

The Peace of Christ



Everyone hopes for peace. We want peace in the Middle East, we want peace with the arms race. We desire peace with our neighbor, and also with ourselves. But what is it and what does it truly mean?

For Christians, peace has a special meaning. Let us listen to the first words that Jesus spoke to His apostles after His resurrection. "On that evening of that same day, the first day of the week, though the disciples had gathered within closed doors for fear of the Jews, Jesus entered and stood among them and said: Peace be unto you!"

There is a peace the world gives. People today want to be left alone, "in peace." They isolate themselves. They do not want to get involved in anything, because that might disturb their "peace." Relationships between people are impersonal because people fear to go out on a limb to defend justice or to condemn a wrong because this would be a disruption.

Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

October 6, 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 this past week's simple feast of the Protection of the Birthgiver of God. The customary greeting is "Christ Is Among Us!" to which we respond, "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 invites us to manifest our faith in response to her first shown love. Invite your friends and neighbors to join us.

+++ 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: Tithing Offering, \$539.00; Kitchen, \$78.00; Candles, \$17.00; Food Coupons, \$100.00, for a total of \$734 .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.

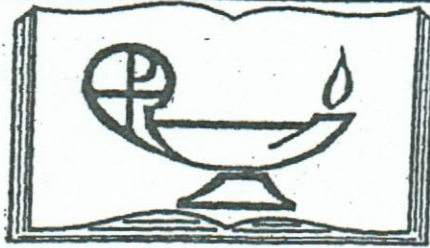
+++ Please be certain to see a member of the Parish Council if you would like to help our parish by using Shop Rite Food Coupons available in \$20.00 denominations. We invite ALL to be caring and supportive and use Grocery Coupons for food shopping as we have gratefully realized \$5600 on this project 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.

+++ 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

Persecution of Jesus

The Pharisees and legal experts were furious and from that time on they plied him fiercely with a host of questions, trying to trap him into saying something for which they could have him arrested Luke 11: 53, 54.

A few minutes later some Pharisees said to him, Get out of here if you want to live for King Herod is after you! Luke 13: 31.

So they began harassing Jesus as a Sabbath breaker John 5: 16.

After this Jesus went to Galilee, going from village to village, for he wanted to stay out of Judea where the Jewish leaders were plotting his death. For the world cannot hate you; but it does hate me because I accuse it of sin and evil. None of you obeys the laws of Moses! So why pick on me for breaking them? Why kill me for this? The crowd replied, You are out of your mind! Who is trying to kill you? Then the Jewish leaders sought to arrest him, but no hand was laid on him; for God's time had not yet come. When the Pharisees heard that the crowds were in this mood, they and the chief priests sent officers to arrest Jesus John 7: 1 - 7; 19 - 22.

Some of them said, "he has a demon or else he is crazy. Why listen to a man like that?" Once again they started to arrest him, but he walked away and left them John 10: 20.

Meanwhile the chief priest and Pharisees had publicly announced that anyone seeing Jesus must report him immediately so they could arrest him John 11: 57.

Since Christ suffered and underwent pain, you must have the same attitude he did; you must be ready to suffer, too. For remember, when your body suffers, sin loses its power 1 Peter 4: 1.

Solitary Journey

By faith Abraham went out, not knowing where he was to go
Hebrews 11: 8.

Our heavenly Father can speak and communicate with us through every person, each happening and in all things and ways. Yet in the voice of the Church, in the unending song of praise we hear in worship, the voice of God reverberates and echoes as vividly as in the revealed word. But we are always and everywhere alone, only in his company. Just as our heavenly Father spoke directly and precisely, individually to Abraham, our forefather in faith, so He directs his message of salvation to us particularly.

We are all wayfarers, persons journeying on roads never taken before. We are born alone and we die alone. No one else can do these things for us. But another can help us pray by journeying along with us. However, alone, or with another, the road remains unfamiliar. Beware of the person who speaks of knowing the path. Beware, too, of those who say there are no guides and that we are always and everywhere isolated from one another. Being alone is not the same as being isolated.

Although we are individual believers, we really find our true identity in the company and pilgrimage travel with others. We are parts of the Body of Jesus Christ, each being likened to a cell, an organ or a limb. Our individuality is sacrificed in worship as we manifest the unity and perfection of Christ's Body. Otherwise its functioning in the world might reveal the neglect, lack of concern and sinfulness of all who make up its totality.

Believers are grateful, they are eager to travel in faith response towards God's goal for their lives. They eagerly trust those who are content to share the salvation journey, yet do not expect them to walk an identical path. Since ours is an individual response to God's revelation within the protection and care of his Body, our personality, our unique character and devotion drive us on at our own speed augmented by the grace of God.. While the journey is unique, even solitary, all ways of prayer, even proven ones are mistaken insofar as they are not authentically our own.

Should not our prayer be that our heavenly Father grant us the strength to learn what He desires from us individually so we can labor, together with others, for our common goal of salvation?

A Gift From God

God's revelation to us in Scripture teaches us the meaning of prayer and presents us with models of discipleship. Prayer in Christian life is vital and absolutely necessary, not just in emergency situations. Prayer is defined as raising one's mind and heart, our entire being, to our heavenly Father. It includes the petition for good things from him in accord with his will.

In prayer, we turn our whole attention to God, offer him praise, thanksgiving and, seeking only the fulfillment of his will, ask for what we need. We as baptized disciples should always be eager to converse with the source of our life. Prayer above all, is God's gift to us, enabling us, the creature to interact with our Creator. It is how we grow in friendship with our Saviour, who, in the power of the Holy Spirit, leads us to the Father of mercies.

In a sense, prayer is something natural to human beings. Each person is created in God's image and, in spite of our alienation and sinfulness, every person retains a desire for the source of his being and essence, God himself. Yet, it is God who seeks our friendship and draws us to himself.

The Old Covenant presents Abraham – our “father in faith” as a model of prayer because he walked in God's presence, listened to him and obeyed his will. Like Abraham, Moses frequently interceded before God on behalf of the Chosen People. Moses' strength as a leader, however, came from his uniquely intimate relationship with our heavenly Father. God called Moses from the burning bush and spoke to him in a remarkably direct way, especially during the encounter on Mount Sinai (Exodus 3: 1 – 15; 19: 1 – 25). Because of his intimate communication with God, Moses is seen as a model of contemplative prayer.

Those who shepherded the people of Israel helped them see that God dwelled in their midst. Foremost among these leaders was David, the shepherd-king, “...after God's own heart” Acts of the Apostles 13: 22. Sacred Tradition holds that David's

faith was the inspiration for the Psalms, the greatest prayers in the Old Testament. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, the Psalms are the Word of God given us as our own model in prayer. They sing of God's goodness in creating the world and his promise of redemption. They were prayed by Jesus and are at the heart of the prayer life of the Church.

The Old Testament also shows us how the prophets of God prayed. Like Moses, they entered deeply into prayer before the living God. Overshadowed by the spirit of the Lord, they received the Word of the Lord so they could speak to the people on behalf of God.

It was in Jesus Christ most of all that the eternal Father taught us what prayer is and how to pray. Both Son of God and Son of Mary, Jesus lived in obedience with Mary and Joseph in their home in Nazareth. Here, in his human nature, He learned from his mother how to pray. But as the eternal Son of God, the prayer had an even deeper significance. "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we have seen his glory; the glory of an only-begotten Son coming from the Father, filled with enduring love" John 1: 14.

In the New Testament, we frequently find Jesus absorbed in prayer. He fasted and prayed for forty days and nights before He began his public ministry (Matthew 4: 2). He prayed before choosing his disciples and apostles (Luke 6: 12). He often withdrew from the crowds to pray and taught his disciples the importance of so-doing (Mark 6: 31). Jesus, who taught us to pray constantly made his whole life a prayer to his heavenly Father (1 Thessalonians 5: 17).

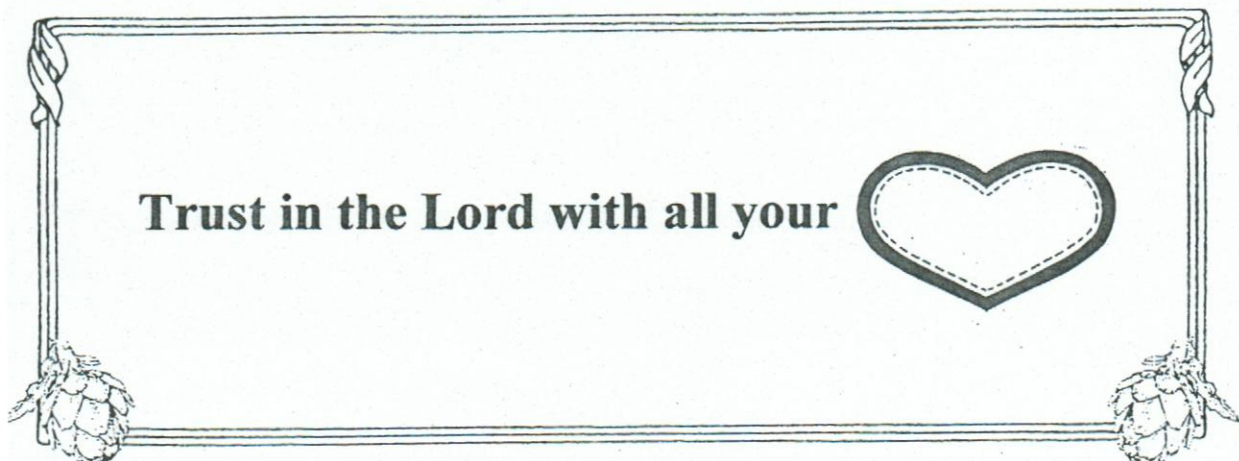
The prayer of Jesus reached its pinnacle in his passion and death. During the agony in the garden, Jesus suffered intensely as He took upon himself the sins of the world and the anguish of a suffering humanity. In obedience to the will of the Father, He laid down his life to save us. There, He experienced for us the full weight of our sinful alienation from the Father and from one another. In this moment of supreme suffering on the cross, Jesus interceded for us and the Father heard his prayer and answered it beyond all hope by raising the Son from the dead.

Jesus gave us the "Our Father" as the perfect pattern of prayer. At the same time, He showed us the interior attitudes we should have when we pray, most especially purity of heart and intention, openness to God's will, love even for one's enemies and an intrepid faith and vigilance against temptation. The interior dispositions needed for prayer are beautifully summarized in the Beatitudes which is why in their chanting at the august prayer of the Church, we reminded how our soul must be disposed in the undivided direction of our Creator.

This leads us back to and emphasizes the truth that prayer is a gift from God to us. Our prayer is pleasing to the Father, when, in the power of the Holy Spirit, it is united to the prayer of Jesus. In this way, prayer deepens our communion with the Holy Trinity.

Finally, just as Mary taught Jesus to pray, so also she helps us to pray. Before she conceived the Son of God in her physical womb, she prayed in complete openness to the living Word of God. Thus she was prepared to share fully in the mission of Christ. Each day, the Church repeats Mary's beautiful and attractive prayer, the Magnificat (Luke 1: 46 -55). Mary prayed with the Apostles on Pentecost and was present at the first Eucharistic celebrations (Acts of the Apostles 2: 42). Her prayers for us and for all our needs are loving and powerful. She always leads us to Jesus. Always seek the intercession of Mary and all the saints before the throne of Almighty God in thanksgiving and petition.

Trust in the Lord with all your





THE BOOK OF ZEPHANIAH

Author—The prophet Zephaniah (commemorated December 3), from the tribe of Simeon. His name can be rendered “God has hidden.” It appears he was of royal blood, tracing his ancestry back to King Hezekiah (715–686 BC), and he was a resident of Jerusalem (1:4).

Date—About 627–625 BC. The holy prophet Zephaniah prophesied during the reign of King Josiah (1:1), who reigned in Judah from 640 to 609 BC. He was a contemporary of the prophets Jeremiah, Nahum, and Habakkuk.

Major Theme—*Judgment and blessing on Judah.*

Background—Zephaniah found himself prophesying in times that were both perilous and promising. During the long reign of Manasseh (696–642 BC), the religion and morality of Judah had been brought to an all-time low. The people practiced Baal worship, worship of the stars, and even human sacrifice, probably to please their Assyrian overlords. However, in the eyes of the holy prophet, these practices were nothing less than unbridled wickedness.

Manasseh repented of his wickedness (2Chr 33:12); however, his son Amon did not, and the people continued their pagan practices. When Josiah came to the throne in 640 BC, there were many who yearned for a return to the God of the fathers and were ready both to hear Zephaniah’s message and to follow King Josiah in his zeal for reform.

Outline

- I. Author and Setting of the Prophecy (1:1)
- II. Judgment of Judah: The Day of the Lord (1:2–2:3)
 - A. Judah’s idolatry and destruction (1:2–6)
 - B. Officials and royalty punished (1:7–9)
 - C. Merchants and complacent judged (1:10–13)
 - D. The Day of the Lord is at hand (1:14–2:3)

- III. Judgment of the Nations (2:4–3:8)
 - A. Philistia (2:4–7)
 - B. Moab (2:8–11)
 - C. Ethiopia (2:12)
 - D. Assyria (2:13–15)
 - E. Jerusalem (3:1–8)
- IV. Redemption and Restoration of Zion (3:9–20)
 - A. The righteous remnant (3:9–13)
 - B. Rejoicing in Zion (3:14–20)

Easy To Fix

We have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us 2 Corinthians 4: 7.

Everyone loves computers, technology and learning new ways of doing things with the incredible resources this century affords. So many appreciate how incredibly simple it may be to correct problems with modern technology. There are simple reasons why things break down. They can be traced and parts replaced, adjustments made to a connection, or resetting or booting up a computer.

Every priest knows fixing the problems people bring to him is not an easy task. Priests certainly want problems in the lives of their people to be fixed as easily as the piece of technology in the parish office. But a broken heart cannot be replaced. A broken or severed relationship cannot be instantly adjusted. A life is hard to reset once a pattern of destructive behavior is established and firmly entrenched.

Priests and every pious faithful believer thanks God for his grace: grace that easily heals, grace that pardons, grace that saves, grace that re-establishes our life pattern. Everyone who follows Christ thanks the Lord for grace that intervenes and grace that provides hope in even the most difficult situations. We thank our God for the grace that comes through the listening ear of a faithful and devoted friend or the caring heart of a mentor or care provider. Thank God for the grace that gently falls into all the nooks and crannies of our lives.

We recognize with great eagerness the freely bestowed blessings we so casually accept on a daily basis. We readily recognize the most important gifts in our lives are freely bestowed, offered us and shared with us by our Creator. They are actually simple responses to our faith investment in Christ. There is nothing particularly complicated to the working of salvation in our midst as communicants of the Body of Christ, our blessed Church.

If we but respond and live up to the challenges given us by the Lord we will inherit God's kingdom prepared for those who are faithful and persevere to the end. In the life of Christ's Church, anything and everything can be overcome and corrected if need be. God's freely bestowed grace is far more effectual than the worst of our sins. God's compelling love is stronger than the alienation we permit to enter our sin-inclined existence. Speak to your parish priest if you need some personal direction in overcoming and correcting a spiritual deficiency. Our heavenly Father has so made us that break-downs and detours can be readily adjusted and reversed. It is a simple enough task to place ourselves in once again working order as created in his image.

Did You Know That ...

...the healing power of touch is conveyed through the touch of the priest's hand as we are anointed with sacred oil?

...the prayers of the Church are literally hot fudge for the soul?

...regular worship deepens God's grace in our soul?

...to live in the hearts we leave behind is not to die?

...the presence of the love of Christ fills our heart with peace?

...through the Eucharist we can accept even the unacceptable?

...we fear not nor grieve beyond letting go the departure of those we have greatly loved, for in the Tree of Life, their roots and ours are forever intertwined?

...in adopting the pace of nature, we find her secret is patience?

...in the attitude of silence the soul finds the path to a clearer light?

...no matter how fragile you feel, God is still breathing within you now?

...hope begins in darkness...dawn will come?

...we must be faithful in small things because in them our strength lies?

...the soul is replenished in worship?

...our outer serenity reflects our inner life?

...there is always music among the trees in the forest, but we must be quiet enough to hear it?

...we ought to always consult not our fears but our hopes and our dreams?

...there is but one thing necessary: to be what God wants us to be?

...we must continue to follow the voice within?

*Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost
Matthew 22, 35-46*



Josiah hears God's Word.

2 Kings 22:1—23:3; 2 Chronicles 34:14-32

Josiah was only eight years old when he became king. No one in his country read God's Word anymore. Even the priests who were in charge of the Temple didn't know where God's Word was!

One day a priest in the Temple found a scroll with God's Word written on it. He ran to the king's helper. "Here is a scroll with God's Word written on it!" the priest said. "King Josiah will want to see this!" The helper took the scroll to the king.

The king's helper read God's Word to Josiah. King Josiah listened to God's Word. King Josiah loved God and wanted to obey God's Word, but when he heard what was written in God's Word, he cried. It made him sad to learn that his people were not obeying God.

King Josiah called all the leaders together. He told them what God's Word said. Josiah and all the leaders promised to obey God's Word.

Josiah hears God's Word.

2 Kings 22:1—23:3; 2 Chronicles 34:14-32



JOSIAH, THE YOUNG KING

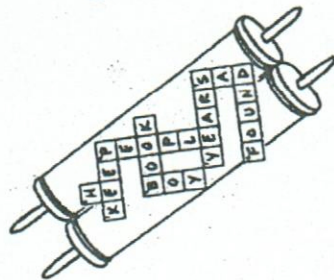
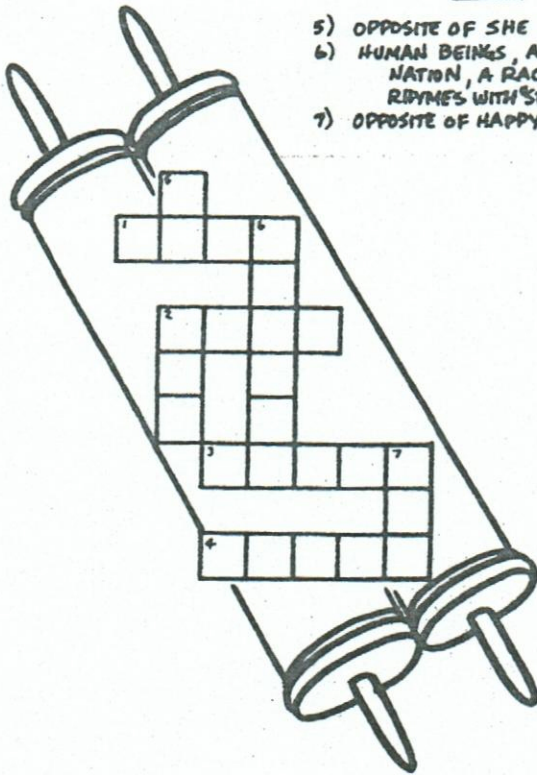
2 KINGS 22

ACROSS

- 1) GOD SAID TO _____ HIS LAW
(RHYMES WITH "SHEEP").
- 2) MANY PAGES BOUND TOGETHER
ARE A _____.
- 3) PERIODS OF 365 DAYS
- 4) OPPOSITE OF LOST

DOWN

- 5) OPPOSITE OF SHE
- 6) HUMAN BEINGS, A
NATION, A RACE -
RHYMES WITH "STEEPLE"
- 7) OPPOSITE OF HAPPY



Prayers
to Mary

ANGELIC SALUTATION

HAIL, Mother of God, Virgin Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb; for you gave birth to Christ, the Savior and Redeemer of our souls.

– More honorable than the Cherubim and beyond compare more glorious than the Seraphim, who, a virgin, gave birth to God the Word, you, truly the Mother of God we magnify.

– We hasten to your patronage, O Virgin Mother of God. Do not turn away from us in our necessities, but, O pure and most blessed Lady deliver us from every danger.

– O most glorious and Ever-Virgin Mary, Mother of Christ our God, receive our prayers and carry them to your Son and our God, that He, because of your intercession may enlighten and save our souls.



One way of linking together any period of time we wish about any of the feasts of the Mother of God is to take up and make our own some of the prayer believers throughout the ages have used to invoke the intercession of the Mother of God to join them in their own prayers before the Eternal Throne. A daily encounter with the Birthgiver of God has a new reason every day for exalting her spiritual beauty and power of soul before the Holy Trinity.

Believers always approached the Mother of God and sought her intercessory power since the time of the wedding in Cana of Galilee. Her intercession was cause for the first wrought miracle of the Lord although it is apparent his time had not yet arrived. All she does in her own quiet inimitable way is seek heaven's blessing for the embarrassment of the parents of the bridal couple as they hosted the wedding reception. Her advice to them and to us is precisely the same "Do whatever he tells you." John 2: 5.

Her intercessory prayer united to ours secures heaven's blessed response. The Ethiopian Church from time in memorial has reminded us, "Your thoughts O Mary, are full of tenderness and your custom is to love human beings" Such is the foundation of trust appreciated by believers over the centuries.

In petitioning the intercession of Mary for our needs, our prayer must be understood in its proper context. The Mother of God does not answer prayer in the same way as her divine Son and our God; she simply affixes her own petition, upon our request, to that which we already make known. She adds her strength and spiritual weight to our needs.

Prayer in its most early authentic context is understood by believers simply to mean a petition in dialogue, a request, a statement honestly expressing our needs for strength, the intention to worship and praise and glorify and thank. Her assistance in prayer develops the sense of mystery. Mary can elicit in us the basic attitude of admiration, trust and love of our heavenly Father.

The Church of Jesus Christ teaches us in the liturgical life of the Akathist, "It is difficult to exalt you, O Virgin with hymns that express our love as we would like to do. It is easy for us to love you in awesome silence without any fear."

WE FLY TO YOUR PATRONAGE

This is the most ancient prayer to Mary. A succession of invocations indicates an acute awareness of the straits in which humankind struggles along.

A series of encomiums exalts Mary the Mother of God, ever Virgin, who is glorious and blessed. It also expresses a most profound understanding of the heart of Mary and of her place in the work of Redemption.

WE fly to your patronage,
O holy Mother of God;
despise not our petitions
in our necessities,
but deliver us always from all dangers,
O glorious and blessed Virgin.

3rd CENTURY



YOU SURPASS ALL PRAISE

This prayer, found in Egypt, was chiseled by an anonymous hand on a terra-cotta. It derives from the 3rd or 4th century. The text is inspired by the angel's salutation to Mary.

O immaculate Virgin,
Mother of God,
full of grace,
the One Whom you brought forth, Emmanuel,
is the fruit of your womb.

In your Motherhood
you have nurtured all human beings.
You surpass all praise and all glory.

I salute you,
Mother of God,
joy of the Angels,
because you surpass in fullness
what the Prophets have said about you.

The Lord is with you:
you gave life to the Savior of the world.

3rd-4th CENTURY

TURN YOUR EYES TOWARD ME

St. Ephrem the Syrian is one of Mary's greatest cantors. He has exalted her in her privileges and in her unique perfection: "You, O Christ, and Your Mother are the only ones who are beautiful under every aspect, because there is no uncleanness in You, O Lord, and no stain in Your Mother."

St. Ephrem also speaks in a notable fashion about the action that Mary exercises over the lives of Christians. He guides the faithful to invoke Mary as Mother and Mediatrix and to take refuge in her with humble and filial trust: "Mary is the hope of those exiled who can attain reconciliation and reenter paradise."

Owing to the elegance of his writing style, St. Ephrem has been called the "lyre of the Holy Spirit." In addition, his Mariological teaching has earned him the title of "Marian Doctor."

MOST Holy Lady, Mother of God,
you are the only one completely pure
in soul and body,
and you surpass all purity,
all virginity, and all chastity.

You are the sole dwelling place
of all the grace of the Spirit,
and you far surpass the Angels in purity
and in holiness of soul and body.

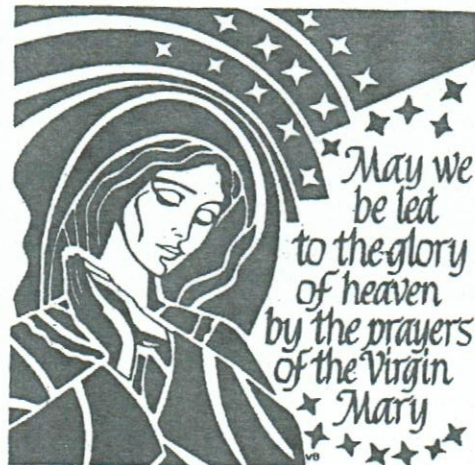
Turn your eyes toward me.
I am sinful and impure
and stained in soul as well as in body
with the passions and pleasures
that constitute the weeds of my life.

Set my spirit free from its passions.
Sanctify and restrain my thoughts
when they race toward adventurism.
Regulate and divert my senses.
Shake off the detestable and infamous
tyranny
of my impure inclinations and passions.
Destroy in me the empire of sin.

Grant wisdom and counsel to my spirit
that is filled with darkness and wretchedness.
Help me to correct my faults and my failings.
Then, set free from the night of sin,
may I be worthy to glorify and exalt you
without reserve,
O sole true Mother of the true Light,
Christ our God.

Alone with Him and through Him,
you are blessed and glorified
by every visible and invisible creature,
now and forever.

ST. EPHREM THE SYRIAN



MOTHER OF LIFE

"Love and veneration for the Virgin Mary constitute the soul of Eastern piety, its heart, that which warms and animates the whole body" (Bulgakov, *Orthodoxy*).

This love of the East for Mary is apparent in the names with which Mary is invoked: the All-Holy, the Virgin of Compassion, the Virgin who heeds us quickly, the Virgin who saves from sorrows, the Virgin of the sweet kisses, the Virgin who nurses, and the Virgin who indicates the way.

However, there is a constant and authentic harmony in the Eastern prayer to the Blessed Virgin: Mary is never separated from the mystery of Christ. This trait is exemplified in the icons where the all-pure Mother always has her Son next to her.

HOW can we fail, O all-holy one,
to admire your Divine and human child-bearing!

O all-immaculate one,
without the help of a man,
you brought into the world
a Son Who has no father according to the
flesh.

He is the Word begotten in eternity by the
Father,
without mother.

He suffered no change, admixture, or division
but integrally retained the characteristics of
each nature.

O Lady and Virgin Mother,
beseech Him to save the souls of those who,
in true faith,
acknowledge you as the Mother of God.

The Prophet David
who, for your sake, was an ancestor of the
God-Man,
addressed the following words, in his hymns,
to the One Who has done great things in you:
"The Queen takes her place
at Your right hand" (Psalm 45:10).

God has chosen you to be
the productive Mother of life.
He became a human being in you,
without a human father,
in order to restore in human beings
the image of Himself that had been tarnished
by sin.

He did so to lead back to His Father
the little sheep lost on the mountains,
carrying it on His shoulders,
to reunite humankind with the Powers of
heaven,
and so save the world,
O Mother of Christ the Lord
Who is rich in mercy!

BYZANTINE LITURGY

STAR ILLUMINED BY THE SUN

In the Byzantine Liturgy, prayers to Mary are frequently woven out of images taken from the pages of Scripture. The Biblical tone is a dominant note of this piety. We could say there is no Scriptural text that directly applies to the Virgin (or can be applied to her in an accommodated sense) that has not been used, commented on, or paraphrased in the Byzantine Liturgy.

In the following passage, the titles applied to Mary are so numerous as to constitute a true litany of glory for the Mother of God.

Mary appears as the end point for many moments of the History of Salvation that are recounted in the Bible from Genesis to the Books of Kings. The Blessed Virgin is compared to the heavenly stairway that God made use of to come to earth and renew it.

From that time, the sun of Christ illumines the world, and Mary shines on that world as a star guiding human beings from death to life.

HAIL, star illumined by the sun, hail:
through you creation has been renewed.

You are the heavenly stairway
through which God has descended.

You are the earth
of the fruit that never perishes.

You are the key
to the doors of paradise.

You are the burning bush
that is not consumed.

You are the sea
that drowns the spiritual Pharaoh.

You are the rock
that gives forth water for the thirsty.

You are the column of fire
that guides those who are in darkness.

You are the nutriment
that has replaced the manna.

You are the promised land
flowing with milk and honey.

You are the tabernacle
of God and the Word.

You are the Ark
gilded by the Holy Spirit.

You are the censer of gold and perfume
giving forth the holy fragrance of Christ.

BYZANTINE LITURGY

WE GLORIFY YOU

The faithful, whether at home or in church, feel the Blessed Virgin's gaze on them. Mary looks out on them from domestic icons or from the central apses of the sanctuary.

The most frequent greeting addressed by the faithful to Mary in the liturgical Office or in prayers recited at home is the one given below. By its frequency it occupies the same place in the East that the Hail Mary has in the Marian devotion of the West.

YOU are more venerable than the Cherubim
and incomparably more glorious than
the Seraphim.

Without losing your virginity,
you gave birth to the Word of God
and are truly the Mother of God.

We glorify you.

BYZANTINE LITURGY

YOU ARE THE BULWARK OF VIRGINS

In every age prayers in honor of Mary have flourished. Every generation has expressed its love for Mary by means of invocations known as the most beautiful and imaginative, the most rich in theology, and the most fruitful for true devotion. One such prayer is the Akathist Hymn, the most celebrated and most popular of the hymns of the Eastern Liturgy in honor of Mary.

This hymn was composed for the feast of the Annunciation on the occasion of a miraculous deliverance of Byzantium attributed to the Blessed Virgin. It manifests a people's firm gratitude to Mary.

Today the Akathist Office is assigned to Saturday of the fifth week of Lent, and it constitutes a true Marian feast.

O Virgin, Mother of God,
you are the bulwark of virgins
and of all who have recourse to you.
The Creator of heaven and earth
has made you Immaculate
so that He might dwell in your womb
and might teach all to exclaim:

Hail (or Rejoice), pillar of virginity.

Hail (or Rejoice), gate of salvation.

Hail (or Rejoice), initiator of spiritual fullness.

Hail (or Rejoice), dispenser of the Divine
goodness.

Hail (or Rejoice), because you have regenerated

those who were conceived in sin.

Hail (or Rejoice), because you have restored
wisdom

to those who were deprived of reason.

Hail (or Rejoice), you who have crushed
the corruptor of minds.

Hail (or Rejoice), you who have given birth to
the source of chastity.

Hail (or Rejoice), nuptial bed of pure mar-
riages.

Hail (or Rejoice), you who reconcile the faith-
ful
to the Lord.

Hail (or Rejoice), beautiful nourisher of vir-
gins.

Hail (or Rejoice), you who dress the holy souls
as spouses.

Hail (or Rejoice), O immaculate Bride.

AKATHIST HYMN

MOTHER OF THE LAMB

In this strophe of the Akathist Hymn, Mary is greeted as the Mother of Christ, the Lamb Who will be immolated and the Shepherd Who guides and defends the flock. The hymn also celebrates Mary's protection and defense of us until we enter the sheepfold of heaven, because she is the gate of heaven.

HAIL (or Rejoice), Mother of the Lamb and
the Shepherd.

Hail (or Rejoice), sheepfold of the spiritual
flocks.

Hail (or Rejoice), shelter against invisible
enemies.

Hail (or Rejoice), entrance to the gates of
paradise.

Hail (or Rejoice), because heaven embraces
earth.

Hail (or Rejoice), because earth sings together
with heaven.

Hail (or Rejoice), perennial voice of the Apostles.

Hail (or Rejoice), unshakable courage of the Martyrs.

Hail (or Rejoice), solid bulwark of the faith.

Hail (or Rejoice), radiant sign of grace.

Hail (or Rejoice), you through whom hell was rendered armorless.

Hail (or Rejoice), you through whom we were reinvested with glory.

Hail (or Rejoice), O immaculate Bride.

AKATHIST HYMN

BLESSED ARE YOU, O MARY

Syria has always enjoyed a rich lyrical tradition dedicated to singing the praises of Mary. The Church of Antioch rendered a special cult to the Mother of God even before the Council of Ephesus: the events that have marked the Nestorian crisis bear witness to the great extent to which belief in Mary's Divine Motherhood was diffused among the faithful and rooted in their hearts.

Prayer texts are rich in a theology centered on the Divine Motherhood. Their poetry is simple and characterized by a penetrating tenderness.

Among the great Marian hymnists besides Ephrem the Syrian is numbered James of Sarug (451-521). The Syrian-Maronite Liturgy borrows heavily from his lyrical treasures.

BLESSED are you, O Mary,
and blessed is your holy soul,
for your beatitude
surpasses that of all the Blessed.

Blessed are you who have borne, embraced,
and caressed as a baby
the One Who upholds the ages
with His secret word.

Blessed are you, from whom the Savior
appeared on this exile earth,
subjugating the seducer
and bringing peace to the world.

Blessed are you, whose pure mouth touched
the lips of the One Whom the Seraphim
do not dare to look upon in His splendor.

Blessed are you, who have nourished
with your pure milk
the source from Whom the living obtain life
and light.

Blessed are you, because the whole universe
resounds with your memory,
and the Angels and human beings celebrate
your feast. . . .

Daughter of the poor,
she became the Mother of the King of kings.
She gave to the poor world
the riches that can make it live.

She is the bark laden with the goodness
and the treasures of the Father,
Who sent His riches once again
into our empty home. . . .

JAMES OF SARUG

CONSUMED BY SORROW

Romanos the Melodist (6th century) ranks first among the great chanters who gave to the Byzantine world the most beautiful liturgical hymns. Out of his deep religious spirit, Romanos draws forth a sincere poetic inspiration that is frequently manifested in an intimately dramatic form.

One example is the hymn *Mary at the Foot of the Cross*, which is paralleled by the *Stabat Mater* ("At the Cross Her Station Keeping") in the West. Mary is presented as a sheep who follows the Lamb as He is led to the slaughter, so that she may act as the sorrowful witness to the sacrifice.

LIKE a sheep
that contemplates its lamb led to the
slaughter,
Mary followed Him.

She was consumed by sorrow
with the other women,
and she said:

"Where are You going,
my Son?

"Why are You finishing Your course so
quickly?

Is there another wedding at Cana,
where You must hasten to change water into
wine?

"Can I go with You,
my Son,
or must I wait for You?

"Say something to me,
O Word,
and do not pass me by in silence:
You Who kept me pure,
You Who are my Son and my God."

WE ARE POOR

Germanus of Constantinople (8th century) is an important witness to the Marian devotion of the East, and his name is almost on a par with the names of St. John Damascene and St. Andrew of Crete. The sermons of Germanus abound in admirable prayers to the Blessed Virgin, all prompted by filial confidence.

When Germanus speaks of Mary, or when he has recourse to her, his accents seem to anticipate those of St. Bernard.

WE are poor in Divine gifts,
O Mary,
but through you
we see the riches of kindness offered to us.
Therefore, we say with confidence:
the earth is full of the mercies of the Lord.

Rejected by God
because of the multitude of our sins,
through you we seek Him out again,
rediscover Him,
and are saved.

Therefore, O Mother of God,
grant us your powerful help
so that we may attain salvation.
And obtain for us the aid of your Son,
the sole Mediator necessary with God.

For your magnificence is infinite,
your goodness in helping the needy is inexhaustible,
and the number of your benefits is limitless.

No one achieves salvation except through
you,
O most Immaculate One!
No one receives grace except through you,
O most Chaste One!

And no one obtains mercy except through you,
O most Honored One!

Who would then fail to call you blessed?

I will call you—
who were enriched by your Son and God—
glorious and blessed,
and I will praise you with all generations.

ST. GERMANUS OF CONSTANTINOPLE

ADMINISTRATOR OF TREASURES

Mary holds a large place in the Chaldean Liturgy, especially in the daily liturgy of the Divine Office. The Mother of Jesus is present there in the abundance of Biblical images and in the invocations with which the faithful entrust the world, the Church, and sinners to her protection.

Together with exquisite and perfect praises, the prayers affirm once again the universal intercession of Mary.



Mary's exceptional position does not cut her off from the children of the Church. On their behalf she is the administrator of the treasures that God has placed in her hands and in her heart.

QUEEN of queens, rich in all things,
enrich your servants with benefits,
O Mother of the Most High!
He has made you administrator of His treasures
and Universal Lady,
just as it has pleased the King of kings
to set you above all things.

In your goodness,
pour down upon all persons the gifts they
need,
so that the whole world may forever weave
a crown of thanksgiving to you.

How beautiful you are,
O Virgin Bride,
for the glorious Bridegroom
[Who is] the Divine Word!
He placed His treasures in your womb,
and in you as in a great ocean
He brought together all graces
and made you the source of life for all mortals. . . .

You are merciful in all necessities!
Come to the aid
of all the children of the Church
now and at the hour of their death.

CHALDEAN LITURGY

WE SALUTE YOU, O MARY

St. Cyril of Alexandria was the champion of Mary's Divine Motherhood against the opposition of Nestorius. At Ephesus, after the Council (444) had upheld the Divine Motherhood, Cyril preached a famous homily. He addressed the Virgin Mary with words that expressed the sentiments of all Christian souls and the traditional Faith, already set forth in the first of twelve anathemas:

"If anyone does not profess that Emmanuel is truly God and in consequence the Blessed Virgin is the Mother of God (*Theotokos*) because she has brought forth in flesh the Word of God made flesh, let him be anathema."

WE salute you, O Mary,
Mother of God,
treasure of the universe,
inextinguishable flame,
crown of virginity,
scepter of the true Faith,
indestructible temple,
tabernacle of the One Whom the world cannot
contain,
and Mother and Virgin. . . .

In your virginal womb
you enclosed the Immense and Incompre-
hensible One.

Through you
the Trinity is glorified
and the Cross is celebrated and adored
everywhere on earth.

Through you
the heavens exult with joy,
the Angels and Archangels are glad,
demons are put to flight,
the demon temptor is cast out of heaven,
and our fallen nature has again been assumed
into heaven. . . .

It is through you
that the only-begotten Son of God,
Who is the Light,
shone amid the nations
who were seated in darkness and the shadow
of death.

What human voice can ever worthily celebrate
the ineffable greatness of Mary?
She is Mother and Virgin
at the same time.

Through her
peace has been restored to the world.

What peace?
Our Lord Jesus Christ,
Whom Mary has brought forth!

ST. CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA

PRAY TO HIM AS HIS MOTHER

In the hymns of the ferial office of the Chaldean Liturgy, one of the strophes is always in honor of Mary. It combines theological depth of thought with poetic sensitivity.

THE Church said to Mary:
“Come, and we will go together
to pray to the Son of God
for the sins of the world.

“You will pray to Him
because you have nursed Him,
and I will pray to Him
because I have mingled His Blood with my
nuptials.

“You will pray to Him as His Mother,
and I will pray to Him as His Bride.
He will listen to His Mother
and respond to His Bride.”

CHALDEAN LITURGY

HOLY VIRGIN, I BEG YOU

St. Ildephonsus of Toledo, Spain, was proclaiming the joy of being “a servant of Mary” already in the 7th century. In one of his prayers he brings to full light the idea of Mary’s virginal Motherhood as a model of spiritual life for the Christian.

Mary must obtain for us from the Holy Spirit the grace for Christ to be formed spiritually in us just as she, through the power of the same Spirit, fashioned Christ according to the flesh.

HOLY Virgin, I beg you:
enable me to receive Jesus from the
Spirit,
according to the same process
by which you bore Jesus.

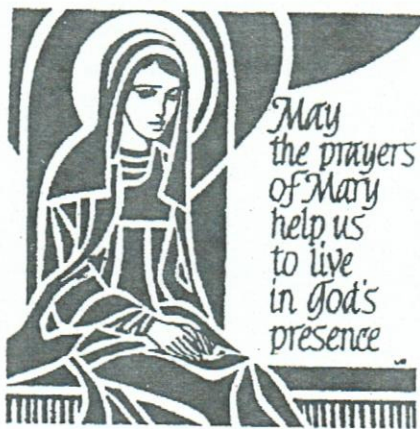
May my soul possess Jesus
thanks to the Spirit
through Whom you conceived Jesus.

May the grace to know Jesus
be granted to me through the Spirit
Who enabled you to know how to possess
Jesus
and bring Him forth.

May my littleness show forth
the greatness of Jesus
in virtue of the Spirit
in Whom you recognized yourself
as the handmaid of the Lord,
desiring that it be done to you
according to the word of the Angel.

May I love Jesus
in the Spirit
in Whom you adored Him as your Lord
and looked after Him as your Son.

ST. ILDEPHONSUS OF TOLEDO





**St. Paul the Apostle
Orthodox Church
24 Burke Road
Freehold, NJ 07728
732-780-3158**

But what is Christ's peace? Ah, this is something special. It is not an external thing like a happy family joined together around a table or a beautiful sunset at the shore. Jesus spoke of HIS peace. And He gave it to His apostles. But they had plenty of trouble after His resurrection. They were hounded by their enemies. They were persecuted, tormented and often killed. Did they or didn't they have the peace of Christ? Of course, they did.

Peace is that INWARD and SECURE AWARENESS of the love of God which the true Christian has which makes him out of reach of anything or anybody to greatly disturb. Take away from the believing Christian everything which the WORLD holds dear: wealth, power, friends, health and you still do not come down to the depths where his peace lies. All these are EXTERNAL, while Christ's peace is INTERNAL.

Have you ever seen a violent storm at sea? At first there is a hush, and then the first rain drops, which soon becomes a torrent. And the wind howls and the sea churns. The fierceness of nature's forces seem to be ploughing into the very bowels of the deep. But this is not so. Several feet beneath the violent surface of the sea the waters are as calm as ever. They move in perfect repose. The storm has not touched them.

Is this not a picture of the peace of Christ? The storms of life come to every person sooner or later. They rob us of those we love, they bring loneliness and disappointment, illness and pain. But they can never reach the depth of Christ's peace. There it lies, deep in the very fabric of our lives, beyond the reach of the world. "These things I have spoken to you," Jesus said, "that you in Me might have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."