



Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Second Sunday of the Great Fast

March 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 seventeenth to twentieth chapters of the Book of Genesis.

- +++ Friday is the solemn feast of the Annunciation to the Birthgiver of God. In anticipation the Divine Liturgy will be celebrated Thursday at 7: 30 PM. Please join us in prayer and praise.
- +++ Final funeral rites will be celebrated in St. John the Baptist, Perth Amboy Parish this evening at 7:00 PM and Monday at 10:00AM for our beloved +Metropolitan Nicholas. We encourage our faithful to be present in prayer. His Eminence, Archbishop Demetrius, Patriarchal Exarch will be celebrant.
- +++ The second All Souls' Saturday will takes place this Saturday with the Divine Liturgy celebrated at 9:00 AM followed by a Memorial service. Please join us in prayer.
- +++ We acknowledge with deep gratitude the generous and kind offering this past week of gifts to the parish in the amount of 100.00 in blessed memory of our beloved departed parishioner, +Paul Pallas. We pray the merciful Lord provide a blessed repose for the soul of +Paul and grant him Eternal Memory as we thank the generosity of these gracious souls.
- +++ We invite all to participate in the blessed grace of this sacred season as we celebrate the Presanctified Gifts Liturgy Friday evening at 7: 30 PM. Father is preaching on persons surrounding the Cross of the Lord.
- +++ 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, \$1,000.00; Candles, \$100.00; Diocesan Dues, \$100.00; Special Gift, \$100.00; Food Coupons, \$100.00; Kitchen, \$100.00; Self-Denial, \$100.00; +Paul Pallas Memorial Gifts, \$100.00; for a total of \$3,500.00. 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.
- +++ The Special offering for the beautification with flowers of our parish church for the forthcoming feasts of the Entrance of our Lord into Jerusalem, Passion Week and the glorious Resurrection will be taken on Sunday, April 10. Please plan on being generous with your offering.
- +++ 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 \$1,000.00 from this apostolate. Even your pennies can help and are a blessing to our parish.
- +++ This coming Sunday at 9: 15 AM, we will celebrate a Memorial Service for the repose of the soul of our beloved +Metropolitan Nicholas. We pray the merciful Lord comfort his family and beloved communicants

LORD



TEACH
US

Prayer

Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man has great power in it effects James 5: 16.

If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it will be done for you John 15: 7.

You will make your prayer to him, and he will hear you; and you will fulfill your vows Job 22: 27.

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks, finds and to him who knocks it will be opened Matthew 7: 7, 8.

And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith Matthew 21: 22.

Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things which you have not known Jeremiah 33: 3.

Pray then, like this: Our Father, who are in heaven, hallowed by your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread; and forgive us our debts as we also forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil Matthew 6: 9 – 13.



Wisdom Of
The



Byzantine
Fathers

Hear how this same John gives the first place to Peter. He puts the Apostle before himself...Let us then become lowly, so that we may achieve spiritual stature. For most utterly does arrogance abase. Abraham says, 'I am dust and ashes' and he prevailed over countless barbarians, bearing a trophy more glorious than the former, and cleaving to his God-endowed virtue, grew even higher in the sight of the Creator *St. John Chrysostom.*

"Sin was not made by Him; and this is evident, for sin is nothing; and when man sins, he makes nothing. And the idol by the Word was not made. It has indeed a certain human form, and man was himself made by Him. But the form of man in an idol, was not made by the Word, for it is written, 'We know that an idol is nothing in the world' (1 Corinthians 8: 4) *St. Augustine.*

Jesus wishes the power of His miracles to be known only gradually, and so He did not reveal what had been done; nor did the chief steward call the servants. For they would not have been believed, saying such a thing about One Who was regarded as an ordinary man; but He called the bridegroom, who especially would inquire into what happened. For Christ had not simply made wine, He made the very best wine *St. John Chrysostom.*

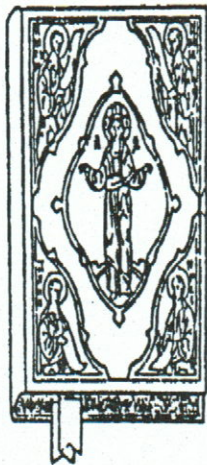
SCRIPTURE

TRIVIA

QUIZ



1. Where did Jesus make a coin appear?
2. Who was the father of Joseph, ruler of Egypt?
3. Which of these is closest in meaning to synagogue? Temple, Tomb, Sepulcher, Museum.
4. Who stretched his hand over the Red Sea?
5. On what mountain did Noah's ark come to rest?
6. The Scriptures name four angels: Lucifer, Michael, Gabriel, and ?
7. What happened to the seven fat cows in Pharaoh's dream?
8. Who fell asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane?
9. Who insisted, "Love one another as I have loved you"?
10. What is the first sin recorded in Scripture?
11. How was Abraham related to Isaac?



ANSWERS TO TRIVIA QUIZ

- 1.. In a fish's mouth. (Matthew 17: 27)
2. Jacob or Israel. (Genesis 35: 22)
3. Temple.
4. Moses. (Exodus 14: 21)
5. Ararat. (Genesis 8: 4)
6. The Archangel Raphael. (Tobias 5: 4)
7. They were eaten by seven lean cows. (Genesis 41: 4)
8. The disciples of the Lord (Mark 14: 32)
9. Our Lord. (John 13: 34)
10. Eve eating the forbidden fruit. (Genesis 3)
11. Abraham was Isaac's father. (Genesis 21: 1)

Deborah

Leader Of God's Army

While Joshua lived, and the elders who had known him and seen the wonders of God also lived, Israel served the Lord well and knew peace and contentment. But the new generations forgot the Lord and how He led Israel to the Promised Land.

Around them were pagan nations who never knew the Lord God. It was easier for them to be like their neighbors and to bow to a false god than to serve the one true God. And many Isrealites turned to pagan ways. The Lord sent His people judges to advise them and rally and inspire them to His service and to remain faithful to Him. When they obeyed the judges whom He sent, all went well. But when they offended the Lord, pagan kings conquered the Promised Land. These judges were not rulers, nor trial judges. The word judge meant more accurately "deliverer or defender" of the rights of God and His people. One named Othniel freed Israel from the king of Aram. Another named Aod slew the conquering king of Moab. And a judge named Samgar killed six hundred Philistines with an oxbone in one day's battle.

And then came a new judge, a woman, Deborah who fought like a man and sang like an angel. Deborah was a young wife and mother whom God gifted with understanding and wisdom. Men came

from all Israel to Deborah with their arguments and troubles. She would sit under a palm tree and with calm dignity bring peace to angry souls. Her prudence and courageous faith melted any resentment men might have felt at the Lord's choice of a woman judge.

And Deborah grieved over the plight of her nation. Because the people had again turned away from the Lord, He let Jaban, the pagan king of Asor conquer and abuse them for twenty years. Now Jaban's cruel general, Sisara the Terrible, ruled the land with nine hundred iron chariots and an evil hand. The people got the kind of ruler they deserved.

Day and night Deborah, her husband and children, prayed God to rescue Israel from Sisara's tyranny and their own sins. And God answered that prayer because it was sincere. He ordered Deborah to call a soldier named Barak. Under the palm tree Deborah said to him, "The Lord commands you to march up Mount Tabor with ten thousand men. And he will give us victory over Sisara's chariots and men" Judges 4: 6, 7. "I will not go unless you come with me" Judges 4:8, said the gruff Barak. "I will go with you," she said. "But not all the glory of this victory shall go to you. Sisara will fall to a woman's power!" Judges 4: 9.

Barak and Deborah mustered the giant army and led it to Tabor's summit, while Sisara marshalled his iron chariots on the plain below. From the peak, Deborah calmly watched and prayed, and when God's hour came she gave the battle cry. Just like Joan of Arc centuries later, she

commanded. Ten thousand men obeyed her voice, streaming down the mountain to do battle. But Sisara's warriors excelled in hand-to-hand combat. Nothing seemed to harm his chariots. Israel was about to taste bitter defeat.

Then suddenly torrents of rain fell. The plain became a thick and deep bog of mud. The chariots floundered and sank in the mire. Israel's soldiers swarmed over Sisara's army. None of the enemy survived. Sisara, terrified of defeat, abandoned his chariot and fled. He hoped to find safety in the tent of a man named Haber, who was not an Israelite, but who had been friendly to Sisara's master, King Jabin.

Limping and shivering, Sisara reached the tent. Jael, Haber's wife, came to meet him. "Come in and rest. Do not be afraid" Judges 4: 18, Jael said. "Give me water to drink" Judges 4: 19, Sisara whispered, still afraid of what he had experienced. She gave him milk, covered him with a blanket, soothed him and put him to rest. Grateful, exhausted from battle and his long getaway march, the burly general slept soundly. Then Jael took a large wooden tent peg and, with a heavy mallet, drove it through his skull. Sisara the Terrible died at a woman's hands, as the Lord had foretold through Deborah's lips.

Then Deborah sang an anthem of victory and praise to the Lord for setting Israel free. Her victory chant made the hills ring:

"Hear, O kings! Give ear, O princes!
I to the Lord will sing my song,
my hymn to the Lord, the God of Israel....

When I Deborah arose, when I arose, a
mother in Israel, new gods were their
choice;

then the war was at their gates.
Not a shield could be seen, nor a lance,
among forty thousand in Israel!

My heart is with the leaders of Israel,
nobles of the people who bless the Lord...
Awake, awake Deborah! awake, awake,
strike up a song. Strength arise, Barak...
Then came down the fugitives with the
mighty, the people of the Lord came down
for me as warriors.

From the heavens the stars, too, fought;
from their courses they fought against
Sisara.

May all your enemies perish thus, O Lord!
but your friends be as the sun rising in its
might!

Judges 5: 2 - 31.

Deborah then retired to her home because she completed her mission for the Lord. Her vocation from God was done and over. She led a revolution against evil, she set a nation free and returned to her family as God prompted her. "And the land was at rest for forty years" Judges 5: 31.

We thus see that our God often chooses the most unlikely of people to lead souls to salvation. No one would have thought a woman would be an instrument of God's purpose, but He confounded the lack of faith commitment in the nation and chose a soul worthy of His purpose. Deborah will be honored by faith-filled souls until the end of time because she cooperated with the grace of God and made herself worthy to be a prophetess to judge and lead, and protect Israel in one of its darkest hours.

Flesh Subordinated to Spirit

There are two tremendous forces striving to predominate in the life of each believer -: the material and the spiritual – and each has its appropriate place in life. Our heavenly Father has ordained that the material and physical should be subordinated to the spiritual, that the kingdom of heaven should be sought after first, above legitimate temporal goals. But in most cases, the order is reversed by our sinfulness. Time is taken for everything else in our lives except seeking after holiness. If at all times one is in ease and comfort, with no trials or burdens, one becomes soft and indulgent, even negligent and soon all inspiration and determination to serve God vanishes. The Apostle Paul declared that he kept his body in subjection, lest he become a castaway after having preached the truth of Christ to others. He realized what most people fail to perceive, that to allow one's appetites and desires to have free reign means spiritual ruin and destruction. It is the soul, then, that must direct the drive and activity of both body and soul so that God is glorified and salvation sought after seriously.

Just as when a flock of sheep is left to its own devices, without the loving care and concern of a shepherd, it inevitably will find destruction, so too, the local flock of the universal Church, the parish, must be guided and guarded by the shepherd, the parish priest who leads it subordinated to the will of Christ for the sake of salvation. When thought of in its proper perspective, the individual believer comes to realize that in observing the Great Fast with all its prescriptions, we express our willingness to sacrifice somewhat for the honor of God, for our own betterment and salvation and for subordination of our sinful flesh to the discipline of the Lord. This is best expressed by bodily and spiritual self-denial of food, amusements and all worldly goods we enjoy most along with all sinful activity so that extra, additional time may be invested in equipping the soul to dominate the temporal, the material, the physical body.

Nowadays people delight to sit at a table laden with inviting foods. They eat to satiate, often more than sufficient for bodily needs. To them the omission of a meal would be a great self-denial. They do not eat to live, they live to eat. And what a protest the appetite raises when its requests are not fulfilled! Yet these longings must be denied during the Great Fast so that our will power is strengthened and confirmed for virtue and good. Then it can be called upon during the remainder of the year to justly lead us to salvation in practicing good works appealing in the sight of the Lord. One or two meals missed every week would result in blessings, spiritual and physical for the believer. We ought sacrifice a meal a day during this holy season so that in imitation of Christ Who fasted forty days in the desert and St. Paul and the other apostles, we might become serious Christian

warriors, eager for victory over the devil which encounter is not won except by prayer and fasting.

Heaven will not become our reality if we do not change first our sinful inclinations and activity. Most young Christians will not abstain much or do penance beyond mere formality. Nothing induces them to a temperance and regulated way of living. This is why the Church loudly insists on entering seriously the discipline of the Great Fast; that each communicant make its orderly way of life his personal own. Thus the Church assists us to pursue our salvation and more surely establish it in our lives.

The Church does not set up a directory for the observance of the Great Fast as much as it asks us to submit to the spirit of the Lord. To espouse the cause of Christ for ourselves means we will imitate the virtue of Christ, His eagerness to pray and fast whenever possible and necessary.

The continuing effort of the Church induces, through fasting, her membership to live soberly, righteously and in godliness during earthly life and at the same time, to discipline themselves to know, to love and to serve God according to His will and not personal interpretation. In other words, doing what God desires by God's method.

The Great Fast is a time during which all real believers should renew the good fight of faith and put aside even allowable pleasures and reduce life to its simplest state, in order to better serve God so that sin is avoided along with all its consequences of alienation and separation.

Believers never forget that the directives for successful pursuit of holiness during this season of the Great Fast will only be as beneficial as we individually are willing to submit ourselves to their fulfillment and completion in our lives. When we recognize that in breaking, avoiding or neglecting the prescriptions offered us by the Divine Physician for regaining spiritual ascendancy in our lives, it is we who are losers, it is we who are short-changed, it is we who are so weakened, our journey to salvation is unquestionably interrupted and detoured.

If the spiritual values of the soul do not predominate, if the soul does not subordinate the evil inclinations of the body, unless the values of Christ are obvious and actively pursued, salvation cannot be reality at all.

Believers then, are eager to utilize this holy season to obtain the promises of Christ, to follow in the footsteps of the Saviour, to seriously and sincerely take up their cross and overcome the devil.

Remember and do not forget...

***you get great life-saving results in sustaining faith commitment to
Christ***

by having a regular daily prayer life,

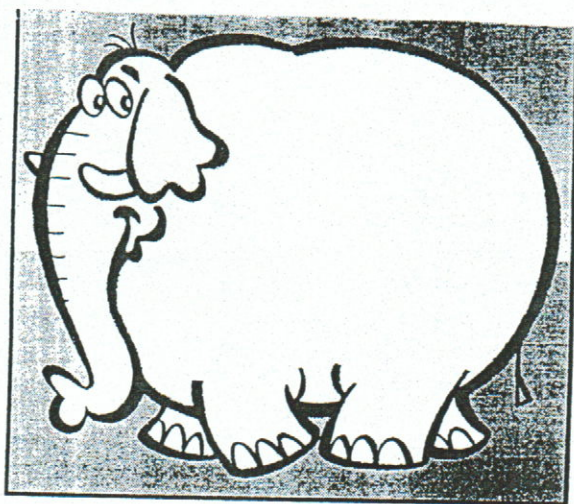
***by worshipping Father, Son and Holy Spirit every Sunday
and holyday***

***by sharing the heart of God in offering and seeking
forgiveness,***

***by regular nourishment with the Body and Blood of our
Saviour,***

by translating your faith into good deeds

by living a faith-filled life!



Cleaning the Upstairs

Create in me a clean hear , O God; and renew a right spirit within me
Psalms 51: 10.

A farm friend tells the story of needing more room for hay in their hayloft in the barn upstairs. He knew he needed to clean out the one area that served as a catch-all for twelve years. One rainy day he and his eleven year-old son tackled the job of sorting out the things piled up there. They found anything from old egg cartons to bicycle parts and far more; a genuine treasure trove of junk and useless nonsense.

“Dad,” the son asked, “what about this... and this?”

“I guess it is trash,” the farmer answered.

“This still looks good yet. Shall we keep it?” he asked.

“Yes, I agreed, “I think we can still use that.”

Finally, after sorting things for an hour and half or maybe two hours, they had three one-horse wagon loads of trash to get rid of. The things considered useful were stacked to one side. The son and farmer-father stepped back to observe the order of the hayloft and the son observed the absolute neatness of the area. Then the younger of the two said, “Well, Dad, it looks as if only about one fourth of the things that were up; there had any value.” “Yes,” the older man chuckled, “I guess so.”

This story causes some deep thinking. How is it with my “upstairs?” – my mind? What things do I keep stored there? Are they valuable in the sight of our heavenly Father, or is it such trash as wrong attitudes, petty grievances, selfishness, wrong motives and hurt feelings? Is yesterday’s sinful erroneous thinking crowding up the space needed for new approaches and holiness in Christ? Am I willing to get rid of this useless trash, or do I enjoy wallowing around in it? Am I reflecting the thinking and mind of the Lord by what I store in my head? Are my memories only of sinful, negative, bad things which ruined my life in the past? Too often we hang on to the kind of thoughts, thinking they actually have some value. In reality, they are cluttering space that God would like to occupy. Why not give God the broom and let him do the cleaning? Now is the time to clean the “upstairs.” Let our heavenly Father do the sorting.

Storm Winds That Fulfill His Word

These revealing words from the insightful and inspired Old Testament King David remind us that our heavenly Father does have purpose and direction for our created world even though we many times cannot discern it. With everyone exasperated from time to time by too much rain, too humid weather, too much snow, this proof of God's caring and sustaining providence is consoling to the believing soul.

Did you ever go into the woods late in the afternoon on a day of howling wind and driving rain; and did you ever see a drearier spectacle, or hear more desolate sounds? The slough of the winds through the almost bare branches, the incessant drip, drip of the water upon the masses of fallen, withered, lifeless, dried out leaves, the air filled with flying leaves fluttering down into the gloom of the forest floor as into a pitiless grave, the radiantly delicate colors of trunk and moss all changed and irreversibly stained designs and blended by the soaking of the driven rivulets of water; how astoundingly hard to believe that such dreariness is related in any way to the inspiring beauty of the summer forest!

And yet we know that it is that very wind which rocks the trees and howls so dismally, just that streaming rain and those rotting leaves which will help to beautifully reclothe the forest trees next year with verdant splendor, and to make the woods sing with joy and pulsate with new exhilarating life. All winds and weather are favorable to the development of the sturdy, well-rooted tree, even the hurricane which strips it of its leaves and branches and quickens all its vital powers, challenging it to put forth new strength for the forthcoming encounter.

If a tree is cut down in part the result is a sturdier trunk and more compact and symmetrically attractive growth. Even if it is toppled over by a storm, its acorns are scattered and become the new seeds of life in the forest, both to propagate itself and animal life which is sustained by them as well. In its ruin it goes back to the soil from which spring other trees in the future for God's continuing glory and man's benefit.

So, we believers are better and purer and stronger today because of the tears and the sighing and the desolation we experienced in our lives. We are being pruned and trimmed by the Master of inconsequential habits and attitudes we possess and as a result are made more purely and clearly in His image. You know, and certainly the world knows, that your life is richer, better poised and positioned, more trustful, less selfish, more detached from the things of pure sense; that the whole atmosphere is somehow purer and more vitalizing.

"Storm winds that fulfill his word" Psalms 148: 18. The soul that hears in their tumult the rustle of almighty wings praises our heavenly Father for the storm in spite of the inconvenience or the discomfort it may cause us personally because it is only the storm that may free us from enervating ease; it is only the flood that breakers upon the eternal rock, showing once our God to be master of all He created. The believing soul understands very well it is only storms that make a strong tree; only suffering patiently endured that makes a strong saint, worthy of His eternal kingdom.

There is very little question that our heavenly Father has a special love of those who have a passion for the impossible. Many things become impossible for us because we do not attempt to understand the will of our heavenly Father. If we accept and confront the impossible in our labor for Christ, we ought to praise Him for offering us such rich opportunities in our spiritual life. Because we are in a way, to discover our task difficult, and then by His grace, to experience the deep joy of overcoming it and finding it done, guided by the same Lord Who chose us for the task.

While the yoke of the Lord is easy and His burden light, nevertheless the furrow that He calls to undertake is not always by any means easy plowing. There is no yoke that fits so smoothly and handily as His, but there is no work that requires more steady trudging and persistent faithfulness than His.

Whether we are able to comprehend or not, all that occurs about us should lead us closer in our union quest with Him. We should be overwhelmed at His power and glory and bow before it in awe and wonder. He is our God and we are His chosen people.

WISDOM! BE ATTENTIVE

Today the time of earthly deeds is revealed, for judgment is at hand. Let us be found fasting, and let us bring tears of supplication, begging mercy and crying out: "My sins are more numerous than grains of sand at the sea, but forgive me, O Creator of all, that I may receive the crown which does not perish" Kontakion, Second Sunday of the Great Fast.

I have loved the fleeting pleasures of the earth and have thrown away eternal blessings, O Christ Jesus. You alone love mankind, and You do not cut sinners off without hope, pouring out mercy upon those who repent. O Jesus, do not turn from me now as I repent, but see in me the thief who was saved by his confession, the tax collector who was cleansed by mercy, and the prodigal who resolved to weep, for in all of these You have instilled a pattern of repentance. When You see me from afar repenting and running to You as Father, come out with warm and tender mercy. If You wish, You can forgive the sins by which I have polluted myself after baptism and my promise to lead a blameless life: but forgive us, O Creator of all, that we may receive the crown that does not perish Matins Hymn, Second Sunday of the Great Fast.

We do not glorify three gods, but only one divinity. In truth, we honor three Persons: the Father unbegotten, the Son begotten from the Father, and the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father, the Trinity of one God, and in faith we glorify each with the name of God Matins Hymn, Second Sunday of the Great Fast.

With what lips shall we mortals praise this holy bishop? He is the teacher of the Church and the herald of divine light, the one who is immersed in the Trinity, for the most beautiful adornment of holy monks, renowned for his divine contemplation and the brightness of his virtues; the pride and glory of Thessalonica; and the holy Demetrius, whose relics flow with holy oil, shares with you the kingdom of heaven Matins Hymn, Second Sunday of the Great Fast.

O light of the true faith, teacher and support of the Church, adornment of monks and invincible rampart of theologians, O holy Gregory the Wonderworker, the glory of Thessalonica and herald of grace, intercede with God for the salvation of our souls Troparion of St. Gregory Palamas.

"AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION ..."

Every time we pray the Lord's Prayer, we make a very special request of God: we ask Him to help us to avoid temptation. One might be "*tempted*" to say that this is an impossible request for our Heavenly Father to grant, for even Christ Himself had to battle Satan, mankind's greatest adversary, before beginning His public ministry.

The Gospel of St. Matthew tells us how Jesus retired into the wilderness of Judea after His baptism, so that He could properly prepare for His world-changing work of teaching His message to believers and non-believers alike. In His humanity, our Lord had the same physical needs we all have, and indeed after 40 days of fasting He was hungry and tired. The Devil does his best work when we are weak, and in the case of Christ, he tempted Him with the things that appealed to Him most at that moment. He offered our Lord nourishment, reminding Him that all He needed to do was "*say the word*"

and the stones around Him would turn into bread. Satan assured Him of the protection of the angels - he promised Christ power and glory. The "*catch*" to all of this? "*Fall down and worship*" Satan and the evil he represents.

Our Savior was able to fight off these temptations and remain focused on His divine mission. As we continue our Lenten journey, we can expect similar spiritual battles. As we pray and fast, we will be tempted to be proud of our accomplishments. Likewise, we will also be tempted to ignore the disciplines prescribed by the Church during this sacred time - yes, the Devil will be "*working overtime*" to convince us that none of this is necessary for our salvation. Therefore, we must pray constantly that God will "*deliver us from evil*" as we strive to perfect the penitential practices of the Great Fast, always looking ahead to the joy of Pascha that awaits us at the end of our 40-day struggle.