

Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Sunday of Publican and Pharisee

February 5, 2012

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 holydays of the Three Hierarchs and of the Meeting of our Lord in the Temple. The customary greeting is: "Christ Is Among Us!" to which we reply, "He Is And Shall Be!"

+++ There is no fasting this week as the Church wishes to emphasize fasting is only beneficial for the appropriate reasons. We do not fast for bragging rights as did the Pharisee!

+++ The Pre-Great Fast Luncheon will take place the last Sunday of this month. The sign-up sheet is on the kitchen table to be filled in with suggested prepared foods.

+++ We thank all who labored in every way to make yesterday's Pirohi Sale a success. God bless you faithful and devoted servants.

+++ Be certain to join us next Sunday when will honor both our Boy and Girl Scouts who will be present in their uniforms.

+++ Those who would like their homes sanctified with the newly blessed water of Christ's baptism, please advise Father as soon as possible.

+++ 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]; Food Coupons, [REDACTED]; Diocesan Dues, [REDACTED]; Parish Dues, [REDACTED]; Holy Day, [REDACTED]; Christian Fellowship, [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 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, Robert Gorbich, Anna Zacharyczuk, Eleni Pallas, Debra Szmajda, Paul Szmajda, and Pani Buleta.

+++ 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 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.**

LORD



TEACH
US

Repentance

Let us examine ourselves instead and repent, and turn again to the Lord. Let us lift our hearts and hands to him in heaven Lamentations 43: 40.

And when God saw they had put a stop to their evil ways, he abandoned his plan to destroy them and did not carry it out Jonah 3:10.

When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, "At home even the hired men have food enough and to spare, and here I am, dying of hunger. I will go to my father and say, I have sinned against heaven and against you, and am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired man." So he returned home to his father Luke 15: 17 - 20.

For I am the least worthy of all the apostles and I should not even be called an apostle at all after the way I treated the church of God 1 Corinthians 15: 9.

Now I am glad I sent it, not because it hurt you, but because the pain turned you to God. It was a good kind of sorrow you felt, the kind of sorrow God wants his people to have, so that I need not come to you with harshness. For God sometimes uses sorrow in our lives to help us turn away from sin and seek eternal life. We should never regret his sending it 2 Corinthians 7: 9 - 10.

Like sheep you wandered away from God, but now you have returned to your Shepherd, the guardian of your souls 1 Peter 2: 25.

Meditation for the Harried

The word *meditation* often conjures up images of various kinds, most of them inconsequential in far-a-way monastic mountain isolated retreats, but the age-old practice is actually much more accessible than that. It is necessary for the believer in Christ to think about him in a concerted and practiced way. In its simplest form, it can even drop your blood pressure and heart and respiration rate significantly. It does not have to take long, just simply ten to fifteen minutes a day.

Here is a simple routine to get your started. You do not even have to sit in some obscure and postured position. Find a chair where you can sit comfortably and quietly, away from distractions. Keep you legs uncrossed, feet flat on the floor, hands laid loosely in your lap. RELAX.

Close your eyes. Take a few deep breaths to begin. Then slowly and gently breathe deeply and fully into to your abdomen. Your tummy should expand as you breathe in.

Concentrate on your breathing and remove your focus from the chatter of your mind, attempting to remove all the worldly preoccupation it is concerned with. Do not stop thinking, just do not attach your attention to needed relaxation. Each time you get swept back up into your worldly thoughts, move your attention back to breathing and the relaxed feeling of your entire body, experiencing your abdomen expanding and contracting.

You can breathe away stress in a matter of minutes. Remain in this posture and slowly repeat in your mind, or even verbally the Jesus Prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner!"

Try this routine daily and after a few days, you will shed the worries of the world and remain composed even in the most difficult circumstances immersed in the peace and tranquility of Christ our God and Saviour!

Meditation can be characterized as reflection of eternal realities. It has as its aim thinking about spiritual and religious values and never-ending encompassing truths. It is a way into the deeper insight of the will of God as it personally concerns the individual, with a renewed purpose to fulfill God's will which is spiritual growth, insight and physical well-being.

It is normally impossible that faith should take deep root or a prayer life develop purposefully and solidly without some meditation, just as it does not happen that physical well-being ensue without actual investment of effort.

This is a very simple way of beginning a rich life of prayer and thought in Christ. It has profound contemplative content and spiritual aim. If begun seriously and with purpose, it will attain success for the individual who wishes to be enriched and forsake pervasive problems in life. It is placing ourselves into the hands of the Lord and allowing his grace to permeate the soul and find strength and favor in heavenly values.

Time invested in this practice will improve lives both spiritually and physically. There will be a change in time of the personality as one is abandoned to God's will. The strength derived will notably improve the standard of living and quality of life. We will then begin functioning as children of God, created in his image and hopefully able to return to his likeness!

Sickness and Health

Today when we are sick, we automatically begin self-medicating and self-curing or, if seriously ill, take ourselves to the physician or the emergency room for treatment. Some even resort to proven homemade remedies and might even look online for medical advice. But in salvation history, to the people of God, the people of Israel, the source of healing was our Creator God. The approach was entirely different because the element of faith response to God's first shown love is paramount. This element is muted down or completely removed from the sickness paradigm today.

David testifies to this in his poetic writings. "There is no health in my flesh because of your indignation; there is no wholeness in my bones because of my sin, for my iniquities have overwhelmed me; they are like a heavy burden, beyond my strength...festering are my sores because of my folly...my loins are filled with burning pains; there is no health in my flesh" Psalms 38: 4 – 8.

He recognizes it is his own sinfulness that has distracted him into health neglect as well as depending on the tender mercy of God for healing and being made whole. "Because for you, I wait, O Lord; I wait on you O Lord my God to answer...Forsake me not, O Lord, my God do not be far from me! Make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation" Psalms 38: 16, 22, 23.

"Let me know, O Lord, my end and what is the number of my days, that I may learn how frail I am. A short span you have made my days, and my life is as nothing before you; only a breath is any human existence. A phantom only, man goes his way; like a vapor only are his restless pursuits; he heaps up stores and knows not who will use them" Psalms 39: 5 – 7. Again he recognizes the reason for his misfortune, "With rebukes for guilt you chasten man; you dissolve like a cobweb all that is dear to him, only a breath is any man" Psalms 39: 12. He readily attributes to his Creator God gratitude for expected healing. "I have waited, waited for the Lord, and he stooped toward me and heard my cry. He drew me out of the pit of destruction out of the mud of the swamp" Psalms 40: 2, 3. And on all these occasions, the Old Testament king is grateful to acknowledge it is only the Creator who made him who can overcome his shortcomings in health and make him whole once again. "Deign O Lord to rescue me; O Lord make haste to help me. Let all be put to shame and confusion who seek to snatch away my life. Let them be turned back in disgrace who desire my ruin....though I am afflicted and poor, yet the Lord thinks of me. You are my help and my deliverer; O my God, do not hold back" Psalms 40:14 - 18.

The best source of medical advice was the Law of Moses. It helped keep the people of Israel healthy and assisted in preventing the spread of diseases. Many of these laws can be found in the Book of Leviticus, chapters 12 – 18 and in a few chapters of the Book of Numbers. Some conditions or diseases caused a person to be “unclean” which meant the person was unable to participate in any religious or community activities until he was made “clean” once again, which meant being cured and free of a particular affliction.

Houses with strange growths, spots, or mildew on the walls had to be disinfected, cleaned and repaired. They were torn down if the mold kept coming back. Clothing or blankets with mold or mildew had to be sanitized. If you could not get mold out, you had to cut it out. If the mold grew or came back, you had to burn the cloth or leather (Leviticus 13: 47 -59).

People with skin infections had to be quarantined outside the camp until they were cured. A priest had to examine the afflicted person to make certain of the cure (Leviticus 13: 46; 14: 2, 3).

Anyone who touched a dead body was unclean for seven days (Numbers 19: 11 – 13).

Clothing of soldiers returning from battle had to be disinfected. Any equipment brought home had to be put through fire and not used for seven days afterwards (Numbers 31: 22 – 24).

Although it was generally understood that reasons for illness was man’s neglect of himself and failure to recognize himself as created in God’s image, therefore finding it incumbent to accord himself proper care and respect. In time, however, illness was perceived as something our God does permit and allow, not necessarily as a punishment, but as the natural consequence of man’s lack of insight and even disobedience. In the Book of Job we come to understand that illness is not necessarily punishment from God, but rather a mystery that limited man cannot always understand God’s reasons for permitting it in our lives (Job 2; Ecclesiastes 8: 10 – 13; 9: 2; John 9: 1 – 7). “It was no sin, either of this man or of his parents. Rather it was to let God’s works show forth in him” John 9: 1: 3. God’s glory is far more radiant and important than man’s temporary affliction.

Yes it is true that on several occasions, sickness was permitted as a discipline from God in the case of Moses’ sister, Miriam (Numbers 12) when she was struck with leprosy as she attempted to lead a rebellion against Moses and even snaggged their brother Aaron to commiserate with her. Then was afforded the learning and teaching opportunity to show the authority and powerful intercessory ability of Moses through whose prayers she was cured. It is also true that our heavenly Father explained through Moses that those who disobeyed him

would suffer diseases because they were also neglectful about personal matters which would safeguard their health (Deuteronomy 28: 21 – 23, 27).

In the last analysis, illness is something our God can definitely use to demonstrate his power. The disciples of Jesus asked him about a man born blind. Was it he or his parents who sinned to bring about the blindness? Jesus wisely replies to them and us, “Because of his blindness, you will see God work a miraculous sign for him” John 9: 3.

Our challenge, then, is to so profoundly believe, to so enrich our faith, that when illness strikes, we can be the means for God to work a cure, a sign, a miracle in which He is glorified and we are made well once again!




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FUTURE NOW.

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For

Heavenly Worship

WISDOM! BE ATTENTIVE

Let us bring to the Lord the sighs of the Publican and as sinner let us approach the Lord. He desires the salvation of all mankind; He grants forgiveness to all who repent. For us He became man while remaining God, co-eternal with the Father. Kontakion, Sunday of the Pharisee and Publican.

The Pharisee, overcome with his pride, and the Publican, bent down in repentance, came before You, the only Lord: the first trusted in himself and was deprived of Your blessings; the other spoke but a few words and received Your blessings in abundance. Behold my tears and strengthen me, O Christ our God, for You are indeed the Lover of mankind. Vesper Hymn, Sunday of the Pharisee and Publican.

Open to me the doors of repentance, O Giver of life. As we worship in your temple this morning, teach us how to purify the temples of our bodies, and in Your compassion, purify me by the goodness of Your mercies. Matins Hymn, Sunday of the Pharisee and Publican.

In parables Christ invites us to correct our life. He raises up the Publican in his humility and shows us how the Pharisee was brought down by his vanity. Seeing the dignity to which the humble are raised and the deep abyss into which the proud fall, let us imitate the virtue of the Publican and despise the sins of the Pharisee. Vain pretensions deprive us of every good deed, while humility purifies us of every evil. O faithful, let us embrace the ways of humility and totally despise the ways of vainglory. Wishing to find humility in the hearts of His disciples, the King of the universe charged them to imitate the Publican and his humble sighs for pardon. I sigh as the Publican, O Lord, and my groaning does not cease. Thus do I find the path to Your heart. Have mercy on me who now seeks to live in humility. Matins Hymn, Sunday of the Pharisee and Publican.

Vainglory brings to nothing both justice and its treasures, while humility scatters a multitude of passions. O Saviour, grant that we may imitate the Publican. O Faithful, let us vie with each other in zeal, and let us seek to do good. Let us live together in humility, and may our hearts sigh with tears and prayer so that we may obtain forgiveness from God. Matins Hymn, Sunday of the Pharisee and Publican.

Raised up by his humility, the Publican who formerly lamented now was justified for having said: Lord be merciful to me a sinner. He is the one whom we imitate from the abyss into which our hearts have driven us. From the depth of our heart we say, Spare us for we are sinners, O Saviour. Who alone loves mankind. The Word has shown us the best path to exaltation; it is the way of humility. For He Himself was lowered to take the form of a servant. By following His humility, we shall be exalted. Matins Hymn, Sunday of the Pharisee and Publican.

FORGIVENESS VESPERS

Come and
take part in
this powerful
and moving
celebration of
forgiveness and
renewal.



Sunday, February 26

Following Covered Dish Luncheon

Great Fast: reconciliation begins with forgiveness

"O God, be merciful to me,
a sinner!"

With these words humbly spoken, the publican asks forgiveness and finds favor, as Chris tells us in the gospel (Luke 18: 10-14) because, as the psalms write, our heavenly Father will not spurn "...a heart contrite and humbled" Psalms 51: 19.

February 26 marks the beginning of the yearly opportunity the Church in her holy wisdom invites us to encounter a journey of reconciliation. Through the Great Fast of humility, to wholeness, we are invited to deepen our personal relationship with Christ and through him, with each other.

Reconciliation begins with forgiveness – asking, receiving, granting.

Start your pilgrimage journey of the joy of Resurrection renewal by joining with all our parishioners in the powerful and moving celebration of Forgiveness Vespers after the Covered Dish Luncheon. Do not make yourself an exception because exception means obduracy of heart.





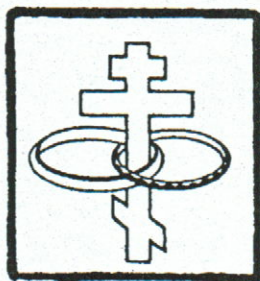
Birthday
Wishes!

We are pleased to greet those of our faithful communicants who celebrate their birthday this month. Our Lord has offered these souls yet another year of blessed life. The most obvious way He blesses us and participates in our life is by sharing his divine life with us in the Eucharist at the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. Thus we gather together and offer thanks for yet another year of life blessed by his most gracious hands. Today, we prayerfully remember in the Divine Liturgy the following souls who celebrate their birthday during this month:

February 6 William M. Karpiak
February 7 Robin Pasquino
February 14 Sarah Ann Harrison
February 14 Tatyana Lucas Harrison
February 21 Joan Henry
February 24 George Idromenos
February 27 Marilyn J. Korba
February 28 Joseph F. Choti

With a prayerful heart and grateful soul, our parish faith community asks the Lord to continue to bless these birthday celebrants with good spiritual and physical health for the coming year. We invite all to add their personal intercessory prayers so that with one voice and one heart we may also participate in the grace and joy of their celebration. As we wish them a happy and blessed celebration of their birthday, our ardent prayer resounds that the Lord our God will continue to bless them for

Many and Blessed Years!



WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

The Byzantine Fathers of the Church were wont to emphasize how ancient and how venerable marriage is in the sight of our God because it was established yet in paradise before the fall of Adam and Eve and brought to blessed perfection by Christ in Cana of Galilee. Its grace survived the sin of our first parents and it remains a sign of the presence of the Holy Trinity in our midst. It is a living symbol of the deep and abiding love between Christ and His Bride, our blessed Church. It is characterized in the liturgical life of the Church as a happy martyrdom. And it is precisely for this reason the sacramental Mystery of Marriage is such a joyous event. On the third Sunday of this month, we honor those of our good parishioners who observe their marriage anniversaries this month. They are specially remembered in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy and subsequently receive an individual and personal blessing of the Lord at its conclusion. Celebrating this month are:

February 13 Nikitas & Angeliki Tsokris

We gratefully give thanks to the Blessed Trinity for having guided and strengthened the marriages of these believers, and their cooperation with sacramental grace to remain faithful to one another over the years. Like all who are faithful to Christ, they recognize the presence and necessity of the Holy Spirit not only in the marriage, but in subsequent family life as well. As we praise our God for their witness in our midst, let us also join them with our prayers and thanksgiving before the throne of the Lord. May they continue to praise His Holy Name by their love and devotion to one another for

Many and Blessed Years

GREETINGS AND GIFTS ...

From what we know of the Apostle Paul, there were very few people with whom he was close. Because of his days as a persecutor of Christians, the other Apostles found it difficult to fully trust him. In like manner, some found him to be a bit demanding and hard to get along with. We do know, however, that there was one person that he loved like a son: the Apostle Timothy. Perhaps the greatest sign of Paul's affection for him can be found in the words of his greeting to him that is expressed in his 2nd Letter to Timothy that we find in the New Testament: "Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord." (2 Timothy 1:2) Grace ... mercy ... peace. These, indeed, are three wonderful gifts from God that Paul prayed would be given to his young protégé. Let us look a bit closer at these words.

GRACE is not to be viewed as a reward for good works, but rather a "present" that we truly do not deserve. It is God's own presence dwelling within us. Through grace, God forgives our sins and transforms us into His image and likeness. It is only by the grace of God that we are saved.

MERCY may be defined as the compassionate, steadfast love that God has for sinners. It is our constant wish to receive it. Often in our public and private prayers to we implore Him to have mercy on us, even though we know we are undeserving of it.

PEACE is the state of harmony with God, ourselves and each other that all of us seek. It is only through Christ, the Prince of Peace that such tranquility can be found, for it is through Him that we are all united. He gives us all the same promise He gave His Apostles: "Peace I leave with you." (John 14:27) May our constant prayer be that God bestows these three spiritual gifts upon all of us!