



Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Meatfare Sunday

February 22, 2009

Father Robert E Lucas, Pastor;
Father John Cmur; Deacon Kenneth E. Ellis and
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

+++ Please be certain you join us next Sunday after the Divine Liturgy for the Luncheon prior to the Great Fast. We ask all to sign up on the food donation listing in the kitchen. Forgiveness Vespers will be celebrated afterwards and all will join us in prayer, praise and preparation for the Great Fast.

+++ Prayers are solicited for the successful appraisal of our parish property this Wednesday that God's will be fulfilled among us.

+++ 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.

+++ **The weekly Scripture Study meets on Sundays following the Divine Liturgy while children attend their own classes. Everyone now has an opportunity to participate in adult religious education at which Scripture is discussed and explained along with other interests.**

+++ 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-end: Tithes, \$[REDACTED]; Candles, \$[REDACTED]; Food Coupons, \$[REDACTED]; Christian Fellowship, \$[REDACTED]; Diocesan Dues, \$[REDACTED]; Kitchen, \$[REDACTED]; Special Gift, \$[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 for the sake of the Lord and the good of our parish. God bless and reward you good and faithful souls! The attendance was 39 adults and 15 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, Pani Buleta, Paul Szmaida, and Debra Szmaida.

+++ 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.

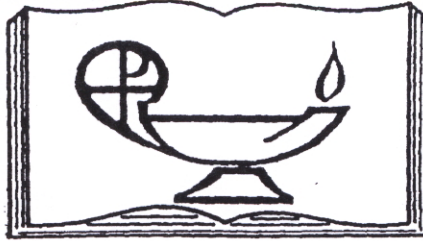
+++ Please check the Sign-Up-Sheet for the weekly Christian Fellowship for the coming weeks. Simple foods without need for preparation are the best. Marilyn Korba coordinates this vital apostolate. Please assist her in making it a success by bringing your donation early so that all are present at the worship of our God.

+++ 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!

+++ As soon as possible, please see Marilyn Korba to sign up for the Alaskan Cruise next August, 2009. We are in need of your support.

+++ 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!

LORD



TEACH
US

I Will Judge

The Lord said to Samuel: I am about to do something in Israel that will cause the ears of everyone who hears it to ring. On that day I will carry out in full against Eli everything I threatened against him that I am judging his family once and for all, because of this crime: though he knew his sons were blaspheming God, he did not reprove them 1 Samuel 3: 12, 13.

We give you thanks, O God, we give thanks, and we invoke your name, we declare your wondrous deeds. When I seize the appointed time, I will judge with equity...God is the judge; one he brings low; another he lifts up Psalms 75: 2, 3, 8.

Now the end is upon you; I will unleash my anger against you and I will judge you according to your conduct and lay upon you the consequences of all your abominations; ...then you shall know I am Lord Ezekiel 7: 3, 4.

I will bring you out of the city and hand you over to foreigners and inflict punishments on you. By the sword you shall fall; at the boundaries of Israel I will judge you; thus shall you know I am the Lord Ezekiel 11: 10 - 12.

I will now gather together all your lovers whom you tried to please; whether you loved them or not; I will gather them against you from all sides and expose you naked for them to see. I will judge you and inflict on you the sentence of adulteresses and murderesses; I will wreak fury and jealousy upon you. I will hand you over to them to tear down your platform and strip you of your dais; they shall strip you of your garments and take away your splendid ornaments, leaving you stark naked. They shall lead an assembly against you to stone you and hack you with swords...Thus will I put to an end your harlotry Ezekiel 16: 37 - 40.

WISDOM! BE ATTENTIVE

When You will come to earth in glory, O God, and all creatures will tremble before You, the river of fire will flow before Your judgement seat, and the books will be opened and all hidden things revealed; deliver me from the unquenchable fire and make me worthy to stand at Your right hand, O righteous Judge. Kontakion, Meatfare Sunday.

When You shall come to render just judgement, O righteous Judge, You shall sit upon Your throne of glory. A river of fire shall flow before Your judgement seat; the powers of heaven will be there with You. Filled with fear, all humanity will be judged according to their deeds. At this hour, O Christ, spare us, and because of Your great love, grant that the faithful who pray to You, may be given a place with Your chosen ones. Vesper Hymn, Meatfare Sunday.

The books will be opened and the secrets laid bare before Your awesome judgement seat; and the whole valley of tears shall resound with a dreadful sigh, when it sees sinners sent to eternal punishment by Your just judgement, and hears them weeping hopelessly. Therefore, O God of mercy, we pray to You: Spare us who sing to You, O only Good One. Vesper Hymn, Meatfare Sunday.

The trumpets shall sound and the tombs shall be opened; humanity shall come forth trembling. Those who have done good shall rejoice, as they await the reward they shall receive. Those who have done evil shall shriek in terror, as they are sent to punishment and separated from the elect. In Your goodness, spare us, O Lord of glory, and grant that we may enjoy a place with those who love You. Vesper Hymn, Meatfare Sunday.

I weep and lament when I think of the outer darkness and eternal fire, together with Hades, the worm that consumes, and the gnashing of teeth, the unceasing grief that falls upon those who have sinned without measure, and who have provoked You to anger, O God, most good. Alas, among these sinners, I am the first. But in Your great mercy, O Judge, save me. Vesper Hymn, Meatfare Sunday.

Alas! O my darkened soul, how long will you persist in sin? How long will you lie in laziness? Why do you not think of the dreadful hour of death? Do you not fear the awesome judgement seat of the Saviour? How will you defend yourself? How will you be vindicated? Your works are there to convict you, and your actions to witness against you. Moreover, time is growing short, O my soul; hasten and cry out in faith: I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned; but I know Your love and Your mercy. O Good Shepherd, in Your goodness, do not deprive me of a place at Your right hand. Vesper Hymn, Meatfare Sunday.

WHY LOVE HEALS

Making deep emotional connections
with friends and family reduces
stress, creates more happiness and
actually keeps you healthier

There is an actual, physical chunk of brain that runs your emotions called the limbic brain. You can trace its development back in millennia. You can see it on an MRI. Every second you spend with other people, your limbic brain is tuning in to them, being changed by their moods and changing theirs in turn. It is a constant, life-affirming limbic dance. Experimental psychologists have known for decades that we share moods. If you do not believe, just think of the people who make you feel better simply by walking into a room. These sorts of interactions feel so good directly and unconsciously, that we would wither away without them. This is why we should never underrate the emotional side of life.

Of course, women are better than men in keeping the limbic dance going by working to ensure that families stay connected as the years go by and by building lasting friendships and deep connections from the many different aspects of their lives. High school, and college friends, friends from work, friends from raising children together, from neighborhood committees, from shared vacations; sure some of

these bonds and friendships fall away as part of the natural cycle of growing and changing, but most people find new friendships to replace them. Women who do not find close friendships, who have trouble keeping up connections, need to make an effort to change their patterns.

Hundreds of research studies confirm that isolation hurts us and connection heals us through the same physical mechanisms as exercise and healthy diet. Blood vessels are measurably more elastic, the heart's ability to respond to extraordinary demands is higher, cardiac inflammatory protein levels are lower and blood pressure response to exercise is better in most connected people. Their stress hormone blood profiles are also measurably healthier than those of isolated people.

Sadly, we all see people who give up on connection and association, who stop living years before they die. These are women and men who feel so overwhelmed by the prospect of getting out and building new connections that they stop trying. Our society with its emphasis on the traditional family structure and the workplace as centers of social togetherness, does not help matters. People who lack either of those have to work doubly hard. But the consequences of not making connections are so devastating that you cannot allow yourself to retreat into isolation. The stakes are too high. A study of more than four thousand women and men showed a direct link between the size of one's social circle and survival, with large circles bringing ever-greater longevity. Men and women with fewer than six regular contacts outside the house had significantly higher rates of blocked coronary arteries, were more likely to be obese and have diabetes, high blood pressure and depression, and were two and a half times more likely to die over the course of study than those with an extensive social network. Having either a good marriage or just one close friend cuts the risk of mortality by a third, and the benefit increases the more our circle broadens. It's reassuring to note that both quality and quantity count. Some people have a few close friends or family members, while others have a broad network of involvement with their community. Either works well, though it is best to have both. Ideally family associations can best be supplemented most easily by church groups.

Talk to any nurse about how much it matters for patients to have visitors in the hospital and about the difference in outcome for those people who have a steady stream of visitors, a wall covered with get-well cards, flowers obscuring the monitors and tubing. But the thing is, you cannot wait until trouble strikes to build up a

friendship community. You have to work at it day after day, make the calls, the effort, be the hospital visitor yourself years before you need one yourself.

ISOLATION CAUSES STRESS WHILE BEING CONNECTED IS AS HEALTHY FOR YOU AS GETTING REGULAR EXERCISE

Usually those of religious faith sincerity do build up relationships more easily, so church attendance does seem to provide an opportunity for serious friendships that last. Fellow believers share passions and convictions as well as connections. They work hard at staying in touch with friends and they are critically important people in their children's and grandchildren's lives. They make living, caring, connecting their avocation.

Optimism is an extraordinary limbic resource and is available to everyone because it is a learned skill. You can decide to be optimistic with remarkable success. Not pollyanna optimistic, but glass half full optimistic, and it is certainly worth the effort. Women who are optimistic about motherhood prior to pregnancy have a much lower mortality rate from cancer and heart disease. It seems to help to approach illness with a positive, optimistic attitude which may lower blood pressure and improve immune function. You recover from bypass surgery faster and better, you get out of bed sooner after back surgery and you go back to work and regular exercise sooner. Anger doubles our risk of heart disease. But perceiving your work as satisfying cuts your risk of heart disease in half. Generations ago, extended families provided rich life-long limbic safety nets and connections to the larger group. In the days before television, telephones, electric lights and convenience stores, this was not a choice. There was nothing to do but be within a group.

The great gift of traditional societies was that you were a necessary part of the community your whole life. It seems as if that model is vanishing from our planet. But our society still has all those limbic connections; you just have to find them and put them together for yourself. Many who conduct studies in this area, emphasize how much church membership contributes to the good not only of soul, but mind and body as well. For those who are frantically busy with work,

the office can be an important source of connection and gratification, which helps to explain why increasing numbers of Americans of both sexes are choosing to work past retirement. Sometimes this is for financial reasons, of course, but sometimes it is due to the increasing recognition that work has a value beyond the paycheck. Part of the value is simply in the structure, in having reason to get out of the house in the morning. Part of the value is in the interactions that come automatically with most jobs. No small part of it is the importance of having a role in the group, a definite niche in the great social order.

PEOPLE WHO REPORT THAT FAITH IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF THEIR LIVES HAVE HIGH LEVELS OF LIFE SATISFACTION

There are other ways to connectedness, too, such as spirituality. A search for meaning is too profound and personal for facile advice giving, but we do know that for limbic reasons alone, you should be on the journey. Not only does the Lord insist we love one another, but that we relate in a loving and concerned way. Applying the golden rule to our relationships is vital and important and no more better place is provided than the structured spiritual setting where everyone puts into practice what God expects. The growing number of reasonably well-done studies on spirituality point to its importance in our lives for mental and physical health. Many people who search for meaning in their life and their experience through religious expression or spirituality survive loss, cancer, and heart disease better and have healthier immune chemistry and lower risks of stroke and Alzheimer's disease than those who do not.

People who report that faith is important and vital in their lives have higher levels of life satisfaction and emotional well-being. You can decide for yourself how much of the positive effect stems from the increased social connections offered by organized religion and how much is from something ineffable, but the simple message is that it is important to look for meaning in our life's experience. Every single human being on the planet craves limbic connections. We just need to head out the door to build them. The tide of social atrophy –of limbic decay – is not that strong nowadays. It is just remorselessly steady. The ultimate message is swim against the tide, every day. If you work at it steadily, it is almost impossible to fail.

Being Watchful in Times of Darkness

In Jesus darkest hour, when He was the object of injustice, his personal response as well as his direction for us is to “Watch and pray” Mark 13: 33.

Jesus knows first hand what it is to be the victim of violence, injustice and the target of a kind of darkness attempt to overcome all that is true and right. Humanly, cognitively, and logically no one has sufficient insight to explain all the violence prevalent in the world today. Yet the only thing that rings true to make any kind of sense is that there is a reality of evil that feeds and motivates such dark and destructive action.

Like our Lord, innocent people in the air, in office buildings and public servants on the ground become the target of evil expressing itself. As members of a “believing community” we struggle to find perspective in these very dark days.

Evil and darkness being perpetrated in this world is no new concept to the One who along imparts mercy and light. Perhaps because He is so aware of all the battles with evil and darkness, explains why He so actively shares himself with us in mercy and light. What would our lives look like, how would our choices be made on a daily basis, if we embraced this sobering “world view” which has its source in the Lord?

This perspective is one which is keenly aware of the diametric opposition of light and darkness as well as the enormous responsibility to live our lives in truth and light. It is therefore not surprising that He warns his disciples in his own darkest hour to “...watch and pray....” The Greek word used in the Scripture to describe this directive is one that connects with ideas including vigilance, watchfulness, sober-mindedness, and a prayerful attention. To “watch and pray” is an active response, certainly not at all passive. Perhaps the stunning intrusion of all the recent manifestations of darkness and evil sobers us all to a life that is committed to be in fact, more watchful and prayerful. It is during these dark hours, as believers in Christ’s Lordship that we join together to continue to “watch and pray.”

But what can we do? It seems the less we do, the more paralyzed and powerless we feel. Some are standing in lines more frequently, giving at blood banks. It is a correct and helpful response. What then? Two important actions come to mind. Both of these require a depth of soul and commitment of will.

Firstly, we can actively involve ourselves in personal prayer for all victims, the injured and surviving families and friends impacted by devastation in the world. To allow depressed and even angry feelings to translate into a kind of “active prayer that perseveres in prayer without ceasing.” We must break out of our distorted view of prayer that characterizes it as passive, ineffective, or weak. Active and effective prayer rests on the conviction that innocent “victims of darkness,” are being received into his kingdom with infinitely personal, devoted care. They are seen in a light such as the martyrs of faith are viewed. Darkness overcame these innocent ones in this world, but the Light of Love in Christ embraces them with amazing tenderness and complete peace in his kingdom!

Secondly, the alternative action to be involved in is to bring mercy, love, truth and light to any and all situations that surround us each day. Never is evil overcome by evil. It is light that dispels darkness. In short, it is the light that we bring into the darkness of our own personal world that becomes our believing response to the greater evil we all witness in horror occurring around us.

What do we do with our angry feelings? Can we deepen in our conviction against evil and darkness? If so, we must believe it will occur as we deepen our conviction for goodness and light. It is always time to embrace the One who is goodness and light. We become “haters of evil” by becoming “lovers of good.” As we embrace the loving Saviour, we will begin to find personal direction, peace of soul and firm conviction to manage the multitude of feelings that confront us today and each day of our lives. May his mercy extend to us all and embrace us with eagerness that we are overcome by the love of Jesus Christ for the world.

Prayer for Departed Souls

Into your hands, O Lord, I commend the souls of your servants who lose their lives in the horrible tragedies being perpetrated upon mankind in the world today. We beseech your mercy to gather them up in the place of rest, where all the blessed saints repose, where the light of your countenance shines forever. In addition, grant that our present lives may be Godly, sober and blameless so we too may be found worthy to enter into the heavenly kingdom with those whom we love and see no longer. For you are the Resurrection, the life and the repose of your departed servants, Christ our God and to you we ascribe glory, honor and worship together with your eternal Father and life-giving Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

THE "KEYS" TO THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

Have you ever used a safety deposit box in a bank? If so, you certainly realize that 2 keys are generally required for you to have access to your valuables: one that is in your possession and one that is controlled by the bank itself. Although everything in that box may belong to you, you must still follow the guidelines set down by a higher authority; in this instance, those who run the bank. In like manner, it may be said that for us to attain the greatest "treasure" of all - eternal life in the Kingdom of Heaven - 2 "keys" are required as well.

The first "key" is held by our Lord. When He gave His very life for "the sake of our salvation," in effect, He did His part to open Heaven's gate for us. Christ's death upon the Cross and His ultimate Resurrection made everlasting life a *POSSIBILITY* for all of us who claim to be His followers.

For it to become a *REALITY*, however, we must follow the "regulations" set down by no less an authority than Christ Himself! That second "key" carries a great responsibility with it. We cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven unless we have loved the Lord with our entire heart, soul and mind. Its gate will remain locked to us unless we have loved our neighbor as much as we love ourselves, ministering to their needs as if we were serving Jesus Himself. We will never be able to turn that second "key" if we have not practiced the Gospel, repented of our sins and taken Christ into our hearts through the frequent reception of the Sacraments. There is a place for all of us in God's Kingdom. May we all do what is necessary to claim what our Savior wants us to have!

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