



Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

October 30, 2011

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.

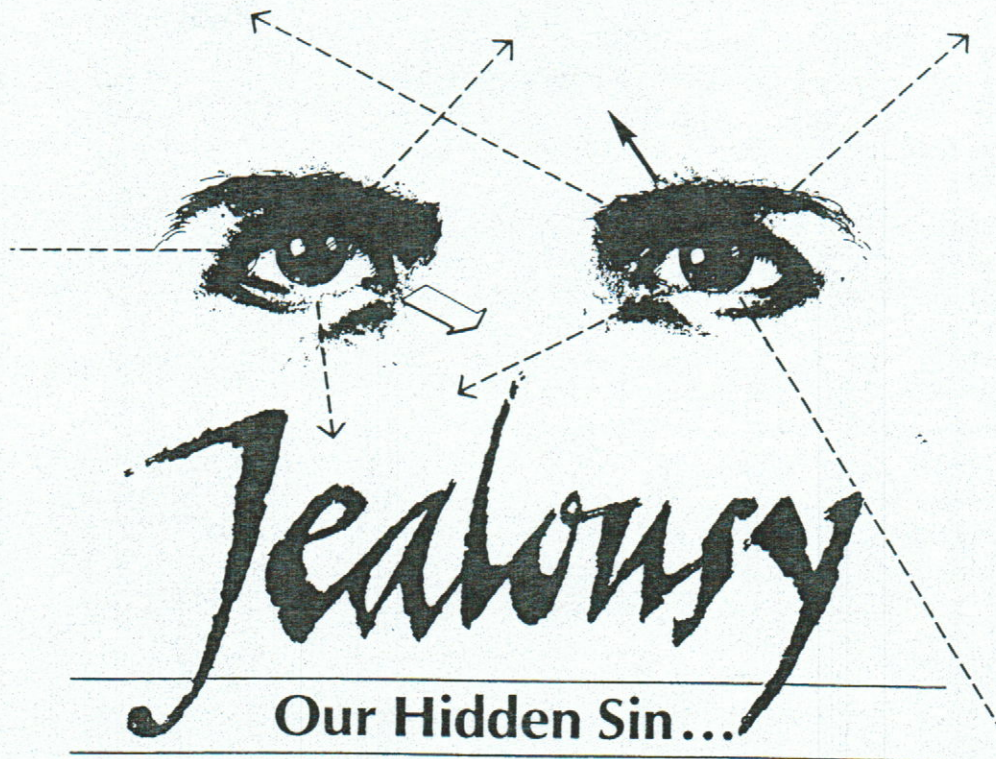
We are a beacon on a hill with the eyes of many upon us; that beacon is the inspired Light of Christ which must shine brightly in our lives.

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 this past week's feast of St. Demetrius the Martyr. The customary greeting is "Christ Is Among Us!" to which we reply, "He Is And Shall Be!"

+++ Next Sunday at 9: 15 AM, at the request of George & Debra Szmajda, we will celebrate the 40th day memory of her beloved departed aunt, +Anna Noveshalski, with a Memorial Service. We pray the merciful and



Do you succumb to jealousy in your heart from time to time? How much of your motivation comes from this apparently fickle feeling? "Not much," you might respond, but do you really understand the devastating power and subtlety of this inner, many times, hidden passion?

You may be surprised with God's perspective on this subject. In our daily lives jealousy towards God is simply evidenced by our refusal to give Him credit for what He alone has done. It is a ready failure and refusal to accept Him as our omnipotent God. We withhold from Him that acknowledgement of His worthiness to receive our glorification and praise as well as worship. Thanksgiving and praise are stifled in the soul by jealousy and envy in the depth of our heart and soul. Because we refuse to be His children, we refuse Him worship; we so manifest a desire to be His equals, repeating, sadly, the arrogant original sin of Adam and Eve.

Jealousy is the universal motive of the human heart in *all* work and skill development unless the life of Christ is being lived seriously through us on a daily basis. If we have no serious faith commitment to the Saviour, we can easily degenerate into a jealous person. In perusing Scripture, we find this sweeping statement, "Then I saw that all toil and all skill in work comes from a man's

Jealousy is totally ruthless and is the root of the actions of a mass murderer like the infamous Hitler. "Wrath is fierce and anger is a

emotional desire. Never, therefore, underestimate the power of this sin if unrestrained in your heart and soul. You may not stoop to physical murder, but you can become a character assassin, spiritually destroying a person and their good name and reputation. You can make accusations or utilize innuendo. Always give credit where credit is due. Envy and jealousy is the enemy of honesty.

The story of Joseph and his brothers is another example of jealousy cruelly tearing brothers part. "And his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in mind" Genesis 37: 11. After Joseph had declared his dream his father took him seriously, and regarded him as a young man of importance and grand destiny. This was the last straw for the brothers who conspired to murder him even though he was the baby of the family.

Then there is the astounding story of David, the shepherd boy and Saul the king. Saul began by loving David but was angered by an underling being honored with a greater reputation. "Then Saul became very angry, for this saying displeased him; and he said, 'They have ascribed to David ten thousands, but to me they have ascribed only thousands. Now what more can he have but the kingdom?'" 1 Samuel 18: 8.

JEALOUSY AMONG MEN

Men are more vulnerable to jealousy than women in certain areas, particularly in their desire for power, position and title. We compare ourselves instinctively without even thinking about it. Every time we look, every thing we see, we compare ourselves: our status, our possessions, our reputation, our relative positioning to that person, to that institution, that object. We live in a performance oriented world where we are taught to compete. Man's desire for possessions often has more to do with the *prestige* he hopes to gain than either the love of an object or the desire for security. All of us need loving appreciation, but to collect envy from the eyes of those whom we have outperformed is a hollow victory indeed. There is no real respect for such a winner, only alienation and loneliness because such a man lives without God.

JEALOUSY AMONG WOMEN

The story of Rachel and Leah in the very first book of Scripture reveals to us some of the particular temptations that affect women. Two sisters are miserably locked into a contest for acceptance and security, as well as the object the other may possess, whether it be a child or a handful of flowers.

Terrible roots of insecurity are revealed in Leah's statement, "Happy am I! For women will call me fortunate" Genesis 30: 13. What about that of Rachel: "I engaged in a fateful struggle with my sister and I prevailed" Genesis 30: 8. Even a cursory summary of this passage reveals that a

jealous woman must possess the *object* another has, must gain *security* and *status* through performance, and must gain the *acceptance* of that authority.

Another obvious vulnerability among women is the status associated with health and beauty. Women are cruelly, even in our society, expected to conform to the images of female beauty present in every culture. In the United States this is the cultural wisdom of depraved Hollywood and Broadway hedonism and narcissism.

COMPARING OURSELVES

Let's examine two more Scriptural examples that reveal the devices of the human heart:

Envy when comparing ourselves with spiritual leaders. The children of Israel envied Moses and Aaron. "They quickly forgot his works; they did not wait for his counsel, but craved intensely in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert. So he gave them their request, but sent a wasting disease upon them. When they became envious of Moses in the camp and of Aaron, the holy one of the Lord, the earth opened and swallowed up Dathan, and engulfed the company of Abiram" Psalms 106: 13 – 17.

We are very quick to resent what we perceive as *privileges* imparted to those in spiritual leadership and authority, but we fail to see the *price* that has to be paid over the period of many years of apprenticeship under God. Reality should teach us priests, bishops and spiritual leaders are not their own masters; they simply function as co-workers of God. Moses began to pay that price as a newborn baby. He was set in a basket and floated down the Nile. Those who raged against him did not begin their lives in such danger, and a just God, who measures all things, judged them harshly because they deserved it.

Envy when comparing ourselves with new or unlikely people God is using for His glory. Do you know why the religious leaders actually murdered Jesus? Pontius Pilate had a true insightful hunch concerning their motivation, so he offered them Barabbas to prove his hunch and found out, even as a pagan non-believer he was right. Barabbas stood for everything they had previously condemned. Jesus stood for everything they were supposed to uphold. "When therefore they were gathered together, Pilate said to them, 'Whom do you want to me to release for you, Barabbas, or Jesus, who is called Christ? For he knew that because of envy they had delivered him up'" Matthew 27: 17, 18.

So, how do *you* feel, knowing man can degenerate to such low-life status so very quickly? These are the temptations common to all of us. Look up to your heavenly Father in simple prayer and ask for His mercy and forgiveness. That is why the Jesus Prayer can become such a source of strengthening assistance and affirmation, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a

sinner.” Its repetition teaches and emphasizes the reality of our condition. There are terrible consequences for those who continue in this sin. The curse prepared for another will inevitably come upon you and the blessing that you coveted for yourself and looked forward to receiving, will be given to others who are actually deserving.

In various conversations, we can detect many times that people are eager to be used by God. But He can't use them because they are not submitted to Him, they don't recognize themselves as belonging to Him, they are not humble, nor teachable, or genuinely seeking after holiness. Christ cannot shine through sinful limited personalities. Just as it is true many people would like to do a particular kind of job, but cannot simply because they do not have the credentials, they are not fit for the work they would like to do. Every employer not only examines, interviews, but tests each applicant to see if he will be suitable or not. There is no doubt God is using everyone who is usable, who is willing to contribute to His glory here and now. Instead of being jealous about others whom God is using, people ought to search themselves to know and determine if they are in fact usable. God cannot just use anybody that comes along. It is only those who “...will but cleanse themselves of evil things that he may be a distinguished vessel, dedicated and useful to the master of the house and ready for every noble service” 2 Timothy 2: 21. How is this done? Simply using the tools and means heaven provides and by following the advice offered from heaven above, “ So, turn from youthful passions and pursue integrity, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord in purity of heart. Have nothing to do with senseless ignorant disputations. As you well know, they only breed quarrels and the servant of the Lord must not be quarrelsome but must be kindly toward all. He must be an apt teacher, patiently, and gently correcting those who contradict him, in the hope always that God will enable them to repent and know the truth. Thus, taken captive by God to do his will, they shall escape the devil's trap” 2 Timothy 2: 22 – 26.

If we as faithful believers are useful to God, He will bless us beyond expectation. God wants us, needs us for His glory and the salvation of souls and He's hunting and looking for us avidly. Unfortunately, He has to pass up and overlook hundreds to simply find the one faithful and devoted soul who will serve His purposes, who is able to be used to further the kingdom.

Remember the story of Haman and Mordecai in the Old Covenant? Haman was the first Hitler type in salvation history. He committed himself to murder a whole race just because he was not sufficiently honored or recognized by one Jew. But what happened? His honors went to Mordecai and his own entire family was destroyed. He lost his life on the gallows prepared for his enemy. Was not the Scripture fulfilled in regard to his horrific behavior? “‘Therefore, as I live’ declares the Lord God, ‘I will deal with you according to your anger and according to your envy which you showed because of your hatred against them’” Ezekiel 35: 11. Every faithful believer should be interested in asking, “How can I seriously deal with jealousy in my own heart. I know I am capable of it. What can I do to improve myself?” There are four considerations at the root of these thoughts and feelings.

THE ROOTS OF JEALOUSY

A DISTORTED SELF-IMAGE. Do you readily recognize how simply beautiful and really valuable you are in the sight of our Creator God? Living as we do in a performance oriented world that pressures into its model for conformity, we often lose sight of reality. If we don't end up with what all our neighbors have, we somehow begin to think less of ourselves. But we are judging by worldly, earthly, physical standards. Our God looks at us from the perspective of the soul: eternity and richness in spiritual values. Yes, it is true we must compete with others through our position, appearance, and possessions, or we face rejection of one sort or another. Like salmon leaping at the waterfalls of opportunity, we struggle to dominate others lest we amount to nothing. Poor exhausted child, Jesus' kingdom is not like that at all. The basis of your value and your beauty really is your uniqueness and you have nothing to do with that either. You were "fearfully and wonderfully made" and never need to envy another because you are an original creation, not a duplicated copy. You must also keep in mind so is every other creation of our God. There has never been a person like you before and never will be again. Rejoice in your uniqueness, secure in God's love. He made you just the way He wants you to be. Only *you* can fulfill your particular destiny and ministry of service. You are not only needed by God, but by other human beings, especially believers in Christ.

AN INFLATED PICTURE OF SELF-PRIDE. St. James is eager to share this heavenly insight: "But if you have bitter jealousy and self-ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth" James 3: 14. Humility is to see ourselves as we really are, all the positives and all the negatives. We soon realize we do not even deserve to live. Your next breath should be drawn with gratitude to God for His mercy. Jealousy is often rooted in self-righteousness. Let us go back to the cross and "humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God" 1 Peter 5: 6.

A TWISTED PICTURE OF GOD IN HIS JUSTICE. Is God always fair? Absolutely. Then why are we bent out of shape when someone else receives a blessing from God, a talent or gift that is seemingly unique and different from ours? We fail to see the loving mercy of God in our own lives and fail to admit our own partiality. Instead, trust our heavenly Father. He always does what is best in your particular circumstances!

FEAR AND INSECURITY IN YOUR REALTIONSHIP WITH GOD. Why do we become depressed when that other woman has a new baby or that other family moves into a beautiful new home? Why are even spiritual leaders not encouraged, even sometimes strangely discouraged, when they hear reports of a great victory in blessings from heaven over satan in another parish? Erroneous thinking like this stems from the subconscious belief that the blessings of God visited on others is a sign of God's greater love for them. Listen instead to the testimony of our God: "Do not be afraid when a man becomes rich; when the glory of his house is increased" Psalms 49: 16.

Each of these four roots is in some way a distortion of the truth about ourselves or about God. That is why continuing spiritual growth and formation are inevitable for the genuine believer. Most of what we become involved in is simply due to our own stupidity and ignorance. The symbolic lighted candle of education and enlightenment would lend a tremendous value to us! We must keep alive a realistic relationship with our Creator which is possible only in a life of faith filled commitment borne witness to in regular worship each Sunday and holy day. If we keep our eyes open and our ears attentive to the message of God imparted each time we are supposed to be in church at worship, particularly during the Divine Liturgy, we will assist ourselves immensely in avoiding the jealous streak. The grace of the Divine Liturgy strengthens us against falling victim to the devils' temptations. When we do what God asks and expects of us, we are less likely to become our own victims and finally, victims of the devil himself. We must face up to our need and honestly face up to God to further strengthen revelations and inspirations of grace when we participate in heavenly worship in our parish. And then we must recognize that God loves us without condition, regardless of what our self-imposed status or position is. Because He created us, we are loveable and worthwhile in our own integrity.

CONTENT IN CHRIST'S ARMS

We all have our individual personal struggles with jealousy. Our only hope is Christ our Lord and the grace of the Holy Spirit. His strength is perfected in each of us if we sincerely seek after it. When we daily acknowledge our weakness, we see Him as everything we are not: the most secure, the most successful Being in the universe, and when we come to really understand He dwells within us, we cannot help but be overwhelmed. What an astounding and wonderfully magnificent as well as soul-inspiring testimony we have in the apostle Paul's statement, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" Galatians 2:20.

RESPONDING TO JEALOUSY

How do you respond wisely to jealousy in others? That's really a whole new subject, but here are few suggestions: Do not provoke jealousy through unwise communication. "Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another" Galatians 5: 26. Be a minister of grace, a servant of God's blessings to others by declaring their value to you and your personal need for them. Withdraw from a person demonstrating open hatred or destructive manipulation under the pretext of being frank and honest and open-minded. We are taught to "...avoid such men as these" 2 Timothy 3: 1 - 5. Trust in the Lord. Do not be afraid. "The Lord is the defense of my life; whom shall I fear?" Psalms 27: 1. Bless those who curse you. Pray away every curse and evil they attempt to place on you and pray down every blessing of heaven on those who through insecurity and pride have stumbled in their relationship with you and are manifesting the marks of jealousy.

OUR HEAVENLY FATHER: ON DUTY 24/7

We all know that getting a good night's sleep is extremely beneficial to our mental and physical well-being. Many physicians will tell you that ideally, this translates into eight hours of sleep a day, which literally means we are asked to spend one-third of our lives in bed! It is also true, however, that most of us can function fairly well on a considerably shorter period of rest. It seems that the older we get, the less sleep we require. It is also interesting to note that in the animal kingdom, giraffes - the tallest of all mammals - sleep only between 10 minutes and 2 hours in a 24-hour period!

Thankfully, there is Someone Who never sleeps - Someone Who is **"on duty"** 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. That **"Someone"** is, of course, our **HEAVENLY FATHER**. In the story of Creation found in the Book of Genesis, we read that after forming the entire universe in six days, God **"rested"** on the seventh day. Undoubtedly, this was the last time that He did so!

God is constantly watching over us. He is available every second of every day to listen to the supplications and respond to the needs of His children. When we turn to Him in prayer, we can be assured that He is always listening - our calls for help are never put **"on hold."** Psalm 120 attests to this: **"My help comes from the Lord, Who made heaven and earth. Let not your foot be moved; neither let Him Who keeps you slumber. Behold, He Who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep."**

Are you troubled by something? Are your problems in life causing you sleepless nights? Turn to the One Who never sleeps!