



Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

September 15, 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

+++ Today we have festal anointing on the occasion of yesterday's solemn feast of the Universal Exaltation of life giving Cross. The customary greeting is "Christ Is Among Us!" to which we reply, "He Is And Shall Be!"

- +++ 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 calls upon us to manifest our faith in response to her first shown love. Invite your friends and neighbors to join us.
- +++ We thank all who secured orders, who came to prepare for and worked to make the Pirohi Sale a success. God bless you devoted souls!
- +++ Pirohi Schedule for the next few months October 12, November 1 and December 7. The Bake Sales will take place on November 22 and December 20. Order sheets are available in the kitchen. Preparations will take place Thursday morning at 7:00 AM. We ask all to solicit orders to assure success.
- +++ Please keep the intentions of these members of our parish intercession community in your daily prayers: Anna, Ryan, Betty, Mary, Beth, Ann Helene, Delores, Claire Elizabeth, Debra and Michael.
- +++ The sign-up sheet for both the Web Site and Bulletin sponsors is on the bulletin board in the kitchen. Please sign up as soon as possible. Do NOT make payment until your sign-up month has arrived. This will make it easier for Father to keep track of payments. Thanks in advance to all who support the parish in this way.
- +++ We offer thanks to the Blessed Trinity for inspiring generosity in the souls of our faithful and the blessing of abundant grace in our midst with the offering received last Sunday: Tithe Offering, \$504.00; Pennies From Heaven, \$3.00, Holyday, \$30.00; Food Coupons, \$400.00; Kitchen, \$14.00; Candles, \$19.00, for a total of \$970.00, 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 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 **\$1708.00** 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 \$5600 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.



Grasping Eternity

And they that are wise shall shine as do the brightness of the firmament and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever Daniel 12: 3.

For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I nm known 1 Corinthians 13: 12.

Verily, verily I say to you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God Mark 14: 25.

He will swallow up death in victory and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces and the rebuke of his people shall be taken away from all the earth for the Lord has spoken Isaiah 25: 8.

And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand on me, saying to me, Fear not, I am the first and the last. I am he that lives and was dead and behold I am alive forever. Amen. And I have the keys of hell and of death Revelation 1: 17, 18.

For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by ear, neither has the eye seen, O God, beside you, what he has prepared for him what waits on him. Isaiah 64: 6.

Lo, I am about to create a new heaven and a new earth; the things of the past shall not be remembered or come to mind. Instead, there shall always be rejoicing and happiness in what I create; for I create Jerusalem to be a joy and its people to be a delight; I will exult in Jerusalem and exult in my people. No longer will the sound of weeping be heard there or the sound of crying Isaiah 65: 17 - 19.

Sexual Love and Marriage

Priests are often asked why our Orthodox Church insists that sexual love be restricted to those who are married. Why is it not possible, for example, for a couple who is eventually going to get married, to be sexually intimate before the marriage ceremony in our Church? After all, the marriage will certainly take place in time, they say. Why wait with the act of sexual love until the formal church festivities are accomplished and fulfilled?

This question is not easily answered when those who ask it are not committed communicants of the Orthodox Church, with some measure of spiritual depth and experience, and it is virtually always the case with those who pose this sort of question. They seem to think the marriage ceremony is simply a legal societal license for lust fulfillment. Certainly, the question can be answered quite simply and easily. Our Lord forbids such sexual activity. Our blessed and holy Church, being His Body, echoes His gospel message and forbids it as well. Period. But why? That is still the in depth question!

Perfect Love

Our Orthodox Church knows that God created human beings male and female that they might love one another with a perfect love, the very same love with which God loves the world and the way Christ loves our Church. The love of one man and one woman for each other in marital, sexual love is for us the most perfect earthly reflection of and participation in the love of God Himself. Scripture teaches us that God is love. That is why we as people are to love one another, and particularly in marriage with an intimate love. And that is why the abiding love of one man and one woman forever is the most perfect expression of divine love that exists in our fragile world.

Married love is the most perfect form of human love because it is the most intimate and all embracing form of human love that God has created. It goes on forever in the kingdom of God. Once it is initiated, it never ends. Even death cannot contain or limit it. The love of a man and a woman reflects the eternal love of Christ and His Church which is an intimate love.

Christ does not abandon His Church and His Church likewise does not abandon Him. The commitment is eternal. Everything in the marriage ceremony testifies to the eternal character of marriage: the prayers, the rings, the crowns; all the liturgical actions. In Christ and in His kingdom, there is no death. We live and we love forever in God's unending life of love.

Love And Marriage

If a man and woman love each other perfectly and completely, they will be united in every possible way: mind, heart, soul, and body. They will share everything together, all that they are and all that they have: faith, knowledge, convictions, aspirations, interests, possessions, joys, sorrows...everything, always and forever. And this is because they already belong to the eternal never-ending kingdom. What they have begun in time will find its completion in eternity.

The essential element in never-ending love is faithfulness. Being faithful in all things for the sake of ever deeper and more perfect union - no matter what - is what our Christian love is all about. That is the way God is, faithful in everything, faithful forever, for the sake of an ever more perfect communion with His creatures in love. And it is at the public ceremony of marriage that the formal, sincere, honest and serious commitment to each other for faithfulness in Christ can only be made.

The realization of a totally perfect, all embracing and eternally faithful human love is in Christian marriage. And in marriage the sealing of this everlasting fidelity in pursuit of the ever more perfect communion in love is in the sexual act. Sexual love is the sign and the seal of total unity, total faithfulness and total commitment forever. It is not a physical act so much as it is a spiritual one because it takes place on and in a spiritual dimension. It is an act which expresses the total self-offering of one person to the other for eternity. It is an act of love with all one's mind, heart and soul and full strength. It is an act which signifies and realizes that the two "become one flesh" ever more truly in God forever and all time. When participated in this mentality and spirituality, it becomes then, a source of God's blessing, empowerment, strength, grace to the husband and wife. If it is reduced simply to a lustful servicing of mere urgent physical fulfillment, it becomes a source of pain, anxiety, and frustration, as can be attested to by the increase of divorce in our enlightened society. With the proper disposition, it

reaffirms God's blessings on the marriage and is the closest we human beings can achieve in imitating the intimate union and love which exists in the Holy Trinity and this is preeminently a spiritual love, a total self-giving of one to the other. Consequently, we come to see the sexual act in marriage is far more spiritual than it physically appears to the spiritually myopic.

Given By God

The possibility for human love to be what God created it to be is itself given by God. This is the faith of Orthodox communicants. Members of the Orthodox Church believe that what God has joined together, is impossible with men, but that all things are possible with our God. It is for this reason and no other reason that for Orthodox believers marriage in the Church will always necessarily and naturally precede their living and loving together. Otherwise we reduce ourselves merely to carnal beings, monists, simply perceived as body with no soul, no spiritual dimension.

Because Orthodox believers want their human love to be what God made it to be, wish and aspire for it to be perfect, not half-baked, and because they believe that this perfection is only bestowed by God, they come to His holy Church and offer themselves to Him through Christ seeking the grace of the Holy Spirit in the sacramental Mystery of Marriage. They come to ask God to give them what the world cannot give, what they cannot achieve by themselves. They ask God to do for them what society cannot do, even though it issues a marriage license. They appeal to the Lord to join their union that their limited and sin-filled imperfect human love might be made complete, holy, divine, eternal, and a source of His bountiful blessings for them. Premarital sexual activity excludes God Who condemns it. It puts God on notice that He is not wanted as a cohesive participant in what should be a glorious unity. It distorts, it perverts, it twists, it subverts and even makes a caricature of the love of God for mankind and of the love Christ has for His Church.

For Orthodox Christians not to be married in the Orthodox Church is a sin. It is a sin not because sexual love in itself is dirty, wicked, or sinful. It is a sin because sexual love by itself, not hallowed, not sanctified, without God is impossible. It then degenerates to lust and characterizes us for what we really become: bereft even of our humanity, and more akin to the beasts of creation who function according to their own law and respond to simple instinct. It becomes by man's distortion something it was never

intended to be. Therefore it does not have a chance at perfection; it cannot be eternal. It is condemned to pass away; it is doomed with all things of this world which are not saved, not transfigured, not sanctified, resurrected and divinized by Christ through the all-saving grace of the Holy Spirit. Scripture puts it very simply. Without God all is imperfect, incomplete, and ultimately lost. With God, however, all is perfected, completed, fulfilled, and ultimately totalized and saved. And our frail human love is no exception. This does not mean a wedding in the Church guarantees success, sexually or otherwise in marriage. But what it emphatically does mean is that the opportunity for sanctification, the chance for fulfillment and the possibility for perfection are granted by our good God, if we also sincerely and seriously do our part. If Christians are those who do all things in God, if Orthodox Christians are those who do all things through the sacramental Mysteries and spiritual life of His Body, the Church, sexual love and marriage can hardly be an exception.

St. Paul compares the intimacy enjoyed by a man and wife united in Christ as being a sign of the love and intimacy which exists between Christ and His Body, the Church. Far from being just a lusty fulfillment of physical need, it is one of the most meaningful spiritual encounters with God that man can achieve and experience. Beyond being sinful, premarital sex becomes satisfied with only part of the goal realized and fulfillment attempted without the Source of fulfillment being a part of the relationship. It raises a clenched fist to God and insists He is not necessary to its alleged happiness and completion. It is a revolt against His awesome authority and His ordained and prescribed behavior for mankind. Not only does premarital sex exclude God, it separates the individuals from their own innate spirituality. A dichotomy and spiritual schizophrenia is established which many find difficult to heal and overcome. It looks upon a human as being fundamentally only flesh-meat. It denies eternity and grasps at fleeting straws of the temporal world. It is infantile because it desires immediate gratification for a perceived need. It is submission to the temptation of the devil and the denial of fidelity to Christ in all things, times and places. It actually puts us outside the grace and redemptive ability of Christ to save us until we change and repent!

Orthodox Christians would rather the all embracing and enveloping and fulfilling complete and total love afforded as a distinct possibility in the life of the Body of Christ.

“Follow Me”

Our Lord calls us in vastly different ways because we are all vastly different people. We are not necessarily speaking of a religious vocation, but a general call to a better life, a fuller life, a complete life. Our Lord says, “I want you to become a special friend of mine; to break whatever you know to be unworthy of you. I want you to be perfect, to be willing to sell all you have to follow me.” He does not speak necessarily to us in a literal sense, but He does say, “If you want to be perfect, you must let nothing stand between you and me; there must be nothing held back; no deliberate affection for anything opposed to my will.” He advises us to depose of our pride, our lack of reality, our sinfulness, to rid ourselves of everything which keeps us separated from Him. The standard, of course is high, but our Lord’s actual challenging words are “If you would be perfect...” Matthew 19: 21. They cannot be brushed aside, but must be encountered and embraced. We must make a response to them.

And of course, there are things in our hearts which pull us away from our Lord. They must be sold. What has been stopping or arresting our true peace of soul? Are we too fond of admiration? Do we set too much store on the affection and respect of others? Some of us hear the voice of God loudly enough to make us uncomfortable, but not nearly loudly enough to make us change ourselves. Even when His voice is clear to us, we do not wish to give in. Is there anything we like to hold back? Then it must be sold. Are we still quite happy all by ourselves bereft of God’s grace? This attitude, too, must be sold. So, there is no doubt He asks, “Are you willing to give me anything I want? I have given you everything you need. Are you willing to do whatever it is I ask?” Then, “come follow me” Matthew 8: 22.!

This is Christ’s command and invitation addressed to each of us. He Who created our hearts knows how to attract them. Misery is the element of the devil. Joy is the resounding element of the Lord. The greatest and highest joy is to be found in His service. He wants us to be near Him, because to be near Him is happiness. He wants us to be like Him, because to be like Him is happiness and fulfillment of the purpose for which He came into the world. He wants us to become less selfish and self-centered, to think more of Him and others; to love Him and to help others love Him.

Is He not worthy to follow regardless what our ordinary vocation in life is? Beg Him, then, to make His call so loud and so clear as to be unmistakable, and have the generosity to be content, even anxious to follow wherever He may lead.

WANTED

Serious Souls
Who Are
Sincerely
Interested In
Eternal Salvation
In Christ;
You Can Invite Them
To Worship
And Grow In Faith
With Us.

Or Fill In The Stub Below And
Give To Father

NAME _____

MAIL ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____

Did You Know That ...

...love is the best glimpse we are permitted of eternity?

...there is never a better measure of what a person is than what he does when he's absolutely free to choose?

...a whole piece of the true faith is what some people have without realizing it is oxymoronic?

...we should be bold in what we stand for and careful in what we fall for?

...we are tomorrow's past?

...we should not let what we cannot do interfere with what we can do?

...an economist's guess is liable to be just as good as anybody's guess?

...even if we are adrift, we should stay afloat?

...a person often meets his destiny on the road he took to avoid it?

...sainthood emerges when you can listen to someone's tale of woe and not respond with a description of your own?

...people make rules for themselves and always thereafter find loopholes?

...the love of truth often lies at the root of much humor?

...discipline is remembering what you really want?

...one of the lasting pleasures you can experience is the feeling that comes over you when you genuinely forgive an enemy, whether he knows it or not?

...we judge ourselves by what we feel capable of doing, while others judge us by what we have already done?

...pessimism never won any battle in life?

CHRISTIANITY'S MOST PRECIOUS RELIC

Relics may be loosely defined as "spiritual keepsakes." They may refer to some possession or article of clothing of a saint, or even a part of a saint's body itself! Needless to say, such artifacts are viewed as sacred treasures by the Church.

It is logical and understandable then, to note that when Christianity emerged victorious from a nearly three-century struggle with the pagan Roman Empire, the finding of the Cross of Christ was a top priority. An expedition to find this precious relic was led by St. Helena, the mother of the Emperor Constantine. Journeying to Jerusalem in 326 A.D., Helena was able to determine that the Cross was buried under the Temple of Venus that the Emperor Hadrian had build on Golgotha. After tearing down the pagan temple and digging deeply below it, Helena's workers found three crosses. How would they know with certainty which cross belonged to Christ and which were the instruments of death for the two thieves crucified with Him?

Their answer was provided in a miraculous way! At that very moment, a funeral processions was passing by. The dead man was placed on the first two crosses, with nothing changing in his condition. But when he was placed on the third cross, the man was restored to life! Helena knew that this was the Precious and Life-Giving Cross of her Saviour! Patriarch Makarios of Jerusalem then lifted up, or ELEVATED the Cross for all to see, and the crowd is said to have exclaimed with great reverence: LORD HAVE MERCY! During this day's solemn observances, the Cross is glorified as the sign of victory, power and salvation for all Christians.