





# Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Thirty Second Sunday after Pentecost

February 6, 2011

Father Robert E Lucas, Pastor; Subdeacon Daniel J. Korba and Nikitas Tsokris, Cantors      Rectory 215-862-9227; Parish Center 732-780-3158

## We Are A Stewardship Parish Of Time, Talent and Treasure

The mission of our parish faith community is to teach the Gospel message in the rich tradition of the Orthodox Church; to enable people to reflect the image of Jesus Christ in every day activities of life; to offer spiritual formation through changing times; and to celebrate community among Orthodox believers in our Freehold area.

We of St. Paul the Apostle Parish dedicate ourselves to maintaining the sanctity of worship and spiritual enlightenment in a family environment that reaches and involves all ages and unifies all people.

We believe in the spirit of ecumenism in which we share our faith by word and example and extend our spiritual insights to all people.

We accept the responsibility of Christian Stewardship that through generous giving we may all experience a faith communion with Christ as the Center of our lives.

We dedicate ourselves to insuring the well-being of all people so that we may truly experience the message of Christ's salutary gospel.

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

*It is not ourselves we preach but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts, that we in turn might make known the glory of God shining on the face of Christ. This treasure we possess in earthen vessels to make it clear that its surpassing power comes from God and not from us. We are afflicted in every way possible, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in us 2 Corinthians 4: 5 - 8.*

## GLAD TIDINGS

+++ Today we have festal anointing on the occasion of this past week's feast of the Meeting of the Lord in the Temple. The customary greeting is "Christ Is Among Us!" to which we respond, "He Is And Shall Be!"

+++ The last Sunday of this month, January 27, we will have our annual Luncheon before the Great Fast followed by Forgiveness Vespers. We invite all and expect everyone to be with us for the celebrations.

+++ We sincerely thank all who prepared for, secured orders and helped by coming to fill them this past Friday and Saturday at the monthly Pirohi Sale. Since the needs of our parish are so great, we especially appreciate our faithful communicants investing their time in support of our parish. God bless you devoted souls!

+++ 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.

+++ Prices for all the baked goods and food products we have for sale increased with the new year. We are pleased they were received with no complaints but certainly with the ready understanding of our patrons for having raised our prices to meet increasing costs.

+++ 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]; Holyday, [REDACTED]; Diocesan Dues, [REDACTED]; Parish Dues, [REDACTED]; Christian Fellowship, [REDACTED]; Food Coupons, [REDACTED]; Pennies From Heaven, [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.

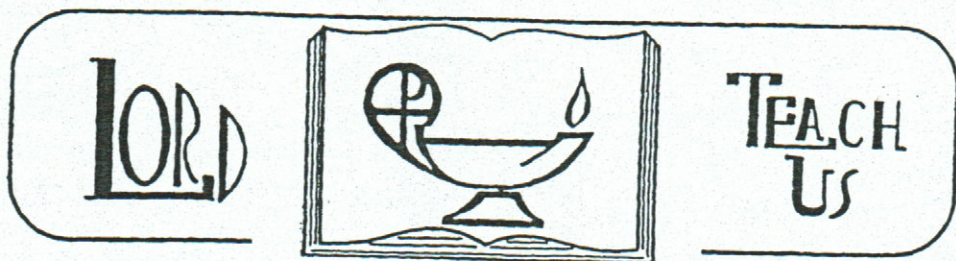
+++ As faithful believers, we intercede and associate ourselves in prayer with the following who have prayed and offered seven day lights for their intentions: Father Lucas, Pani Lucas, Louis Pasquino, +Paul Szmaida, Debra Szmaida, George Idromenos, Kent Pasquino, Kyle Pasquino, Bob Gorbich, Anna Zacharyczuk 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!





## Perseverance

*Let us hold unswervingly to our profession which gives us hope, for he who made the promise deserves our trust. We must consider how to rouse each other to love and good deeds Hebrews 10: 23, 24.*

*"Simon, Simon! Remember that satan has asked for you, to sift you like wheat. But I have prayed for you that your faith may never fail. You in turn must strengthen your brothers" Luke 22: 31, 32.*

*I do not ask you to take them out of the world, but guard them from the evil one John 17: 15.*

*Therefore submit to God; resist the devil and he will take flight James 4: 7.*

*The Lord, indeed, knows how to rescue devout men from trial, and how to continue the punishment of the wicked up to the day of judgment 2 Peter 2: 9.*

*Happy the man who holds out to the end through trial! Once he has been proved, he will receive the crown of life the Lord has promised to those who love him James 1: 12.*

*He gives strength to the faint; for the weak he makes vigor abound. Though young faint and grow weary, and youths stagger and fall, they that hope in the Lord will renew their strength, they will soar as with eagles' wings; they will run and not grow weary, and walk and not grow faint Isaiah 40: 29-31.*

*The Spirit of God has given us no worldly spirit, but rather one that makes us strong, loving and wise 2 Timothy 1: 7.*

*Take courage and be brave, all you who hope in the Lord Psalm 31: 25.*



## Sunday of Zacchaeus

Our Lord enters the city and looks up to behold the tax collector out on a limb from a large sycamore that spreads over the street just so he can see Christ. Without much fanfare the Saviour invites him come down and tells him He wants to be in his home that day. During this personal encounter with Christ, Zacchaeus confesses and repents his sins and the Lord eagerly announces, "Today salvation has come to this house" because "The Son of Man has come to search out and save what was lost."

Christ is the pre-eminent reconciler of sinful and separated mankind with the Father and the sacramental Mystery He establishes for the formal act of reconciliation in the Church when sin severs us from the life of Christ and His Body, the Church. Because reconciliation is the way to communion with our God when that very communion is broken by sin, it is often referred to in the traditional life of the Church as a renewal of baptism, or as the reestablishment of that condition of life with the Creator which was given us in the basic and elementary sacramental Mysteries of inauguration into Christian life. It is a restoration of our condition at the time of creation, when without sin, we were able to approach our God and have intimate communion with him. And the proud, wealthy and accomplished Zacchaeus is willing to climb a tree and go out on a limb to obtain it!

As believers, we know that not every sin requires the necessity of formal penance through the sacramental ritual. This becomes obvious since Christians are never completely without sin. Certain grave sins or the prolonged separation from holy communion, however, do call for the grace of reconciliation. Christians living in communion with Christ are eager to make use of the treasure of this sacramental Mystery periodically to humble themselves consciously before God and to receive guidance in Christian life from their spiritual father, who is generally pastor of the parish in which they commune. It is the fundamental appreciation of believers that sacramental penance is necessary for those receiving Holy Communion when they commit grave sins or when they have been separated from the eucharistic meal for a long time. Absence from the celebration of the Divine Liturgy is one of the greatest offenses man can hurl at his Creator, and is therefore a grave, grave, grave offensive sin. Being present from worship actually means from beginning to end, from the first Amen to the last Amen.

The sacramental Mystery of Reconciliation in the Church exists to allow for repentance and reconversion of Christians who have lapsed, and fallen away from the life of faith. We call this Mystery that of Reconciliation simply because of how St. Paul describes it. "This means that if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old order has passed away; now all is



+++ 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 remind our faithful only those who are present for the entire Divine Liturgy should come forward to receive Communion. The entire Liturgy means "Amen" to "Amen."

+++ We are very pleased the plumbers and electrician were here this past week in spite of the menacing snow to begin the huge renovation of our rest rooms. The old source of water from the house was disconnected and shut off. We now have water from our new well. No one in the parish knows where the water connection between house and church is located so we will have to wait until spring to dig up the soil and cut off the pipes. For now the water valve in the house has been shut off until then. The new hot water tank was installed and we now have no problem with our need in this regard particularly when we are baking and cooking. The next step is to have the carpenter come and rearrange the walls so a uni-sex bathroom can be installed in addition to the two we already have, the remainder of the floor tiling done and new fixtures and doors installed along with new lighting and ventilating fans. Please pray we have the patience to see this enormous project soon completed.

+++ Father will have the Offering Statements for this past year completed for distribution next Sunday.

+++ Some of the bulletins which were not able to be distributed because of the copy machine break down are available on the desk in the vestibule. Hopefully the remainder for the month of January will be printed for your spiritual edification by next Sunday.

+++ The first All Souls' Saturday will be celebrated on February 26. Please be certain to drop in the envelope with names of departed souls to be remembered in our services. The customary offering is \$10.00.

+++ May all glory, adoration and worship be accorded our God in the Holy Trinity by all the faithful of our parish with one mind, one soul and one heart each day of the week!



new! All this has been done by God who has reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation” 2 Corinthians 5: 17, 18.

Popularly, we have called this mystery by a number of names, confession, penance, contrition, but these are but separate formal individual parts of the overall Mystery. The first is sincere sorrow for sin and for breaking communion with our heavenly Father. The second is an open and heartfelt confession of sin. At one time this confession was public in the midst of the Church, but in recent times it is usually done only in the presence of the spiritual father who represents the entire believing community and God in offering pardon. The third element of this mystery is the formal prayer of absolution through which the forgiveness of our heavenly Father through Christ is sacramentally formally imparted to the repentant sinner. Thus reconciliation is achieved from sin to sinlessness, from offense to pardon, from separation to unity of faith.

Fulfillment always consists in the reception of the Eucharist and genuine reconciliation of the repentant sinner with God and believing man according to the commandments of the Lord. From this there obviously follows the necessity of a sincere attempt by the penitent to refrain from sin and remain in faithful obedience to God in uprightness of life.

Of course this sacramental Mystery, like all the rest is a vital element in the life of the Church which presupposes a firm belief and conviction that Christ himself is present in the Church by grace of the Holy Spirit. Christ is the Church and the Church is Christ! A person without the experience of Christ in the Church will never understand the meaning of sacramental reconciliation and the need for confession of sin. When the Church is known and understood and experienced as new life in Christ and as genuine communion with God in his kingdom already present with man in sacramental mystery, then not only will sacramental confession of sin be understood, but be appreciated, as well as cherished as a sacred mystery of our loving God which is the unique possibility for reunion with our Creator after we have so willingly severed and broken it. It is understood as the means to save sinners who confess their sin and who sincerely desire to change their lives according to the way which God has ordained for us.

Consequently, it must be understood that Orthodoxy, the Body of Christ strictly adheres to the teaching of God's revelation to us in Scripture that only God can forgive sin, but that He eagerly does so through Christ in the Church, that his conditions are genuine repentance and promise of change which are witnessed by the actual confession and confession by definition is the open and public acknowledgement of sin before God and all mankind. This is what Zacchaeus did today as he slid down the tree. This is what we are called to do in our own circumstance of life.



## The Season Before the Great Fast

The Paschal season which celebrates the triumph of the glorious Resurrection of our Lord is preceded by the liturgical time known as the Great Fast, which itself is alluded to and prepared for by its own liturgical time. Thus we now find ourselves in the period known as *the Pre-Fast season*. Our blessed Church does not want to immerse us in the rigors of the Great Fast without proper preparation. Thus she always prepares us to make the spiritual transition from the joy of the Nativity of our Lord-Theophany season to that of seriously meditating and doing something spiritually serious about our own individual soul, to bring it in conformity with the will of our Heavenly Father: "...whatever you do, do all for the glory of God" 1 Corinthians 10:31. The message from the very inception of the Covenant was the same. "I am the Lord your God; consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy" Leviticus 11:44.

The first sign of the approach of the Great Fast comes some five Sundays before its beginning. On this Sunday the Gospel reading is about Zacchaeus, the tax-collector. It teaches us how Christ brought salvation to the sinful man and how his life was significantly changed and transformed because he "sought to see who Jesus was" Luke 19: 3. The desire and effort to see Jesus begins the entire movement through the Great Fast towards the Resurrection when He is truly revealed as He is: the Almighty Son of the Eternal Father Who is Lord of Life and Conqueror of death. His mission in the world is to share this victory with believers. "You must therefore be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" Matthew 5: 48. This is the first movement towards salvation. Believers are thus reminded and even aroused in their spiritual journey to imitate the virtue of the tax-collector. We are called upon to practice some introspection regarding our relationship with Christ, and if it is sincere, it will inevitably lead us seriously in following after Him once again.

The following Sunday is that of the Publican and Pharisee which focuses on the two men who went to the temple to pray. One was a Pharisee who was a very decent and righteous man of religion, the other a publican who was a truly sinful tax collector notorious for cheating people. The first, though genuinely righteous, boasted before God and so was condemned, according to the testimony of Christ. The second, although genuinely sinful, begged for mercy, received it and was justified by our God, "Believe me, this man went home from the temple justified, but the other did not" Luke 18:14. Our Lord wishes us to assume a serious posture. The inevitable lesson here is that we have neither the religious piety of the Pharisee nor the repentance of the publican by which alone we can be saved. We are called to approach all of life, particularly our own as we really are in the light of Christ's teaching, and to beg for mercy.

The next Sunday in preparation for the Great Fast is the Sunday of the Prodigal Son. Hearing the warm and emotionally responsive parable of Christ about our Heavenly Father's loving forgiveness, we are called respond to the grace of the Holy Spirit by "coming to his senses at last" Luke 15: 17, as did the infamous son, to see ourselves as being residents of "a distant land" Luke 15: 13, alienated and separated from true life in the Holy Trinity by our own sinfulness. Having removed ourselves from our "father's house" Luke 15: 20, we should be eager to make the spiritual movement necessary for a return to grace. We are given every assurance by the Master that the Father will receive us with joy and gladness. We must only "break away" Luke 15: 18 and confess our self-inflicted and sinful separation from that security which alone can be found in Christ. To reach the destiny which belongs to believers,



to actually return to the place where we belong, we must have the same initiative that characterized the sinful and separated son: *"Father, I have sinned against God and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son"* Luke 15: 21. If we wish genuine celebration in our personal lives, it must be centered on the truth of God because we are His choice creation. *"this brother of yours was dead and has come back to life. He was lost and is now found"* Luke 15: 32.

The Sunday which follows is called Meatfare Sunday since it was officially the last day before the Resurrection in the apostolic Church for consuming meat. It commemorates and emphasizes Christ's parable of the Last Judgment. We are reminded this day it is not enough for us to see Jesus, to see ourselves as we are, and to come to God as His prodigal sons who always fall short of the glory He pre-ordained for us. We must be His sons by following Christ, His only-begotten Son, and by seeing Christ in every man and woman about us, and by serving Christ through them. Our salvation and final judgment will depend on our deeds, not merely intentions or even on the mercies of God devoid of any personal cooperation with and obedience to His freely offered grace. *"...for I was hungry and you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you took me in. I was naked and you clothed me. I was sick and in prison and you visited me. For truly I say to you, if you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me"* Matthew 25: 35-40.

We are not saved merely by prayer and fasting and certainly not by religious exercises alone. We are saved by serving the Lord through His people, the goal toward which all piety and prayer is ultimately directed. We cannot, on one hand profess to be baptized believers and fail to seriously and sincerely live up to our responsibilities. We will not be able to merely cry out, presuming on the mercy of our Creator, *"Mas' master! Open the door for us...because He will answer, 'I tell you, I do not know you'"* Matthew 25: 12. The Church wishes to emphasize to us in our day and time there will be a judgment and each person is called to accountability. None will escape.

Finally, on the actual eve of the Great Fast, the day called Cheesefare Sunday and Forgiveness Sunday, we sing and remind ourselves of Adam's exile from paradise. We identify ourselves with Adam because we often choose what continues to alienate ourselves from the Source of Life. We lament the loss of eternal beauty, dignity and the delight of our original creation, mourning our corruption in sin. We also hear on this day the Lord's sublime teaching on fasting and forgiveness and we enter the season of the Great Fast forgiving one another so that our God will be disposed to forgive us. It is the requisite requirement for holiness. *"If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses"* Matthew 6: 14, 15. At the evening services traditionally celebrated on this day, appropriately called Forgiveness Vespers, believers are called forward at the very end of the hymnology to ask for and receive the forgiveness of each believer gathered together by the Holy Spirit for this celebration. It is a fitting, moving, and appropriate way to start the sacred season, freed at last of the chains which always create unnecessary burdens in our lives.

On this day we are also taught the positive value of fasting: for the strengthening of the powers of the soul. *"When you fast, you are not to look glum as the hypocrites do. They change the appearances of their faces so others may see they are fasting...see to it you groom your hair and wash your face. In that way no one will see you are fasting but your Father who is hidden; and your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you"* Matthew 6: 16 -18.



# What Is This?



Warmed water has traditionally been added to the chalice precisely prior to distributing Communion to the faithful. In so doing, the priestly celebrant prays, "The fervor of faith, full of the Holy Spirit." The two vessels shown are the actual container of the water with a handle and the tray upon which it is handed to the priestly celebrant at the altar.

The warmth of the vibrant spiritual life of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity in the precious Body and Blood allow us to experience Christ in the Eucharist as triumphantly and eternally alive, hence the warmth of life in contrast to the coldness of death is obviated.

In receiving the gift of eternal life in the Eucharist, we are called upon to have the fervor and zeal of faith that gives expression to Christian witness in our everyday surroundings. The same conditions required for worthy reception of the sacramental Mysteries also require us to be continually faithful to the Lord in all things. The hot water is a continuing reminder to us of our Saviour Who taught us: "I know your works, that you are neither hot nor cold. I wish that you were hot or cold. So, then, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will vomit you out of my mouth" Revelation 3: 15, 16.



## Cracked Pots

*We have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us*

**2 Corinthians 4: 7.**

The life of a believer in Christ helps us to accept the nature of the clay jar that we are. We have weaknesses. We have strengths. For some people who know us, our strengths outweigh our weaknesses. For others, our weaknesses outweigh our good traits. But we all live somewhere between what we have been and what our heavenly Father is reshaping us to become.

This is truly an image of God's kingdom. We live in the "already, but not yet" time. The salvation of our Creator God has come among us, but it is not yet enjoyed by all people and all creation. Our Lord gives us a glimpse of God's future glory, but its full realization remains in the future, yet we are living it as much as our limited human nature allows in the life of his Body, the Church. We are between the already of what our God has done and the not yet of what our God will do when we are finally brought, by his grace, to perfection. The work God is doing in us has begun with our baptism, but is not yet complete since we do not always cooperate with his sustaining grace.

Yet God's glory is seen clearly in our sinful, broken imperfect humanity. "We have this treasure in clay jars." We can focus on the clay jar or we can focus on the treasure of God in us. We can condemn and look down on each other, and ourselves for being a cracked, chipped, misshapen, leaky, brittle, traditional, or contemporary jar. But if we focus on the treasure, we have ardent hope, hope for me, hope for you, hope for us, hope for enemies as well as friends, for the entire world's people because the treasure is God's extraordinary power at work in us.

Beginning today, at this very moment we ought to begin looking for and emphasizing the treasure of God in us as He continues to fulfill his purposes in the world and in us which cannot be done without our cooperation.



# Did You Know That ...

...before walking in someone else's shoes, be certain you take off your own?

...the human race has improved everything but the human race?

...what a father says to his children will not be heard by the world, but will reverberate for posterity?

...millions long for immortality who do not know what to do with themselves on a Sunday morning?

...it is the greatest of all mistakes to do nothing because you can only do a little?

...one jagged tooth is all that is needed to strip a gear?

...the difference between playing to win and playing not to lose is often simply the difference between success and mediocrity?

...it is wise to keep in mind that no success or failure is necessarily final?

...the easy chair is a dangerous place from which to view the world and its temptations?

...age is important only to a curd of cheese or a bottle of wine?

...be certain to learn from the mistakes of others because you will never live long enough to make them all yourself?

...all the praiseworthy maxims have all ready been written; it remains to put them into practice?

...success is the power with which to achieve salvation in this life without violating the rights of others?

...if you wish to enjoy the rainbow, you must learn to put up with the rain?

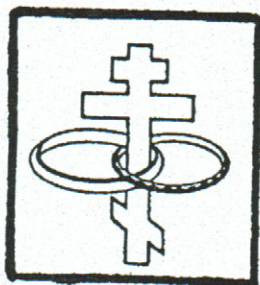
..having something to say is always far more important than wanting to say something?



## The Meaning of True Love

It is sharing and caring,  
Giving and forgiving,  
Loving and being loved,  
Walking hand in hand,  
Talking heart to heart,  
Seeing through each other's eyes,  
Laughing together,  
Weeping together,  
Praying together,  
And always trusting  
And believing  
And thanking GOD  
For each other . . .  
For love that is shared  
    is a beautiful thing—  
It enriches the soul  
    and makes the heart sing!





## 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 of February. 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**





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:

January 5 Stephen Demyan  
January 11 Pani MarlneLucas  
January 12 Christopher Pashos  
January 16 Marion Peles  
January 20 George Szmaida  
February 6 William. M. Karpiak  
February 7 Robin T. Pasquino  
February 14 Sarah Anna 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!**



## IS THE GRASS REALLY GREENER ON THE OTHER SIDE?

**H**ow often have we heard the words "Life just isn't fair"? Indeed, how often have we ourselves uttered them in despair? Perhaps we look around and see others who seemingly have been blessed more abundantly in a material manner. Perhaps our health is failing or family and marital problems are bringing us down. Perhaps we find ourselves trapped in a "dead-end job" or, worse yet, with no job at all. It seems quite natural to ask the question: Why? Aren't we told that "all men are created equal?" If this is true, why does God allow so much injustice to exist in His world?

The answers to these questions are not easily grasped or explained. We must remind ourselves that much of the unfairness that we see all around us is man-made, not God-caused. Life often unfolds in a manner over which we have no control. True happiness can only be experienced in the world to come — the world that awaits those who bear their crosses patiently and humbly. We must fight the temptation to feel that God has abandoned us or that He has "played favorites" in distributing His blessings. Our Lord has told us explicitly: much is expected from those who have received much.

Whenever we feel like questioning God's reasoning on such matters, we should turn to the last chapter of the Gospel of St. John. As our Lord is speaking with the Apostle Peter, we find the Apostle John, referred to as the "beloved disciple," walking by, causing Peter to ask "But Lord, what about this man?" To paraphrase Christ's answer, Peter is told very plainly that whatever happens to John is none of his business; he should only be concerned with himself! It seems that this is a good piece of advice for all of us to follow!