

# Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Twenty Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

December 13, 2015

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

+++ The Holyday Bake Sale is this Friday and Saturday. Please get your orders in by Wednesday of this week. Packaged cookies and individual cookies will be available as well. We are in need of helping hands on both days.



+++ 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, to unite our prayers with hers for the salvation of our souls. Invite your friends and neighbors to join us.

+++ Please keep the intentions of these members of our parish intercession community in your daily prayers: Barbara, Betty, James, Yevlogia, Nicholas, Maria, Cynthia, Pani Anna Marie and Andrea.

+++ The sign-up sheet for both the Web Site and Bulletin sponsors is on the bulletin board in the kitchen. Please sign up as soon as possible. Do NOT make payment until your sign-up month has arrived. This will make it easier for Father to keep track of payments. Thanks in advance to all who support the parish in this way.

+++ We offer thanks to the Blessed Trinity for inspiring generosity in the souls of our faithful and the blessing of abundant grace in our midst with the offering received last Sunday: Tithe Offering, \$351.00; Candles, \$9.00; Holyday, \$30.00; Kitchen, \$2565.00, Flowers, \$40.00; Food Coupons, \$320.00; for a total of \$3315.00. 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!

+++ 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, Maria Idronmenos, Anna Zacharyczuk, Bob Gorbich, Marilyn 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 **\$1828.00** 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 \$6750 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.

+++ We invite all pray the Lord our God grants us the grace of enrichment of our spiritual lives for his glory.



### God Is Our Protector

*The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe* Proverbs 18: 10.

*For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come* 1 Timothy 4: 8.

*When I cry out to you, then my enemies will turn back; this I know because God is for me* Psalms 56: 9.

*Happy is he whose resting place is in the secret of the Lord and under the shade of the wings of the Most High; who says of the Lord, he is my safe place and my tower and strength; he is my God, in whom is my hope. He will take you out of the birdnet, and keep you safe from wasting disease. You will be covered by his feathers; under his wings you will be safe; his good faith will be your salvation* Psalms 91: 1 – 4.

*Whoever obeys his command will come to no harm and the wise heart will know the proper time and procedure* Ecclesiastes 8: 5.

*I am not asking you to take them out of this world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one* John 17: 15.

*He grants a treasure of good sense to the godly. He is their shield, protecting those who walk with integrity. He guards the path of justice and protects those who are faithful to him* Proverbs 2: 7, 8.



## Proclaiming the Gospel

Millions in this country have never read a clear presentation of the gospel of Jesus Christ our Saviour. Our parish bulletin and the literature we provide for spiritual growth proclaim the teaching of the gospel clearly in our Orthodox tradition. In the vestibule of our church are various tracts explaining the way to heaven. People read tracts, our own people, and those you might give them to. The printed word works if prayed over. If you know someone who could profit from reading some of our literature, take it and gift them with it. Before you do, pray over the literature, that your devotion and sincerity accompany the written word and enter the heart of the reader. Your work with the Lord, then, will become powerful and exhilarating.

If everyone in our parish were sensitive in soul to the spiritual needs of those whom they encounter each day and if they then responded in prayer and blessed information, how much would our God be glorified and our precious faith grow and be edified! In obedience to the great commission, "Go therefore and teach..." which is addressed to all baptized believers, we should all realize our responsibility to the Lord. Is there someone in your family who is without Christ? Is there someone in your extended family that does not go to church? Do you know someone who has had problems with the Church in the past? Is there someone in your neighborhood, a good friend or neighbor who could benefit from your prayers and from some edifying information about the Church of Christ and the salvation of their soul? What about your emancipated, grown children? Bring it to them, mail it to them, but see to it that your prayers accompany the literature that God will soften and dispose their hearts to read and subsequently believe.

Read all the literature yourself, carefully. Make certain you read every word of the parish bulletin that you, too, be enlightened by it. Pray aloud if you must over the religious message. Do not distribute a single tract without an accompanying enriching prayer. The result of your efforts is directly proportional to one's faith in the printed word. Pray to give the tract to someone who will most benefit from it; leave it somewhere where it will be found and most beneficial. Follow through over and again with intercessory prayer that the gospel message enter and grow in favorably tilled soil of the soul.

Our religious education material encourages people to fall into the arms of a loving and embracing God. It invites people to visit our church and learn of the saving work of Jesus Christ. It nudges people to repent and accept the redeeming death and Resurrection of Christ. It persuades our communicants to become more active in the life of the Church. It strengthens our own faith as we become partners with Christ in enriching the lives of others with His gracious love.

## Never Lose Sight Of Your Goals

Though one Navy SEALs diver lost part of his leg in a shipboard accident, he refused to give up on his cherished goal of becoming a Master Chief, the highest ranking he could attain in the military. After being outfitted with a prosthetic leg, he worked hard to keep himself in top physical condition. Impressed by his astonishing efforts, Navy officials asked him to lead calisthenics classes for new recruits. None of the recruits knew that their hard-working taskmaster was also an amputee. "I could hear them say among themselves, 'that old chief—he's going to kill us.'"

Two weeks into training, his class was scheduled for a session at a swimming pool. When he came out to greet them, he held his prosthetic limb beneath one arm. "Those kids down there almost had a heart attack," he recalls. "Here was the same guy that was leading them, that they were talking about, who had only one leg and was swimming them to death. But that would build those kids up, make them mad. 'That was sure a good motivational period for those kids.'"

It was also good for their instructor. Not only did he exhibit to the recruits their own possibilities, but by focusing on his life-long goal, he also became the first amputee ever to earn the Navy rank of Master Chief.

Quite an accomplishment, we might add, and an inspiration to all who become frustrated in their continuing struggle after sanctity. If we are seriously persevering, our God will see our sincerity and grant us victory in our attempts at following in the footsteps of Christ! "Pray with perseverance..." Ephesians 6:18.



Dear Lord, I need your  
peace today.

**I have crooked places that need to be made  
straight and rough places that need to be  
smoothed. I am facing mountains I cannot  
climb and valleys I cannot cross. I need  
help. I release into your hands all the  
worries and anxieties and struggles I face  
today in life.**



## Did You Know That ...

...rest is a good thing, but boredom can be its brother?

...every revolution evaporates and leaves behind only the slime of a new bureaucracy?

...they never fail who die to themselves in the cause of Christ?

...it is a trick among the dishonest to offer sacrifices that are not needed, or not possible, to avoid making those that are required?

...the two things that worthless people sacrifice everything for are happiness and freedom and their punishment is that they get both only to find they have no capacity for the happiness and no use for the freedom?

...he who is secure is not necessarily safe?

...a free society is where it is safe to be unpopular?

...He who created us without our help will not save us without our consent?

...no one is able to shield a man from the consequence of his own evil doings?

...the salvation of the world depends on the men who will not take evil in good humor and whose laughter destroys the fool instead of encouraging him?

...scandal is what one half of the world takes pleasure inventing and the other half in believing?

...the object of the scandalmonger is not that she tells of racy things, but that she pretends to be indignant about them?

...every great advance of science has issued forth from a new audacity of imagination?

...the universe is full of magical things, patiently waiting for our wits to grow sharper?

...we cannot expect anyone else to keep our secret if we cannot keep it ourselves?

...most of us have perfect confidence in everyone else's indiscretion?

God is only possible if we have the realistic humility to know that we can and most times, probably are wrong.

To try to "...seek the kingdom of God" means to do the best we can, knowing that we are often wrong and that God will work through us and with us anyhow and correct our shortcomings and mistakes if we sincerely and seriously pursue His will in our lives. When a man is ordained to any station or office in the life of the Church, the ordaining prelate's first words of prayer are: "God, Who heals all illnesses and supplies what is lacking...." Humility is necessary to serve the kingdom of God, whether as a lay person or as one ordained for service to souls.

What can we say about the kingdom? The gospel message is full of the teaching of Jesus about the Father's kingdom. When He was led before Pontius Pilate, He made the important and astounding declaration: "My kingdom is not of this world" John 18: 36.

The Kingdom of God does not have armies or legions or mere physical treasures or a worldly organization. There is a subtle difference between the Church and the Kingdom because the Church must now temporarily have an outward manifest organization, the kingdom if God rules through the hearts and souls of its communicants. This does not mean the Church is not of the

kingdom, only that it is the way by which the kingdom manifests itself now in the world.

Because the Kingdom is not an organization, it is not a "thing" or an "object", but more a dynamic of faith life, a spiritual entity. Here again, in the Divine Liturgy, we have a problem of translation, a expressed difficulty of the limitation of language and words. The word translated as "kingdom" is more action than a place or an organized structure. We might better understand it as the reign of God among us, but this can also become somewhat cumbersome and awkward.

Even the word "reign" must not be understood or confused with something else. When we announce in prayer, together with our priestly celebrant, "Blessed is the kingdom..." we are making a commitment to actively work, in humility and love, to bring about God's righteousness in our lives and in the world, to complete the work of grace in our life. We also recognize that the results of the kingdom are not yet here and now, fully realized, and that the Divine Liturgy reminds us that we are on the path to God's glory, to be united by grace with it because we have entered the new and eternal dimension of grace and love. We must cooperate with that love and grace to elevate ourselves into becoming citizens of that spiritual realm which surrounds us.



# The Kingdom of God



The openly public part of the Divine Liturgy begins with the invoked words of the priestly celebrant, "Blessed is the kingdom of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit...." The gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is fundamentally and purposefully concerned with announcing the Kingdom of God. Even St. John the Baptist went about "...preaching the kingdom of God" Mark 1: 14. He noted, "...the kingdom of God is at hand" Mark 1: 15. How many times did the Lord emphasize, "The kingdom of God is in your midst" Luke 17: 21?

In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells His followers not to worry about food or drink, clothing or shelter. Because our heavenly Father loves us, He will provide for us and so He commands, "...seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be given you as well" Matthew 6: 33.

In response to this challenge, we later in the celebration expressly sing, "Let us set aside all earthly cares, that we may welcome the King of all."

From the very first moment of the Divine Liturgy, our attention is focused on God's kingdom and as we see, on His righteousness which we should pursue. We must enter the Divine Liturgy celebration with the right mind, the proper disposition, our primary concern being that the will of God is done in our lives.

Our difficulty, however, is determining and knowing what the will of God is. Many people seem to be quite convinced what it is; it is very simply associated with and being the very same thing they want and pursue. They seriously think God's will is united with their will instead of the other way around. This becomes one of the serious pitfalls of faith, especially of those in service to the Church. It is too easy for imaginary faith to confuse man's will with that of our Creator. Many times it becomes a natural human impulse to think that we are right because otherwise why should we think as we do while everyone else is wrong! Why do they think the way they do? The answer is often found in our alienated and misinformed pride. But the surest way of attaining a healthy conscience is living faithfully in God's Kingdom and being guided by His principles. It involves a life of earnest prayer and steady study of God's revelation to us.

The soul who lives in reality, however, is aware that it can make a mistake. Likewise discerning the will of



St. Maximus the Confessor writes in *The Church's Mystagogy*, that the Divine Liturgy is "...the revelation of the mystery of our salvation which is in the secret recesses of the divine. For as the Word of God says to His disciples, 'I shall not drink of the fruit of the vine until then when I drink it anew with you in the kingdom of my Father'" Matthew 26: 29.

Every Divine Liturgy is our personal carrying out and fulfilling in action and faith what we pray for daily, even more frequently, when we say in the Lord's Prayer, "Your kingdom come, Your will be done" Matthew 6: 10. If we are serious in our prayer, we will also be serious about our participation in the grace of every Divine Liturgy celebrated four benefit, each Sunday and holyday.

This initial announcement is plainly and loudly made so that no one is confused; that no one misunderstands where they are gathered by the Holy Spirit; for what purpose they come together and lose their individuality and are bound up together with other believers to compose the Body of Christ which glorifies the Father in worship by the energized grace of the Holy Spirit. It concludes with "...now and ever and forever..." to show us God's kingdom is here and now, that it has been established as a result of Christ's triumph over death, that it is the predetermined destiny of baptized

believers and the only means by which we can achieve salvation. The kingdom of the Church here and now leads us into the Kingdom of heaven in eternity.

The problem of translation evidences itself once again as it has been around for a long time. Human expression and limited language is important to understand and consider in conveying eternal Godly values. The word 'forever' is attached to the original expressed meaning of 'ages of ages,' which is an inadequate expression of the original meaning of 'human life-span after human life-span', therefore conveying a very long time, or eternity, that is, without beginning or end.

We as human beings have a limited life span, contrasted with that of God Who is eternal, having no beginning and no end. We describe ourselves as mortal because we have a physical beginning and end. Our soul, however is immortal, not subject to death because it has a beginning at our creation, but no end. God is beyond our human lives and limitations, but through our Christian belief and faith, after our temporary earthly life, we are united to God for all eternity if we meet the challenges He provides for us to respond to positively.

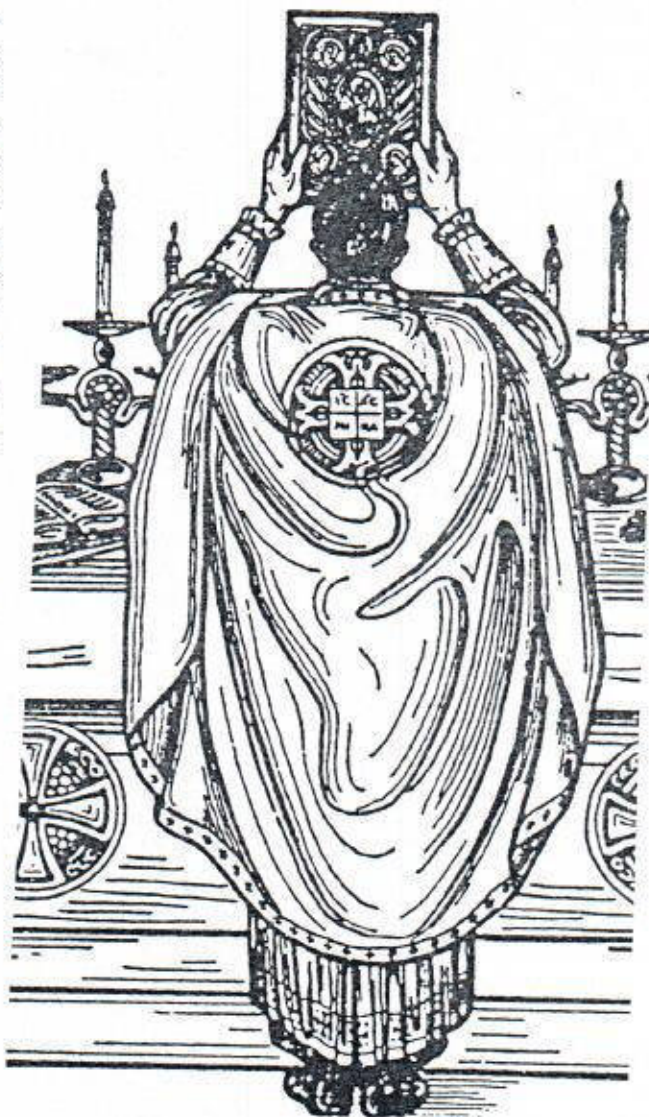
Scientifically, most do not believe in the nature of the universe as a series of cycles. It had a beginning and it will have an end, but God has no beginning and no end. It is to the never-ending



Kingdom we are invited and of which we taste and experience when we worship at the Divine Liturgy. It is to this never-ending kingdom we are called, to experience, at least in part, as much as humans are now able, here and now what our eternity will forever be like. For the eternal Kingdom man is created in God's image. Into the Kingdom of God we were introduced at baptism. While we live in space and time, we cannot form an absolutely clear idea of eternity because it is beyond our capability. This can happen only when we finally die to this world and enter eternity, freed from our temporary existence when we rise in "...the spiritual body" 1 Corinthians 15: 44. As St. Paul said, "At present we see indistinctly, as in a mirror, but then face to face" 1 Corinthians 13: 12.

The Kingdom of God is here and now, in the life of His Body, the Church, it is the pre-extension of the eternity of our Creator God and our worship at the Divine Liturgy is our participation in the heavenly worship, our way to God's reign fulfilled. It is our truth and our life.

There is nothing else like it! We must so live that this Kingdom for which we were created, in which we were born, to which we were baptized and reared, due to our neglect and misfortune, precipitate the fulfillment of Christ's doleful warning, and "shall be taken away from you..." Matthew 21: 43.



## THE HEAVENLY HOST

**M**an has become increasingly familiar with the visible world he inhabits. The wonderful secrets of land, sea and sky have been revealed to his inquiring mind. And the endless search goes on; man goes higher, farther, deeper, ever prying loose the wonders of God's creation.

But there is also an invisible, unseen world. The Sacred Scriptures point this out on the first page: "In the beginning God created heaven and earth". What is this unseen creation of God? Who inhabits the unknown regions? We do know of some invisible things: our souls are invisible; the air we breathe cannot be seen. But this feastday of our Church tells us that the most glorious of all the unseen works of God are Angels.

Man has long pondered the problem of the origin of evil. Around them they saw good and evil. It wasn't difficult to think of good as coming from God, but where did evil come from? Thinking men began to speak of the unseen world of Angels. God made them holy, but some revolted against the Lord and refused to serve Him. As a result, there was war in heaven. Leading the faithful Angels in the fight against those who revolted was St. Michael. He led the heavenly host to victory over the evil forces, who have long tempted man to sin. The leader of the forces of evil is called Satan.

That struggle of love versus hate did not end there. It continues to be fought to this day. St. Paul wrote vividly about the Christian call to arms: "Put on the armor of God, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit."

Why were we told this? Not that Christians should fight against any man, but that we may wage war against the spiritual forces of wickedness. We must battle against sin in all its clever forms & against evil in all its subtle design. We are the soldiers of Christ. We have our banner, the Cross; our captain, the Lord; our weapon, Christian love.

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