





# **Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church**

**24 BURKE ROAD**

**FREEHOLD, NJ 07728**

**Sunday Of The Prodigal Son**

**February 20, 2011**

**Father Robert E Lucas, Pastor; Subdeacon Daniel  
J. Korba and Nikitas Tsokris, Cantors**

**Rectory 215-862-9227; Parish Center 732-780-3158**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **GLAD TIDINGS**

+++ 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.

- +++ The first All Soul's Saturday takes place this Saturday with the Divine Liturgy celebrated at 9:00 AM followed by a memorial service. Please join us in prayer after you have submitted to Father the names of your departed relatives. The customary offering is \$10.00.
- +++ Mistakenly Father listed the luncheon before the Great Fast taking place next Sunday. Correctly it will be on March 6 following the Divine Liturgy. Immediately afterwards, we will have Forgiveness Vespers for the whole parish to enjoy. Please sign in the kind of food you will prepare for this event.
- +++ 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.
- +++ **At the time of the next Pirohi Sale which takes place on Saturday, March 5, we will have a Clam Chowder Sale for \$8.00 a 32 oz. container. Please secure orders that it be a success and benefit our parish.**
- +++ 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, \$~~1,000.00~~; Candles, \$~~2,000.00~~; Diocesan Dues, \$~~1,000.00~~; Food Coupons, \$~~3,000.00~~; Kitchen, \$~~1,000.00~~; Christian Fellowship, \$~~1,000.00~~, for a total of \$~~9,000.00~~. We express our profound gratitude to the parishioner communicants who offered their God-given treasure and labored for the sake of the Lord and the good of our parish. God bless and reward you good and faithful souls! The attendance was 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 express our deep and profound gratitude to one of our young parishioners who donated his entire savings of \$~~1,000.00~~ to our parish church in thanksgiving for and honor of the many blessings he has received in his young life! Our sincere prayer is that the Lord continue to bless him with good health for Many & Blessed Years!
- +++ 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 \$~~1,000.00~~ from this apostolate. Even your pennies can help and are a blessing to our parish.
- +++ For the expansion of our much needed parochial facilities, our parish pledge support to date totals \$~~4,000.00~~, \$~~1,500.00~~. As we thank the Lord for inspiring generosity in the hearts of our faithful, we also thank the donors for accepting the challenge of the Lord in building up His Body. We cordially invite and look forward to receiving additional and increased pledges from all our devoted parishioners.



LORD



TEACH  
US

## Fatherhood of God

*Then you are to tell him "Yahweh says Israel is my eldest son" Exodus 4: 22.*

*Since you are the people of God, never cut yourselves as the heathen do when they worship their idols, or shave the front halves of your heads for funerals Deuteronomy 14: 1.*

*If will be his father and he shall be my son. If he sins, I will use other nations to punish him 2 Samuel 7: 14.*

*He has told me, Your son Solomon shall build my temple for I have chosen him as my son and I will be his father 1 Chronicles 28: 6.*

*While still in the presence of the whole assembly, David expressed his praises to the Lord. O Lord God of our father Israel, praise your name forever and ever! 1 Chronicles 29: 10.*

*He is father to the fatherless; he gives justice to the widows, for he is holy Psalms 68: 5.*

*And he will cry to me, You are my Father, my God, and my Rock of Salvation Psalms 89: 26.*

*Listen, O heaven and earth, to what the Lord is saying: The children I raised and cared for for so long and tenderly have turned against me Isaiah 1: 2.*

*For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulders. These will be his royal titles; Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace Isaiah 9: 6.*



## The Fatherhood Of God

The sweetest of all grace vouchsafed to man is not so much when the Holy Spirit inebriates us with enduring torrents of his love, but when our heavenly Father reveals himself to us and we come to realize what it means to be a child of God. Our soul then knows it is at home, comforted, reposing in the bosom of its first and only principle of existence and life. In our Christian vocation, we are called to experience the truth of these words: "No one comes to the Father but through me." Perhaps it is because until that moment we never have a single bit of consolation in life until we know and experience the fatherhood of our God. With that truth we ought be intoxicated forever.

When we call God our Father, we are not using a metaphor because He is our Father in the fullest sense and certainly not in some applied way. When we call him King, we mean He is more of a King, not less of a king, than those earthly monarchs who sometimes share a title with him. Their sovereignty derives from his, not the other way around. St. Paul tells us about the fatherhood of our God, that all fatherhood in heaven and on earth has its source and identity, even like name in him. "I kneel before the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name" Ephesians 3: 15.

We must not wait until we can understand our heavenly Father before we learn to know him. It is by learning to know God that we will learn to understand the Father and readily grasp the qualities that comprise the character of God the Father in his relations with us.

Misleaders have always been many because the fatherhood of God is a difficult revelation, uncongenial to the native pantheism of private intuition. To locate divinity, in the Father and Son and Holy Spirit challenged even untutored monotheism. If we read the sacred texts of our forefathers in faith, we see at once that the Triune God was but a fragile glimmer in Hebrew revelation received from heaven. And they were never conscious of it as they should have been. The treasure given to them in shadowy language because of their inability to then understand and grasp would have been totally incomprehensible to them and in pious



obedience to what they knew of God, they would have been obliged to think it blasphemous if it had been uttered clearly.

The world would not know about the Blessed Trinity if the human intellect yielded to intuition pure and simple. It had to be revealed by example, calling upon grace-infused faith to respond. Hinduism has an intuition of "Being, Consciousness and Joy" in Vedanta, the supreme self-Brahman, but this is a weak impression of what heaven has to stamp on hearts of and minds together as the Divine Trinity. At least it shows us the Hindu was grasping for truth prior to the coming of Christ.

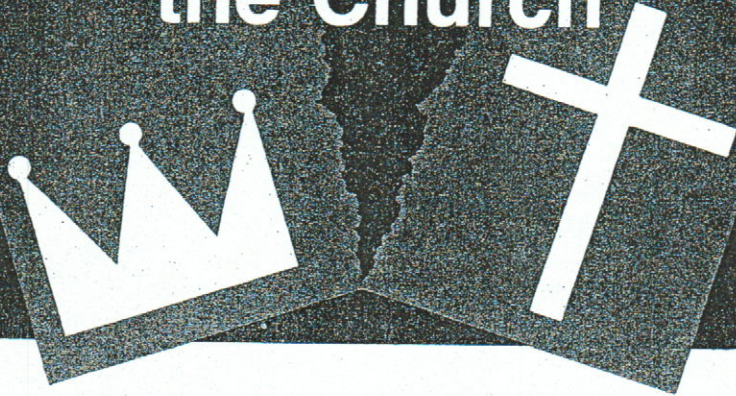
Christ spoke most deeply of Fatherhood in the Resurrection. It was then that He begins earnestly to call his friends his littler children. It is days before the Ascension and He knows what we have yet to learn: that our greatest dignity as human beings in the world is to be adopted as sons and daughters by the world's Creator, who makes his creatures his children in the sacramental Mystery of baptism.

By calling God "Father," the language of faith indicates two main things: that God is the first origin of everything and the transcendent authority; and that He at the same time goodness and loving care for all his children. He is so vast and comprehensive He cannot be limited as man is prone to do with himself. God's parental tenderness can also be expressed by the image of motherhood, which emphasizes God's immanence, the intimacy between Creator and creature.

The language of faith thus draws on the human experience of parents, who are in a way the first representatives of God for man, even though today they too often forget their sublime vocation and pursue their own agenda in rearing their children after their own misunderstandings instead of those revealed them by the concerned and masterful Creator. But this experience also tells us that human parents are also fallible and can easily disfigure the true and exalted face of fatherhood and motherhood. We ought therefore recall that our God transcends human distinction between the sexes because He not only created human nature in the way He did, but exceeds them as well. He is neither man nor woman; He is not so simply, God. He also transcends human fatherhood and motherhood, although He is their origin and standard, because no one is or can be as uniquely and pre-eminently father as God is Father.



# Nationalism and the Church



In our human desire to organize information, we like to put things into categories. Of course, we realize that such generalizations are often inaccurate, but we do it nevertheless because it suits us. Even with the global mobility and mass communication we have today, many people still tend to affiliate certain nationalities into certain church affiliations and denominations. People with Polish, Italian or Spanish surnames are usually presumed to be Catholic, while there is less certainty of the religious identity of those who are Arabic, with African or oriental family names. There is some foundation in the past for these assumptions; few territories in times past had room for more than one religion. Thus we even like to think of "Orthodox" countries. Belonging to a particular church was part of one's national identity, given the circumstances of history. Serbians and Croatian are essentially one people but what determines their ethnic identity is their religious profession of faith. If you are Orthodox, you will identify yourself as Serbian and if Croatian, you like to think of yourself as Catholic.

This interplay of nationality and religious identity was important in the sixteenth century. From the 1100s to the 1600s, powerful monarchs controlled their particular domains, providing law and defending their people against any enemies. In return they collected taxes. A feeling of common history and identity emerged as part of the unified national identity. People eventually felt they had a stake in the nation and considered themselves citizens rather than mere subjects. Often, a common enemy served to draw a nation together, and national



language gave the people a way to express their thoughts and world views. Nationalism became a way of living with those around them, particularly if surrounded by hostile thinking. An example in history among the Rusyns of the Carpathians was that under the Polish/Lithuanian hegemony of the middle ages, many lost their particular identity, having left Podolia by encamping themselves ironically further west to protect their identity. So many Ukrainians became victimized by the same commonwealth and not only lost ethnic identity, but religious as well when they were forced to become Romans by Polish rulers. Further, Rusyns living in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, after the first world war were abandoned in regions of Hungary, separated from their brethren and already assimilated successfully into Hungarian culture.

Both in the east and west, religious identity was used to promote nationalistic loyalty to the state which is readily seen in Russia today where to be Russian is automatically perceived as belonging to the traditional and historical Orthodox faith.

In the West, in the years of the reformation, nationalism played a part in determining the religion of the people. Although most of the people who followed Luther were quit sincere, there were some territorial princes who quickly realized that Luther's split with Rome was to their advantage. It decreased the highly organized power of the Roman church and its ability to tax and centralized the authority of the Protestant state.

In central Europe, particularly where Orthodox people lived surrounded by Latins, Orthodox were looked upon as foreigners because they did not identify with western Christianity. Both Protestant and Roman local rulers attempted to subvert Orthodox belief and assimilate them over periods of time into the local religious traditions. It was easier to rule an area if all were of the same thinking and religion. Thus it became obvious that *cejus regio, ejus religio*, or "*whose region, his religion*," obtained in dominance. In these cases, the one source of identity came not from religious profession as much as from cohesive national ethnic identity. Living as they did among Polish Romans and Hungarian Protestants, Rusyns perceived themselves as belonging to the "Russian faith" – "*ruskoj viry*" because of its contrast with what surrounded them.

Greeks, Bulgarians and other traditionally Orthodox people, likewise dominated by the Moslem onslaught were denied any means of manifesting their ethnic identity except in a very limited domestic way through their Church. Thus even today they identify their faith initially by national association primarily because it was the Church which preserved any ethnic values for them. And the same is true for many of the other national Orthodox Churches.



The varied approaches of the Protestant reform movement did not influence all the nations of sixteenth century Europe because of nationalism. Many western countries identified their Roman allegiance with their national identity. And it is precisely the same understanding in Eastern Europe which supported the stability of the Orthodox Church in places where it was being attacked by Islam and Roman Jesuit missionaries intent on making up for the huge numbers lost to Protestantism.

The reforms of Henry VIII in England also evidence the influence of nationalism on religion. Although some simply say the split of England with Rome by attributing the division to the stubbornness of the king who wanted a divorce from his wife, the movements of history are seldom so simple. England was powerful politically in Europe and wanted to control England all by itself. Anything foreign was suspect and the political power of the popes at the time was rightly feared.

Today we live in a new environment and yet we continue to look upon ourselves with an old-world national identity first and then suffer secondly to call ourselves Orthodox. The pervasive power of past history reveals itself difficult to abandon. And in times recent the Church itself has rightly condemned the identity of the Church of Christ with any kind of nationalism primarily because of the insight of St. Paul who reminds believers our faith profession is by far more important than our passing earthly ethnic identity. It matters absolutely nothing to our God what our national identity is. "Here there is no difference between Jew and Greek; all have the same Lord, rich in mercy toward all who call upon him. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved" Romans 10: 12, 13; "There does not exist among you Jew or Greek, slave or freeman, male or female. All are one in Jesus Christ. Furthermore, if you belong to Christ, you are descendants of Abraham, which means you inherit all that is promised" Galatians 3: 28, 29; "There is no Greek or Jew here, circumcised or uncircumcised, foreigner, Scythian, slave or freeman. Rather, Christ is everything in all of you" Colossians 3: 11.

Unquestionably we should have legitimate ethnic pride, but it should not overshadow or surpass our loyalty to Christ which among too many who identify themselves as Orthodox is the case. "It is he who is head of the body, the church, he who is the beginning, the first born of the dead, should pre-eminence be his in everything" Colossians 1: 18.

What remains most evident is that our faith should identify us as followers of Christ, thus saying we are simply Orthodox is ample enough. Our enemies like us to squabble as we promote our ethnic values and association. Protestantism understands us better and likens us to itself when we say we are "Russian," "Greek" or "Ukrainian" Orthodox because we seem to



be splitting ourselves up in varied denominations as they have done and so they promote their approach in us and often mistakenly see us to be like-minded. Romans like to look upon us as equally divided by nationality, each with its own agenda to advance because Rome boasts of being the one universal church. They advance the idea about us that we are variety of national churches. It is sad we more desire to promote our maternal ethnic identity than the salvific agenda of our heavenly Father. And of course in playing our little games, Orthodox people play into the hands of their enemies by appearing to be openly divisive and promoting nationalism over Christ in the Church.

Needless to say, this nationalism is depriving the Church of Christ of converts who it appears so many times must first become Greek, Russian or Ukrainian before they can proceed to Orthodoxy. We are aware of those who have become Orthodox but do not speak any foreign language and suffer because they want to remain faithful to the Orthodox spouse but do not understand the foreign languages employed hypocritically in worship. There are actually some people who think our God does not understand English and insist for some strange reason a foreign national tongue be used, which of course only empties the pews rather quickly, to everyone's chagrin. We have witnessed the insensitivity of the native Orthodox party to a convert spouse's expectation to understand the services and have them celebrated in an understandable language simply because the gospel requires us to "...hear and understand" Mark 17: 14.

Why, here in the United States, have we failed to see ourselves as Americans with a zealous and legitimate evangelical agenda, to promote the cause of Christ and save souls has not yet been evaluated. St. Paul once again comes to our rescue to set us straight, "There is but one body and one Spirit, just as there is but one hope given all of you by your call. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all, and works through all and is in all" Ephesians 4: 4, 5.

The Church of Christ is not Greek or Roman, but simply Christian. By calling ourselves "Orthodox" we overcome the difficulties of history in separations which still daily abound and show we are faithful to the gospel of Jesus Christ. We celebrate and live the right and correct faith in the right and correct way. The only reason for the Church is to affirm a faith response to Christ's first shown love. "Now that we have been justified by faith, we are at peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have gained access by faith to the grace in which we now stand and we boast of our hope for the glory of God" Romans 5: 1, 2. This means that if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old order has passed away; now all is 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.



# WISDOM! BE ATTENTIVE

*When I foolishly separated myself from Your fatherly glory, I squandered in wickedness the riches You had given me. So now I cry out to You with the voice of the Prodigal Son saying: "I have sinned before You, O merciful Father, receive me repentant and make me as one of your hired servants."*  
Kontakion, Sunday of the Prodigal Son.

*I have sown sin in a land of innocence and life and have harvested the ears of thoughtlessness. I have gathered my actions into bundles of sheaves, but I have not placed them on the threshing floor of repentance. And now I pray to You, O my God, for You are the pre-eternal tiller of our fields: With the breath of Your loving kindness, winnow the grain of my actions, feed my soul with Your grace and forgiveness.* Vesper Hymn, Sunday of the Prodigal Son.

*O faithful, let us discover the power of the divine mystery. The Prodigal came back from his sin and returned to his father's house; in his loving kindness his father came out to meet him and kissed him. He restored him to the glory of His house and prepared a mystical banquet on high. He killed the fatted calf so that we may share in his joy; the joy of the Father Who offers with love, and the joy of the Lamb Who gives Himself for us; for He is Christ the Saviour of our souls.* Vesper Hymn, Sunday of the Prodigal Son.

*I have wasted the treasure that my Father gave to me; I have lived among senseless animals; I have longed to eat the food of the swine, and because no one offered it to me I remained hungry. But now I return to my Father Who is so good, and with tears I cry out: Treat me as one of Your servants, for I no longer deserve Your love, and in Your mercy, save me.* Vesper Hymn, Sunday of the Prodigal Son.

*When I think upon the multitude of my evil deeds; I tremble for the terrible Day of Judgment. But trusting in the compassion of Your mercy, O Lord, I cry out to You like David: Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your great mercy.* Matins Hymn, Sunday of the Prodigal Son.

*O Jesus, now receive my repentance, for I have sinned as the Prodigal Son; I have spent my life in carelessness, thus provoking the anger of my God. I have foolishly wasted the divine treasure of the heritage You once gave me. By my senseless life I have separated myself from You. Accept me, O Father, in Your goodness, as I now return to You. Receive me now, Lord, as You once received the Prodigal. Open to me Your fatherly arms, and in thanksgiving I will sing of Your glory and goodness.* Matins Hymn, Sunday of the Prodigal Son.





## THE PRIEST-MARTYR BLAISE



***M**uch of what we know about many of the saints of the early Church has been handed down to us in the form of oral tradition. Because little, if anything, was set down in writing concerning their spiritual accomplishments, it is not surprising that many legends and folklore developed through the ages concerning certain saints.*

*Such is the case with the Priest-Martyr Blaise. Early Christian writers hardly make mention of him. Still, he remains a popular saint due to some fascinating stories that have somehow been connected with his life.*

*We do know that Blaise was the Bishop of Sebaste in Armenia in the 4th century. When the persecution of Christians became great in his city, Blaise fled to the protection of a cave in the nearby mountains. Tradition tells us that Blaise was actually a physician prior to becoming a hierarch of the Church. It is said that wild beasts would come to his cave to be treated for their various wounds and injuries. Blaise's love for animals, however, led to his ultimate martyrdom. Agricolaus, the Roman governor of the region, had sent his hunters into the hills to find game for him. It was then that they discovered the hiding place of the saintly bishop and brought him back to Sebaste, where he was tortured and imprisoned. Another legend has it that on the way back to Sebaste, Blaise helped a young boy who had a bone stuck in his throat. Because of this, he is looked upon by the Western Church as the "Patron Saint of sore throats." After enduring terrible beatings, Blaise was put to death by beheading in 316 A.D.*

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