



# Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Sunday after Theophany

January 9, 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 solemn feast of the Baptism of Christ, Theophany. The customary greeting is "Christ Is Among Us!" to which we respond, "He Is And Shall Be!"

+++ The Scripture Study Class meets on Tuesdays at 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM. Please come and join us by investing time in learning our precious faith so we can better enjoy and live it! The public is invited to participate

with us, so invite a friend or neighbor. In preparation for this week, please read the thirteenth to sixteenth chapters of the Book of Genesis.

+++ Please remember in your daily prayers our good parishioner, Sophia Idromenos who is hospitalized at Centra - State Hospital. We pray the gracious Lord grants her a speedy recover and restores her to good health for Many & Blessed Years!

+++ 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 this past week: Tithe Offering, \$[REDACTED]; Candles, \$[REDACTED]0; Holyday, \$[REDACTED]; Diocesan Dues, \$[REDACTED]; Parish Dues, \$[REDACTED]; Food Coupons, \$[REDACTED]; Nativity of our Lord, \$[REDACTED]00; Energy, \$[REDACTED]; Kitchen, \$[REDACTED]; Building Fund, \$[REDACTED], for a total of \$[REDACTED]. 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 41 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, Louis Pasquino, +Paul Szmaida, Debra Szmaida, George Idromenos, Kent Pasquino, Kyle Pasquino, Bob Gorbich, Anna Zacharyczuk 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 \$[REDACTED] 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 \$[REDACTED]. 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 **Helen Karpiak** or 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 \$[REDACTED] 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.





### Worthy Of Praise

*In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God John 1: 1.*

*By the word of the Lord were the heavens made and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap; he lays up the depth in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. For he spoke and it was done, he commands it stands fast Psalms 33: 6 - 9.*

*But you have been born again; your new life did not come from your earthly parents because the life they gave you will end in death. But this new life will last forever because it comes from the eternal, living word of God 1 Peter 1: 23.*

*"Is not my word like a fire" asks the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces" Jeremiah 23: 29?*

*All men are like grass and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures forever 1 Peter 1: 24, 25.*

*Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. For he spoke and it came to be, he commanded and it stood firm Psalms 33: 8, 9.*

*The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word Hebrews 1: 3.*

*By the same word the present heavens and earth have been reserved for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the godless 2 Peter 3: 7.*



## **The Holy Family**

**“Behold, I and the children whom the Lord has given me are signs and portents of Israel from the Lord of hosts” Isaiah 8: 18.**

**Home life for believers is so vitally important because it ought to reflect the values God’s revelation over the centuries has taught us. Unquestionably, parents have as their primary objective conforming the will of their children to the mind of the Creator.**

**Consequently, we must teach our children how to forgive, how to make our homes places of love and forgiveness. We must make our streets and neighborhoods centers of peace and reconciliation. It would be a serious crime against youth and their future to let even one child grow up with nothing but the experience of violence and hate.**

**Not only the future of the Church, but of humanity itself depend in great part on devoted parents and on family life built on Christ’s principles in our homes. The family is a true measure of the greatness of a nation, just as the dignity of individuals is the true measure of our civilization.**

**Sadly, with alarming apprehension we observe that in so many families, Christian values are not being taught or lived. We are thoroughly satisfied with the massive approach of secular humanism overwhelming us without teaching the truth of the Lord as an antidote. We try to do what is upright, respected and accepted as behavior standards in our society. We forget all that we profess must be based on the singular values of our Saviour. We cannot achieve success in our society without living the kind of life that ends in salvation. We may be appealing and attractive to our non-believing neighbors on the basis of their standards, but that does not mean we are appealing in the sight of our God. We may promote college degrees for our children, thereby showing how much we appreciate the values of a secular world and how it looks at successful parenting, but we do not get even equally excited these very same children do not even have an idea of Christian life except as it coincides with the values of a fallen world.**

**It is not without reason that Jesus Christ, the Son of God spent thirty years of his life hidden at home. He wanted to point out in this way that the home has a power, a fundamental influence on man. The family is the historic and visible expression of the love of God among us.**



The reward or promise of eternal life with him should always console and encourage us even in dark and difficult moments along the path of life's journey. We should strive each day to deepen our union with Christ by putting aside time for prayer and reflection and being mindful of his ever-loving abiding presence within us. In a hectic life sometimes this can be difficult but there has to be some quiet spot or special time when we can be with him alone and not caught up in the cares of the moment which quickly passes.

By daily growing in his love, we can by our example influence others as we radiate his message of love, joy and peace with all we are in daily contact with.

Lord Jesus Christ, Almighty Son of the Father, I pray that daily I may deepen my love and union with you so that one day I maybe with you for all eternity. Amen.

## Thanking God

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever  
Psalms 136: 1.

We never seem to thank our heavenly Father as earnestly as we entreat him. Yet somehow we do know and understand thanksgiving is really what our prayer should be about. Our God is so good and faithful and that alone should make our whole life an act of thanksgiving. Having just celebrated two milestones in salvation history, the Nativity of our Lord and Theophany, how much more grateful ought we be that He is come among us in the flesh and provides an example for living we should ardently espouse!

Think and meditate upon all Christ does in our life; the countless attentions, the growing within me, the obstacles He has removed, the gift of his presence. We have to blush at our ingratitude and indifference to him.

God is present among us and we take him for granted; therefore we thank him for the Eucharist that perfect act of thanksgiving in which his Son gives thanks for us, even when our minds and hearts are elsewhere. Without the Eucharist, there is no thanksgiving; with it no further thanksgiving is necessary.



## HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

"All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be" Psalms 139: 16. Happy Birthday to you! How many does that make? If you are ten years old, it means you have lived about 3, 650 days. Sometimes we count the days and years from the time of our actual birth. But we know we are actually older than that by nine months. The Psalmist expressed it in poetic language, "You created my innermost being; You knit me together in my mother's womb" Psalms 139: 13. The Psalmist praises God for knowing everything about him. He writes about the wonderful ways he was created and brought into being. When there were as yet no days in his life, all his days were known only to God. Thinking about that prompted him to praise, he says "How precious to me are your thoughts, O God" Psalms 139: 17. The beginning of life and the end are known only to God. And not only the when, but the how. Without thinking, we often congratulate each other when we reach another year, as if to say, "Good, you made it." But we ought to thank God and give Him the gratitude for each passing year. By the grace of the Holy Spirit, we live and we have our being. How important it is to have a personal, intimate relationship with our heavenly Father! Did you know that such a relationship is possible now that our Saviour is among us? In Christ, God the Father demonstrated his eternal love for us. Do you really know this merciful Father, this loving God Who makes your birthdays possible?

### Expect To Be Beautiful

Yet, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter;  
we are all the work of your hand Isaiah 64: 8.

Dear heavenly Father; Divine Potter, the lump of clay that I am keeps crying for definitive form day by day. I yearn for molding, to be perfected in your image and life. Lord this a song of trust. I am in your hands like clay and I wish you to know I expect to be molded. Grant me the strength to become the form you expect of me. Use me for your glory. I expect to be beautiful in your sight. I do expect to be loved because I trust in your promises. Make me usable for the cause of man's salvation. And if by chance someone should drop me as your apprentices sometimes do, I expect to be hurt, even broken. But I do expect you will restore me to my initial glory in creation as a child of God made in your image and likeness. I am just trying to say I am confident O Lord because I am in your hands just like clay. Lord grant me the necessary grace to strengthen the truth about myself no matter how beautiful it is! Amen.



In a recent obituary notice which seems to be the standard today over the internet, an announcement was made about the death of a son of a clergyman. It so happens that for whatever reason this person never attended church in his adult married life, did not rear his children as believers and was successful, as the world judges it, in his education and in his employment experience. All the greetings of his friends, co-workers and neighbors agreed he was a very happy and responsible employee and friend. There was a purposeful attempt to emphasize his religious background, featuring several photos of his father readily recognizable as a clergyman.

He was not buried from the church and there were no religious ceremonies attendant to his interment. Somewhere along the line he lost contact with God and lived the good life as he himself interpreted it to be. Apparently, also, there was never any significant attempt over the years to return him to the path of Christ, unless these too, encountered failure. In the fullness of his earthly activity, there apparently was never time for prayer in Christ, no time to nurture and respond to the needs of the soul, but certainly more than appropriate time for feeding the allusions of earthly success. Now that he is out of the boundaries of this limited world, we are saddened to think of his encounter with the reality of a living and just God and why he felt it so necessary to embarrass the vocation of his father's entire life, castigate Christ and provide a loser's example to his children. What happened between the years of his early family life when he chose to pursue secular humanism and the still remaining descriptions of him as a fine and upright human being in his family and professional life in which there was a glaring absence of the source of joy and salvation and hope in Christ? What brought him to the conclusion he could go it alone and finally repudiate Christ and his Body, the Church by choosing cremation as a final solution for seeming obliteration from the sight of God and accountability before his throne?

The value of baptismal grace was apparently not appealed to and he placed himself outside the ability of our Lord to save him. Perhaps the interested intercessory prayers of believers will touch the grown-cold hearts of his offspring and remaining family members and provide the kind of exemplary Christian living example which will draw them back to the salutary grace and embrace of our Saviour before they too are lost for all eternity.

Dear Lord, heavenly Father, amiable Holy Spirit, help me increase the love of God in my family before it is too late!



## **Jesus Loves Me**

**And the word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth  
John 1: 14.**

**When we approach to receive Communion, we should remember and call to mind that our God knew and loves all of us, not only as God, but also, due to the past feast of the Nativity of our Lord and Theophany which was recently celebrated, but also in his human heart. In all Christ does in our human flesh, He expresses himself as one who loves us above all else.**

**Yes, Creator and awesome God, you knew and loved me, my life, my times, my surroundings, my destiny and my moments of greatness and littleness, all that I have been endowed by grace to be. You already had a knowledge of all this in the center of your being. You already had taken all of this into your heart and borne it there long before I was conceived. What an astounding thought that my life has a share in the formation of your earthly life, that I am one of the reasons you came among us and lifted me by your example. My life belongs to your destiny!**

**During your earthly life you already acknowledged my life. You prayed for me. You cried for me. You died for me and you arose from the tomb for me. You gave thanks for the grace I was to receive...Your life and mine, entwined for eternity!**

## **Closer Walk**

**Jesus himself drew near and went with them  
Luke 24: 15.**

**Throughout life we always keep in close touch with those whom we love. If distance separates us, then letters and telephone calls are cherished. We keep the memory of the message of love in our minds and hearts and embed it deeply in our souls. So too we must always be aware of and mindful of the message our Lord taught us, particularly in this time when the influence of the joyous feast days seems to leave behind the seriousness of his message. Christ love us and promises we will live with him forever.**



# **The Holy Innocents**

**Call upon me in the day of trouble Psalms 50: 15.**

Apparently to annihilate any possibility of a new-born king among his subjects, Herod determines to annihilate all who could potentially claim his throne. He thinks nothing in his pagan inhuman mind-set to dispatching his minions into the kingdom to relieve of life all those two years and under so superficially imagined peace may thrive in the desert kingdom.

Each year, following the feast of the Nativity of our Lord, the Church recalls the memory of the Holy Innocents of Bethlehem put to death by order of the local Roman king so that a Messiah-Saviour-King might be numbered among them and his throne safely secured for a while longer. These first martyrs for the sake of our Infant Prince of Peace are remembered with gratitude as salvation enters the world. Their physical lives are extinguished, but their souls lighten our way by the brightness and encouraging innocent light in these dark times.

When God's will – as on this fest day – seems difficult and incomprehensible to us, have mercy on us.

When sorrow and sadness, disgust and anguish overshadow us as they did you, have mercy on us.

When the holiness and justice of God fills us with terror, have mercy on us.

When we are left without help and assistance as you were, have mercy on us.

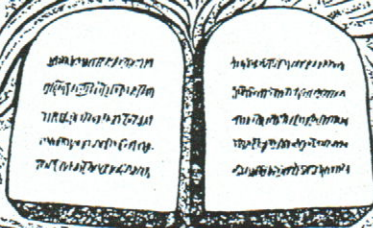
When our loves receives only ingratitude in return, have mercy on us.

When we think the Father does not seem to hear our prayers, have mercy on us.

When the light of faith seems to be diminishing during our night of suffering, have mercy on us.

When nothing else lives on in us except our final misery, our complete powerlessness and the incomprehensibility of God, have mercy on us.





*On the third new moon after the Israelites had gone forth from the land of Egypt, on that very day, they entered the wilderness of Sinai. Having journeyed from Rephidim, they entered the wilderness of Sinai and encamped in the wilderness. Israel encamped there in front of the mountain, and Moses went up to God.*

Exodus 19:1-3





## THE "ART" OF WRITING ICONS

**T**he Orthodox Church has long been known for expressing her theology through iconography. Indeed, our precious Faith is visually brought to life with the sacred images that adorn our churches and our homes. By definition, icons are *"two-dimensional images of Christ, the Theotokos, the Saints, important Biblical events or significant events in Church History."* St. Gregory the Dialogist refers to icons as being *"scriptures to the illiterate,"* making the point that one can simply look at an icon and learn lessons that may take volumes to express in words. Icons are meant to lift up our thoughts to heavenly things or, as St. John of Damascus writes: *"We are led by icons to the contemplation of that which is divine and spiritual."*

The Evangelist Luke is said to have been the first iconographer. He *"WROTE"* the icon of the Theotokos (icons are written, not painted) known as the Directress, or *"The one who points the way."* Since then, true iconographers have dedicated their lives to expressing the dogmas and teachings of the Church through their works. To be an iconographer, one truly must experience a calling from the Lord. An iconographer must pray and fast prior to beginning their work. Writing an icon is said to be, in itself, a form of prayer. Iconographers have maintained that each stroke of their brush is a meditation, which constantly reminds them of the necessity of inner peace as they proceed with their work. An iconographer never *"SIGNS"* an icon, for it is not really his or her work, but merely a depiction of what has been revealed to them through the grace of the Holy Spirit. May we pray that the Church will continue to be blessed with men and women dedicated to preserving this wonderful aspect of our Holy Orthodox Faith.