: Your faith – or lack of it – will affect many generations to come, not simply or just your own children and grandchildren. Do not permit your anger with people of God keep you from raising children of God.

Our Mothers' Day wish and prayer today is that like Hagar, may you be blessed with extraordinary encounters with our heavenly Father. But unlike Hagar, may you be a mothers who choose the value of faith no matter what adversities arise and may your children inherit this Godly legacy. May you never give up on God's promise to you and your family. May your children grow up in full assurance of their place in your heart, in your home and in their potential as faithful stewards of God's holy will. A very holy, blessed and loving Mothers' Day celebration to all today!





## The Drudgery of Housework for Mothers

A busy and conscientious mother was one day regretting she could do so little Christian work. "I shall have only a life of housework to show at the end," she observed rather sadly to her friend one day. Overhearing her, her little daughter exclaimed, "Why, mother, all we children will stand up and tell what you have done for us: everything! I do not suppose they would want anything better than good mothers up in heaven!"

And the friend then remarked, "The child is right. Birth will send to heaven no better saints than the true Christian mothers who have done their very best!"

## Fractions and Mothers

A teacher recently put this question to little James in math class: "James, suppose your mother made a peach pie and there were ten of you at the table – your mother and father and eight children – how much of the pie would you get?"

"A ninth, Ma'am," was the prompt answer. "No, James, now pay attention," said the teacher. "There are ten of you. Ten, remember. Do you not know your fractions?" "Yes. Ma'am," was the swift reply of little James. "I know my fractions," but I know my mother, too. She would say we should enjoy the pie because she didn't want any."

## Tribute

On Mothers' Day a certain priest ascended the pulpit and in his homily said, "My mother practices what I preach." It was the greatest tribute he could pay his mother! Would that all of us could so witness of our mothers!

## Remember Mothers' Love

The Eucharist reminds us so much of the pains, anxieties and love of Christ for us. Someone recently said, "I could never go through more than a week without having Christ in my soul. He showed his love for us and the least I can do is prepare myself to worthily accept his love by receiving him each Sunday and holyday! How like a mother's affirming love is Christ in the Eucharist!"

## Sign of the Times

Orthodoxy firmly abides by the Golden Rule and continues to proclaim God's truth by teaching that premarital sex is morally wrong and contrary to the will of our heavenly Father, even though the latest polls show that some 73 percent of Americans believe it is no big deal.

A single person who has asked why he still believed and honored the divine requirement of chastity prior to marriage said, "I think our heavenly Father knew what He was He was doing when He gave us the commandments. He is concerned about our welfare...spiritually, mentally, psychologically and physically. For this reason, no doubt, He makes the female, the potential mother the guardian of chaste morality for us to emulate.

### Not the mind of a Mother

#### LIST OF AMERICAN WAR DEAD -

REVOLUTIONARY WAR	25,324
CIVIL WAR	498,332
WORLD WAR I	116,710
WORLD WAR II	407,316
KOREAN WAR	54,546
VIETNAM WAR	58,098

However high the number of war dead in our nation's history, it cannot and does not reach the total we have put to death of innocent children by means of abortion. Abortion is choosing death for infants. Abortion is a violation of motherhood. Abortion is sentencing an unborn to death and denying them life. Abortion which has sentenced over 25 million souls to premature eternity not only evades God's will but denies it as well. It is the antithesis of motherhood!

### The Church as Mother

Whenever society is crumbling, as it is so evidently today, the Church is tempted to align itself with political parties and their swayed thinking, strange national interests. In the beginning, this alignment seems to be a good thing, smart thinking and is justified on the grounds that the government will keep its Christian base if it is influenced by followers of Jesus Christ. But in the end reality the state corrupts the Church. The Church as our spiritual mother cannot afford to ally itself with a political power because it can then no longer clearly head the call of Christ because it is deafened by its political interests.





## Just for Mom

When I was a tiny tot,  
A problem, this I know.  
I brought you many headaches,  
And I caused you grief and woe.  
For years you cared for me, but now  
My baby days are through—  
And turn-about's fair play, dear Mom,  
Now I'll take care of you.  
It always makes me happy when  
I find some little thing  
That perhaps may make you happy—  
Make you laugh and want to sing.  
But no matter what I do for you,  
I know 'twill never be  
Enough to ever pay you back  
For what you've done for me.  
The years are swiftly rolling by,  
And gray is in your hair,  
Don't think that I don't know, Mom,  
That I helped to put it there.  
But as long as God permits me  
To stay beneath the blue,  
I'll do my best to show you, Mom,  
How much I care for you.

Jennie Lou Carson

## Who does the Statue of Liberty Represent?

When the French sculptor Bartholei was planning and working for some twenty years on the Statue of Liberty which represents a gift of the French people, his greatest problem was the selection of a model which would adequately represent liberty so vividly embodied in the United States. Various exemplars and heroes were suggested, but he finally decided on his own mother!



## Mothers

Although the first actual Mother's Day observance took place on May 12, 1907, in the parlor of the Jarvis home at 2031 North Twelfth Street, in Philadelphia, the real genesis of the day goes back to 1865: the day that Miss Anna Jarvis' mother—the wife of a Grafton, West Virginia, storekeeper—conducted a "Mother's Friendship Day" in a nearby village.

Mrs. Jarvis, a woman as sentimental and determined as her daughter later was to become, invited all the war veterans in the area—Union and Confederate alike—to attend, in the hope that family ties, broken in the War between the States, would be mended. She made them shake hands, these men who only a few short weeks before had been firing muskets at each other. "It's for the sake of your mothers," Mrs. Jarvis told them.

Miss Anna Jarvis decided to expand the idea as a world-wide memorial—not to her mother alone but to every mother on earth.

She invited a few family friends to her home on that Sunday in May of 1907 for a quiet, informal "meeting of reminiscence"—the first specific Mother's Day observance—and outlined her plan to the somewhat skeptical gathering. Then she went to work.

Turning the front room of her home into an office, Miss Jarvis began to write letters—hundreds of them—to editors, state legislators, governors, congressmen, presidents and kings, all with the same message: Let's honor Mother with a "day."



Considering the respect — if not downright reverence—that was popularly accorded to motherhood, Miss Jarvis had no difficulty in attracting champions to her cause.

Back in Grafton, West Virginia, L. L. Lear, Sunday School superintendent of the Andrews Methodist Church—the Jarvis family church, held the first public Mother's Day service on Sunday, May 10, 1908. Miss Jarvis was unable to attend, but she sent 500 white carnations for distribution to the members of the congregation.

Her strenuous campaign for official recognition of her day bore its first fruit in April, 1910, when Governor William E. Glasscock of West Virginia issued the first state Mother's Day proclamation.

In 1914, Miss Jarvis achieved her first major objective: President Woodrow Wilson put his signature to a joint resolution of Congress designating Mother's Day as a national observance.

Miss Jarvis' prescription for the observance was a simple one: She wanted all children who were away from home to sit down and write to Mother, and all of those who were at home to make some special gesture—a trip for Mother, a family picnic, or some other homely token of family affection and unity.

## THE LIFE-GIVING SPRING OF THE THEOTOKOS

**Ε**ach year on Bright Friday, our Holy Orthodox Church celebrates the Feast of the Life-giving Spring (Fountain) of the Theotokos. There was once a church in Constantinople dedicated to the Mother of God, which was built by Emperor Leo the Great in the 5th century. According to sacred tradition, Leo was walking in a wooded area before becoming Emperor. He encountered a blind man who was thirsty, and he begged Leo to help him find water. After searching unsuccessfully, Leo suddenly heard a "voice" instructing him to "go into the deepest part of the woods, and you will find water there. Take some of the cloudy water and give it to the blind man to drink. Then take the clay and put it on his eyes. Then you shall know who I am." Leo obeyed, and miraculously, the blind man regained his sight! It was then that Leo's eyes were "opened" as well, and he realized that the Mother of God had been speaking to him!

Upon becoming Emperor, Leo built a church over that spot and dedicated it to the Theotokos, calling it "The Life-giving Spring." For years afterwards, pious faithful would come to this holy place and have their prayers answered and their infirmities healed. After the fall of Constantinople in 1453 AD, the church was torn down by the Moslems, and only a small chapel remained over the holy waters. In 1833, construction of a new church on this site was begun, and was completed a year later. Today, pilgrims continue to flock to this sacred shrine, which is contained within the walls of a Greek Orthodox monastery. The waters of the Life-giving Spring continue to heal and to work miracles, for as we are reminded in the Kontakion for Bright Friday: The healing grace of this Spring is inexhaustible!