



Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Twenty Third Sunday after Pentecost

November 20, 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

+++ Tomorrow we celebrate the most solemn feast of the Entrance of the Birthgiver of God in the Temple. The Divine Liturgy will be celebrated in the evening at 7: 30 PM. Please join us in prayer and praise. Confessions during this holy season will be heard prior to the celebration.

+++ We thank all the good souls who offering their helping hands to make yesterday's Thanksgiving Bake Sale a success for the good of the parish. May the gracious Lord continue to bless all with good health for Many & Blessed Years!

+++ We will be having until the Feast of the Nativity a Basket Collection of foods for the local food pantry in assisting those in need. Please bring your donation in as soon as possible and place it in the basket in the vestibule. We thank you in advance for your consideration of food and accompanying prayer on their behalf.

+++ 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.

+++ Each Monday evening at 7: 30PM we will have prayer devotions with homily in preparing for the coming of the Lord among us. Please be certain to invest time and soul in this worthy cause.

+++The St. Nicholas Day Luncheon consisting of non-meat dishes will be held on Sunday, December 4 after the Divine Liturgy. We will have a visit from St. Nicholas and the Food Donation Sheet will be available next Sunday for sign ups.

+++The offering for flowers to beautify our parish church on the feast of the Nativity of our Lord will be taken on Sunday, December 4. Please be generous with your sacrificial offering.

+++ 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 this past week: Tithe Offering, \$100.00; Candles, \$100.00; Bulletin, \$25.00; Fellowship, \$25.00; Food Coupons, \$225.00; Holyday, \$100.00 for a total of \$675.00. We express our profound gratitude to the parishioner communicants who offered 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, Mary Jaakobs, Anna Zacharyczuk, Eleni Pallas, Debra Szmaida, Paul Szmaida, 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 \$100.00 from this apostolate. Even your pennies can help and are a blessing to our parish.

+++ For the expansion of our much needed parochial facilities, our parish pledge support to date totals \$10,000.00. As we thank the Lord for inspiring generosity in the hearts of our faithful, we also thank the donors for accepting the challenge of the Lord in building up His Body. We cordially invite and look forward to receiving additional and increased pledges from all our devoted parishioners.

+++ 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 \$100.00 on this project to date!

LORD



TEACH
US

Lust

Where do the conflicts and disputes among you originate? Is it not your inner cravings that make war within your members? What you desire you do not obtain, and so you resort to murder. You envy and you cannot acquire, so you quarrel and fight. You do not obtain because you do not ask. You ask and you do not receive because you ask wrongly, with a view to squandering what you receive on your pleasures. O you unfaithful ones, are you not aware that love of the world is enmity with God? Man is marked out as God's enemy if he chooses to be the friend of the world James 4: 1 - 4.

Have no love for the world, nor the things of that the world affords. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father has no place in him, for nothing the world affords comes from the Father. Carnal allurements, enticements for the eye, the life of empty show, all these are of the world. And the world with its seductions is passing away, but the man who does the will of God endures forever 1 John 2: 15 - 17.

You have heard the commandment, "You shall not commit adultery." What I say to you is anyone who looks lustfully at a woman has already committed adultery with her in his thoughts Matthew 5: 27, 28.

Lust not in your heart after her beauty, let not her captivate you with her glance! For the price of a loose woman may be scarcely a loaf of bread, but if she is married, she is a trap for your precious life. Can a man take fire to his bosom and his garments not be burned? Or can a man walk on live coals and his feet not be scorched? So with him who goes into to his neighbor's wife; none who touches her shall go unpunished Proverbs 6: 25 - 29.

Therefore submit to God, resist the devil and he will take flight. Draw close to God and he will draw close to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, you backsliders. Begin to lament, to mourn, and to weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy into sorrow. Be humbled in the sight of the Lord and he will raise you on high James 4: 7 - 10.

The Spirit within us

God, though present everywhere, has His special residence, as being a pure Spirit, in our minds — "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." He is somewhere in the recesses of our soul, in the springs of our existence, a light in that mysterious region of our nature where the wishes, feelings, thoughts, and emotions take their earliest rise. The mind is a sanctuary, in the center of which the Lord sits enthroned, the lamp of consciousness burning before Him.



"Congratulations, Father! Your program to mobilize the laity was so successful we don't even need you anymore!"



In God's Image and Likeness

God's revelation to us in Scripture teaches we are created by our heavenly Father in his own image. *God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them* Genesis 1: 27. Most scientists today say it is highly probable all living things on earth evolved from lifeless matter through increasingly complex life forms culminating in the present human species. The causes of this evolution are uncertain; they just happened.

The most common theory of this causation is Neo- Darwinian which holds that while the species of living things are kept stable by genetic inheritance, the genes are liable to random mutations which produce variations within each species.

The varieties better adapted to the existing environment survive and reproduce in greater numbers than others. Consequently, as the environment slowly changes, these dominant species become so different that they can no longer interbreed with the old species and a new species is born.

This process has worked in the direction of producing species of greater and greater complexity and adaptation to varied environments and finally the human species, which because of its big brain and consequent intelligence has now come to dominate the entire earth.

Two things should be noted seriously about such theories of human evolution:

They do not pretend to answer the question as to whether this evolutionary process can initiate and sustain itself or whether it is ultimately the work of a Creator, as Judaism, Christianity and even Islam teach. Science simply assumes without explanation that the world exists and operates by certain laws, none of which they elucidate or make strategically plain. There is an enormous amount of plain acceptance of bias and fact, equated in similar value.

Neo-Darwinian does not explain why evolution has produced the human species rather than an infinite number of other possible life forms or even no life at all. It does not predict that human life must evolve because of some great "law" of evolution as the crank and denounced philosopher Teilhard de Chardin supposed. Instead, it is a historical type of explanation, not a scientific one. History cannot predict; it can only look backward and thus *explain* what happened by describing the various circumstances of an event, many of which were simply the result of plain and obvious chance. In fact, it is an extremely improbable that any living thing and especially complex human life would have evolved as they say it did.

This does not mean Neo-Darwinian theory is necessarily false or of no value. It may cast a wonderful light on the history of the universe and the marvelous way that God, using natural forces, brought order out of chaos and finally created awesome human life. Christians are grateful to the scientists whose studied labor has helped us understand the wonders of God's work and to praise the Creator. What it means is that this theory, like all scientific theories explains seemingly alludes to explain some things about the world, but leaves much more veiled in mystery.

Are we really made in *the image and likeness of God*? If we look carefully at the first chapters of Genesis, we see that this statement is connected directly with God's mandated blessing: *Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion...over all living things that move on the earth* Genesis 1: 28. In the second creation account, we read, *The Lord God then took the man and settled him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate and care for it* Genesis 2: 15.

Thus, unquestionably we are created in God's image, because He has given us a share in his creative dominion over the earth. We are co-creators with God, or to use more biblical language we are God's *stewards* over his creation.

He shares this power with us in two ways: (1) Like other animals we have the sexual power of reproduction on which evolution is based, but (2) uniquely, as human beings, we have the power of intelligence and free will.

Note we are given our good world symbolized by the Garden of Eden to cultivate and care for. But what must be understood by all is that the Church of Jesus Christ is not the enemy of science and technology as she is sometimes accused of being. The Church recognizes and understands that science is a gift of God, a work of the Holy Spirit. And so is technology based on it. Through science we come to understand God's wisdom and goodness

better. Through technology we can care for the environment and develop its resources to overcome the miseries of poverty and disease caused by human mismanagement.

The Book of Genesis actually warns us, along with the continuing understanding of the Church, that if we misuse the power of science and technology and abuse it or misinterpret it in ways contrary to that of God, the good for which He gave them to us, we will destroy ourselves. *You worthless lout! I intend to judge you on your own evidence. You knew I was a hard man, withdrawing what I never deposited, reaping what I never sowed! Why, then, did you not put my money out on loan, so that on my return I could get it back with interest? He said to those standing around, 'Take from him what he has, and give it to the man with the ten.' Yes, but he already has ten, they said. He responded with 'The moral is: whoever has will be given more, but the one who has not will lose the little he has. Now about those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king, bring them in and slay them in my presence* Luke 19: 22 – 27.

It is a grave mistake to think or espouse the philosophy that the Church opposes modern technology because it is artificial or unnatural rather than natural. What the Church opposes are artificial processes which are *anti-natural*, that is destructive of rather than helpful to or collaborative with nature. The Church favors a truly ecological technology which respects God's purposes built into nature and seeks to heal, aid and perfect nature. We should care for Garden Earth by conserving its ecology, but we should also cultivate the garden by weeding it, hoeing it, breeding it, developing it, far beyond its wild state, but always in line with its very created nature, so that its potential in God's sight might be achieved.

The Church opposes contraception, artificial insemination and in vitro reproduction as ways of controlling and manipulating birth or overcoming sterility not because they are artificial but because they are anti-natural. Instead of promoting nature, they break the originally intended created natural link between the marital act and reproduction and the natural link between the child and its parents through the marital act. Our severing of these natural links which bind the family together is typical of the disrespect for ecology which has polluted our environment and is making humanity an endangered species.

Science helps us to understand this ecology and a truly scientific use of technology should preserve and perfect it. Only if we revive the notion of stewardship will science and technology truly serve human need. Our God has fashioned us very carefully through millions of years. By sharing with us the intelligence to understand and use natural processes, He made us his stewards and partners, sharing with him in generous creativity. Let us be worthy of his love by exercising similar loving care.

DIVINATION

With an etymological background in classical Latin, divination means to foresee, to predict, to prophesy.

It is always an act of religious nature when one says he knows and can declare future events or hidden things by means of communication with occult forces. There is no divination if the religious element is missing, as in scientific investigation. The occult forces in divination are always created rational powers which the Church identifies as diabolical.

Implicit in this judgment is the belief that neither God nor the spiritual powers friendly to God would lend themselves to frivolous practices or subject themselves to any evoking human force, regardless how sincere it appears to be. Hence, evoking these powers, whether explicitly or even implicitly, is considered an appeal to the aid of satan. It is therefore a grave offense against God to attribute to the devil a sure knowledge of the contingent future, which as depending on free will, is known to Almighty God alone. By misleading man about the future, the devil can then turn events around to his own diabolical purpose to the detriment of souls.

This does explain the very strong prohibition in God's revelation to us in Scripture of any divining practices. "Do not have recourse," the people were told, "to the spirits of the dead or to magicians; they will defile you. I am Yahweh, your God" Leviticus 19: 31. And again: "Any man or woman who is a necromancer must be put to death by stoning; their blood shall be on their own heads" Leviticus 20: 27.

In the annals of Christianity every form of divination has been condemned by the Church. Among the more common ones are

Augury from the Latin *augurare*, which means to predict, by the interpretations of omens such as watching the flight of birds or inspection of the entrails of sacrificed animals;

Axinomancy from the Greek *axine*, which means axhead and *manteia*, which means divination by means of the movement of an ax placed on a post;

Belomancy from the Greek *belos* which means dart by drawing arrows at random from a container;

Bibliomancy From the Greek *biblion* which means book, by superstitiously consulting books, notably the Bible by randomly opening them to a particular at random page and placing a finger on a line and applying its meaning to a particular problem;

Capnomancy from the Greek *kapnos* which means smoke, by studying the ascent and descent of smoke and concluding that it was a good omen if the smoke rose vertically, especially from a sacrifice;

Chiromancy from the Greek, *cheir* which means hand, by inspecting lines on the palms and frontal of the hand, also called contemporaneously, palmistry;

Necromancy from the Greek *necros*, meaning a dead person, by consulting the dead or conjuring up the souls of the dead to inquire of them some secrets from the past or for the future, more commonly known and growing more popular presently and known as spiritualism.

The faith of believers is already weak and very vulnerable, even suggestible to dangerous proportions if they participate in any of these foolish and demeaning practices. Early canons of the Church declared excommunicated those who practiced any of these sinful practices and damned those who cooperated with them.

Any soul who assented to this nonsense has grave matter for the confessional as a very serious denial of the sovereignty of God. It is creating new gods for the self when none were necessary. It is placing oneself outside the ability of God to save and redeem the individual because a denunciation of God in practice has taken place by indulgence in this sort of outright pagan action.

ARIUS, THE NON-BELIEVER SAYS:

You gotta respect the individuality of the man who knows how to change car oil, but does not know how to confess his sins.



Eternal Punishment

So important is man in the sight of God, that in creating him, our heavenly Father provided a place of reward awesomely elevated and distinguished above everything and anything for his spectacular dignity as made in his own image. Equally true is the unending contrasted penalty suffered in hell along with evil spirits and human beings who die in deadly sin and refuse the loving mercy of the Father through the grace of Jesus Christ. Hell is a place for those not accepting the opportunity for reconciliation with a just and loving God.

Christ speaks of the final judgment (Matthew 25: 34, 41) and compares the sentence of the just with the condemnation of the wicked. Christ as Judge will first say, "Come, you whom my Father has blessed, take for your heritage the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world." But to the unjust wicked, "Go away from me with a curse upon you, to eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels" Then he repeats the two judgments with a conclusion, speaking first of the lost and then of the saved, "And they will go into eternal punishment and the virtuous to eternal life" Matthew 25: 46. Since there is no question about the endless duration of heaven, the Church also teaches the same about eternal punishment. Since hell is a spiritual dimension, the absence of God, fire is used as metaphor to emphasize the worst possible estrangement and penalty for chosen life without God.

A MUCH-MALIGNED, MODERN SAINT

In recent years, many Orthodox Christians have developed a deep devotion of St. Nectarios, who was proclaimed a saint in 1961 by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. The patron saint of cancer victims, St. Nectarios is frequently called upon to intercede in behalf of those suffering from any type of illness. It is hard to believe that during his lifetime, St. Nectarios was often treated unfairly.

St. Nectarios (Anastasios Kephalas) was born in 1846 in Thrace. Always a pious and devout Orthodox Christian, he became a monk at the age of 30. He studied at the University of Athens, writing many books, pamphlets and Bible commentaries. He advanced quickly through the ranks of the clergy and in 1889, Nectarios was consecrated Metropolitan of Pentapolis by Patriarch Sophronios. He was assigned to be Bishop of Cairo. While popular with the faithful, many of his fellow clergy were jealous of him. They managed to turn the Patriarch against him, and within a year, Nectarios was dismissed from his diocese. Although stripped of his authority and duty, he never displayed any bitterness towards those who wronged him. St. Nectarios returned to Athens, where he soon was appointed the director of a theological school - a position he held for 15 years. In 1904, he established a monastery for women on the island of Aegina. When he retired from his position at the theological school, St. Nectarios returned to Aegina, where he lived the rest of his life as a simple monk. He loved hearing the confessions of the countless pilgrims who would come to visit the monastery. Unafraid of physical labor, Nectarios helped with the construction of the monastery buildings that were built with his own funds. He died on November 9, 1920 at the age of 74. Pilgrims continue to visit his tomb in the monastery church on the island of Aegina.

*Icon by Nataliya Zharsky
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