



Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Sunday of St. Thomas

April 22, 2012

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

We Are A Stewardship Parish Of Time, Talent and Treasure

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

GLAD TIDINGS

+++ Our celebration is concluded today with festal anointing.. The customary greeting is "Christ Is Risen!" to which we respond, "Indeed He Is Risen!"

+++ Monday is the simple feast of St. George the Martyr. The Divine Liturgy is celebrated at 7: 30 PM. Please come and join us in prayer and praise.

+++ We are pleased Eleanor Korba offered the candles for today's feast of our Lord's Resurrection in blessed memory of her beloved husband, +John Korba, whose anniversary occurs this month. A Memorial Service will be celebrated for the repose of his soul on April 29 at 9: 15 AM. We pray the gracious Lord continues to comfort Eleanor and her loved one in their loss and that He grants the soul of +John a blessed repose and creates for him Eternal Memory, Christ Is Risen!

+++ We acknowledge with deep gratitude the offering to our parish of the new Trinity Candle, first used today by Eleni Pallas in memory of her beloved husband, +Paul Peter. A Memorial Service will be celebrated for the repose of his soul next Sunday, April 22 at 9: 15 AM. We pray the gracious Lord continues to comfort Eleni and her loved ones in their loss and that He grants to the soul of +Paul Peter a blessed repose and creates for him Eternal Memory, Christ Is Risen!

+++ 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, \$541.00; Candles, \$200.00; Food Coupons, \$100.00; Great Fast Sacrifice, \$99.00; Kitchen, \$450.00; Holyday, \$200.00; Special Gift, \$100.00; Resurrection of our Lord, \$100.00, for a total of \$1190.00. 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 44 adults and 13 children last Sunday.

+++ As faithful believers, we intercede and associate ourselves in prayer with the following who have prayed and offered seven day lights for their intentions: Father Lucas, Pani Lucas, Robert Gorbich, Anna Zacharyczuk, Eleni Pallas, Debra Szmaida, Paul Szmaida, Nina Harrison, Beth Simon, Kyra & Joseph Choti, Sophia Choti, Eleanor Korba, Subdeacon Daniel & Marilyn Korba 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 \$165.00 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 \$110,000.00. 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.

+++ Please be certain to see a member of the Parish Council if you would like to help our parish by using **Shop Rite Food Coupons** available in \$20.00 denominations. We invite **ALL** to be caring and supportive and use Grocery Coupons for food shopping as we have gratefully realized \$100.00 on this project to date!

LORD



TEACH
US

Resurrection

The Lord gives the word; women bear the good news Psalms 68: 11.

Then she reported what he said to her John 20: 18.

I will declare your name to my brethren Psalms 22: 22.

I have revealed to them your name and I will continue to reveal it John 17: 26.

Go your way and tell his disciples and Peter... Mark 16: 7.

He was seen by Cephas 1 Corinthians 15: 5.

The Lord is risen indeed and has appeared to Simon Luke 24: 34.

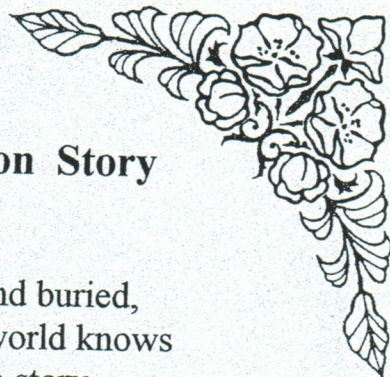
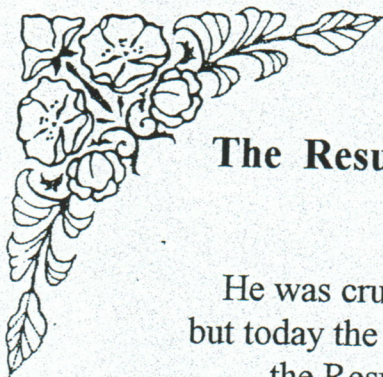
After that he was seen by five hundred brothers at once, most of whom are still alive, although some have fallen asleep 1 Corinthians 15: 6.

He first appeared to Mary Magdalene Mark 16: 9.

The women came up and embraced his feet and did him homage Matthew 28: 9.

Later on, as two of them were walking along on their way to the country, he was revealed to them completely changed in appearance Mark 16: 12, 13.

They then recounted what had happened on the road and how they had come to know him in the breaking of the bread Luke 24: 35.



The Resurrection Story

He was crucified and buried,
but today the whole world knows
the Resurrection story
of how Jesus Christ arose.

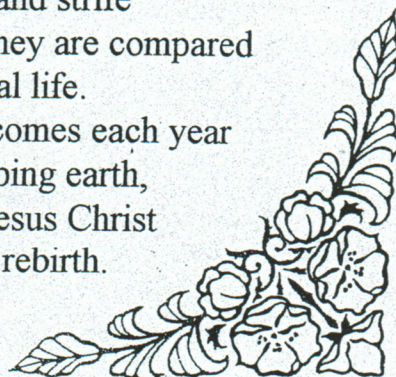
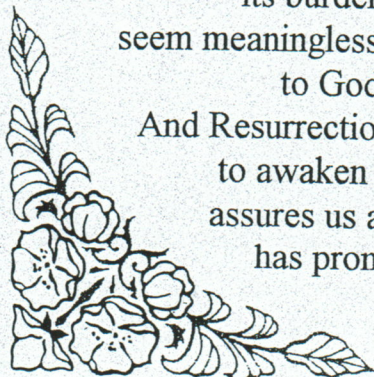
Some may question it and doubt it,
but they cannot explain or say
why after countless centuries
we still follow Christ today.

And they miss the peace and comfort
the Resurrection story brings,
the promise of eternal life
and the hope of better things.

For just to know the Saviour died
to redeem and save all men,
and that because He gave his life,
we too shall live again,
makes all this world's uncertainties,
its burdens, care and strife

seem meaningless when they are compared
to God's eternal life.

And Resurrection, as it comes each year
to awaken the sleeping earth,
assures us all that Jesus Christ
has promised us rebirth.



St. Thomas Sunday

The three hottest words in our language are "Christ Is Risen! This is the essence of the angelic message to the women at the empty tomb of the Lord. Jesus is no longer there because He is risen and lives forever.

Surely those three days while Jesus lay in the tomb were filled with darkness. Jesus died and along with him seemed to go the dreams and hopes of so many. The women who came to anoint his body surely believed that the story was over. Perhaps a few of his followers remembered his words, "Three days later I will rise" Mark 10: 34. But most seemed to have missed it somehow. When Jesus arrives some hours later among his followers in the locked upper room, they are astounded and filled with joy. Can you picture it? We serve a Saviour who not only died for us but rose for us! Because He lives, we too, will live forever. Today we are asked to join the company of Thomas. We are inspired to celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord.

Finally some time later, the absent disciple, Thomas is among the no-longer forlorn followers. And when the Lord invites him to convince himself by touching his wounds and placing his fingers in his side, the twin is inspired to proclaim. "My Lord and my God!" This is far more than he could ever have imagined. It is true as the woman earlier proclaimed "My Redeemer lives!"

How this entire scenario reminds us of an early encounter with the Lord of the blessed Peter, after confessing Christ to be the Son of God. The Lord's words can also apply to the "doubting" Thomas today, "Blessed are you...No mere man has revealed this to you but my father in heaven" Matthew 14: 16, 17.

Such irrepressible joy comes only from a heart and soul inspired with astounding truth. It is the answer made plain by heaven's joy in celebrating with us. And just like the women and the disciples who came earlier to the tomb and found it empty, and ran away to spread the unbelievable news, we leave behind the empty tomb, the unresolved questions of all souls in our daily living, the absence of reality in so many instances in what it is we encounter in our lives, and we embrace the inspiration of the Holy Trinity provided by the Resurrection of our God from the limiting and confining dead.

All the aspirations of Job in his abject suffering in the Old Covenant are now made plain. The prayers requested by Judas Macabee for prayers for the repose of the just departed souls are now fulfilled. David's eagerness for never-ending life is answered. All the eagerness of Job as he was dying, 'If a man dies, will he live again' Job 14: 14? are finally resolved in the questioning mind.

Thomas is inspired by heaven's insight and wisdom from the eternal Godhead descends and finds its place in a tomb outside Jerusalem and gives witness to heavenly reality. How blessed and fortunate is the man who knows Christ as Creator, Saviour and Redeemer! What Christ has achieved is now an integral parcel of baptized man's reality.

The words of St. Thomas are a prefiguring wisdom that inspires all the disciples after the Lord returns to the eternal Father, to enter the world and spread the truth of unfathomable Resurrection joy. It is Resurrection truth that inspired the first believers to respond to the words of Peter at the Pentecost feast. We do not know exactly what happened when Jesus left the tomb in which He was buried, but we do know that the truth of the Resurrection inspired and strengthened the resolve of the disciples and enhanced their entry and purpose into the world for the salvation of mankind. The strength of inspiration received at the empty tomb brought the disciples to the Descent of the Holy Spirit and so armed them that they heroically preached gospel truth to overthrow the influence of satan and separate man from hell's dominion.

Inspired by the message of the holy women, confirmed by St. Thomas today, the disciples are eager to share salvation truth and shout to each other and speak to the world seriously about the obvious implication of empty grave clothes in the cave-tomb.

We are not very good believers, we human beings, but the reality which we witness in our spiritual pilgrimage away from the tomb is captivating and overwhelming. As with St. Thomas, it does make believers out of us.

The Resurrection means the limitations of space and time are abolished. The risen Christ breaks down historical and cultural barriers and ultimately the barrier of death itself. What an inspiration to genuinely live without fear because we belong to the Saviour, wholly, totally and completely and share the fruitful results of his victory over the grave and all its limitations.

For man death generally means a severing of relationships, however dear they are to us. But now in the case of Jesus, we find his death has exactly the opposite effect on account of the Resurrection, as it restores him to fellowship with those whom He loves, Thomas being a good example. It opens up the possibility of fellowship with those – us -whom He, so to speak, has not known in the same way.

We are thus inspired to hope and the disposition of hope is rooted in the fundamental revealed truth that all possibilities for life and its future are under the care and goodness of our heavenly Father. St. Paul's words to the Roman faithful are an overwhelming inspiration and enlightenment for us, "For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation" Romans 5: 10, 11.

This feast is the ultimate reason for hope; it is the inspiration for living an upright life; it is the meaning of undefeatable joy because our amazing grace is now realized and its richness cannot be reversed.

Not longer does the silly baseless insight of the world's logic cause confusion: The logic of self-preservation joins in asserting and advancing eternal reality. God either exists or not, and we must of necessity lay odds for or against him. If I wager for him, and He does not exist, there is no loss. If I wager for him and He exists, there is infinite gain. If I wager against him and he does not exist, there is neither loss nor gain. But if I wager against him and He in fact exists as the Resurrection proves, there is infinite loss. This is the single hypothesis where I am exposed to the loss of everything, including my own personal life. God's wisdom in Resurrection reality inspires us, instructs us, affirms us to make the wager which ensures us winning all, or at worse, losing nothing. St. Thomas enters the consequential wager and inspires us to follow him with the worshipping words, "My Lord and my God!" which we express over and again by singing almost incessantly, "Christ is Risen from the dead, trampling down death by death and to those in the tombs, bestowing life!"

Alleluia



**I am the sheepgate. All who came before me
were thieves and marauders whom the sheep
did not heed. I am the gate.**

**Whoever enters through me will be safe.
He will go in and out and find pasture. The thief
comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy.
I came that they might have life and have it
to the full.**

**I am the Good Shepherd;
the good shepherd lays down his life for the
sheep. The hired hand – who is no shepherd nor
owner of the sheep – catches sight of the wolf
coming and runs away, leaving the sheep to be
snatched and scattered by the wolf. That is
because he works for pay; he has no concern
for the sheep.**

**I am the Good Shepherd.
I know my sheep and my sheep know me. In
the same way that the Father knows me
and I know the Father; for the sheep I will give
my life. I have other sheep that do not
belong to this fold. I must lead them,
too, and they shall hear my voice.**

There shall be one flock and one shepherd.

**The Father loves me for this:
that I lay down my life to take it up again**

John 10: 7 – 17.

A Heavy Heart

Anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad
Proverbs 12: 25.

How often in our lives we pray, at least mentally, *Lord, grant me that tranquil courage that is content to wait patiently for your good word* Our heart is heavy so many times, Lord You know the things and circumstances that weigh it down, the cares, concerns and worries that we bear and how they heavily burden us. Anxiety can be so like a rock inside of us that, like a heart attack, it takes our breath away and carries all our energy off as on a strong wind and leaves us gasping, pained, even paralyzed momentarily, and certainly, fearful of the future

If we ever needed a good word, Lord, a word of comfort and encouragement, a sure message to relieve the pressures and remove the awful weight we so often bear, now is the time!

And yet, we do think how the heart of the Lord was troubled so many times when his listeners, even the disciples themselves could not seem to grasp his message of devotion and pure love. Perhaps, even more was his heart heavy as when He encountered those outside the Chosen People whose faith and devotion and belief was far deeper and stronger than that of those who inherited the richness of truth from heaven. How sorrowful must have been his heart and soul as He looked over the culture of thousands of years which immersed his own people in God's particular love for century upon century and yet did not produce the richness of faith sufficient enough to save their souls.

We do know the heart of the Saviour was troubled and burdened when in Gethsemane He knelt and prayed that his numbing burden might not have to be. Yet it was the Father's will that He bore the burden of the passion and of the fullness of the sacrifice of the Cross for us without ever uttering even a syllable of complaint. His was always to fulfill the will of the Father regarding our salvation.

In completing his earth-sent task, his heavy heart was alleviated by the result of his sacrifice. Now the man whom He created, dragged down by his own foolish sin, was again raised to the height of his created dignity. By that sublime act, Lord, you set us free! May we accept totally all that is necessary to associate ourselves with the Lord in elevating our lives to victorious joy in Christ!

Guest of Honor

To God be the glory forever
Romans 11: 36.

Just imagine opening a piece of impressive mail and finding an invitation that read: The President of the United States and his wife request the honor of your presence at a dinner in the White House honoring several foreign heads of state!

In preparation for such an affair, we would buy entirely new clothing, talk with excited anticipation with friends and when the day arrived, try to make the best impression so as to derive the most enjoyment out of the astounding event. Of course, after the special day, we would talk endlessly to acquaintances about the lavish meal and settings, the elegant surroundings and the interesting people. We would cherish in our thinking how honored we were to have been even considered to come into the august presence of such world famous and world renown personalities. We would find it difficult getting the thought out of our mind that we participated in an historic event in certainly an historic place. We had been called upon to witness and participate in an astounding event. We are so excited we want to make an impression on our hosts in the nation's singularly famous first home!

One far superior to any man or woman on earth requests the honor of your presence at his table each and every Sunday and holy day; but since we are so busy with our daily schedule most people muster up some interest for once a week while others ignore it altogether.

Do we plan ahead with great anticipation? Do we realize how our dignity is elevated and our cause advanced if our Creator God desires our presence? Do we somehow recognize our importance in the scheme of salvation if our God insists we join his company? Do we share the excitement of the special meal of Living Bread and Life-saving Blood with others?

If we would be honored at a White House invitation, how much greater should our dignity be felt when the God of Creation wants our presence each Sunday and holy day! The invitation our God issues is not for a once-in-a-lifetime event, but for ongoing sustenance for eternity!

He Cares

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints
Psalms 116: 15.

Soon after the devastating hurricane storm devastated the southern portion of our nation some time ago, a television interviewer asked the President of the United States after he visited the area to express solidarity with the victims, if the indescribable damage and overwhelming life toll shook his belief in God's Providence. The former president replied by telling of a 73 year-old man who had lost all he owned, all he toiled for his entire life. Through his tears, the man spoke with confidence: "Every physical possession I had is gone, but...I still have faith in God."

The news that thousands of people were affected and untold numbers buried in mud is disturbing and heartbreaking, to say the least. Such as the television interviewer raise the inevitable question: Does our God care?

Our Lord Jesus Christ has taught us that our heavenly Father observes the fall of even a sparrow from the sky, so we can be sure that He is aware of each person who suffers and dies in disasters such as this and He grieves. "Yet not a single sparrow falls to the ground without your Father's consent" Matthew 10: 29. He values each of us so greatly and lovingly that He sent his only-begotten Son to die on the cross for us. "It is precisely in this that God proves his love for us; that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Now that we have been justified by his blood, it is all the more certain that we shall be saved by him from God's wrath" Romans 5: 8, 9.

"As for you, every hair of your head has been counted, so do not be afraid of anything. You are worth more than an entire flock of sparrows. Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will acknowledge before my Father in heaven" Matthew 10: 31, 32.

And when followers of Christ are victims of such tragedy, family and friends can find comfort in the words, "Precious in the sight of God is the death of his saints" The word precious here means to convey of great significance, of great concern, of great value.

So when death and tragedy touches our lives, as it inevitably does, our Father God certainly does care and our response is to have continued and abiding faith in him. When loved ones die, faith in Christ keeps hope alive.

WISDOM! BE ATTENTIVE

Though the grave had been sealed, from the grave You arose, O Christ our God, our Life, and though the door had been locked, You appeared among the disciples, O Resurrection of all, thus You restored for us an upright spirit according to Your great mercy Troparion, Sunday of St. Thomas.

Thomas placed his own restless hand into Your life-giving side, O Christ God, and since You entered although the doors were locked, he cried out to You with the other apostles: "You are my Lord and my God!" Kontakion, Sunday of St. Thomas.

Great is the Lord and mighty in power: to His wisdom there is no end Prokimenon, Sunday of St. Thomas.

When the doors were closed and the disciples were gathered together, You suddenly appeared in their midst, O Jesus our Almighty God. You granted them peace and filled them with the Holy Spirit; You commanded them to wait and not depart from Jerusalem until they were clothed with power from on high. Therefore, we cry out to You, O Lord: Glory to You, our Light, our Resurrection, and our Peace Vesper Hymn, Sunday of St. Thomas.

Even though the doors were closed, You came to Your disciples, O Christ, and Thomas called the Twin, was not with them. Therefore, he did not believe what they told him. You did not deem him unworthy for his lack of faith, but in Your goodness, You confirmed his faith by showing him Your pure side and the wounds in Your hands and feet. He touched them, and when he saw You, he confessed You to be neither an abstract God nor merely human; and he cried out: My Lord and My God, glory to You! Vesper Hymn, Sunday of St. Thomas.

On the eighth day the Saviour came to the doubting disciples. He granted them peace and said to Thomas: O Apostle, come and touch My hands which were pierced by nails. How wonderful is this doubt of Thomas! It brought the hearts of believers to the knowledge of God. Therefore, he cried out with fear: My Lord and my God, glory to You! Vesper Hymn, Sunday of St. Thomas.

Did You Know That ...

- ...when you find yourself fading, close the eyes and realize friends are your energy?
- ...accepting loneliness or facing things alone is a very bad habit?
- ...people may forget what you said, but they will never forget how you made them feel?
- ...the best way to cheer yourself up is to cheer somebody else up?
- ...laughter is the shortest distance between two people?
- ...if you do not learn to laugh at troubles, you won't have anything to laugh at when you grow old?
- ...nobody ever died of laughter?
- ...if you read often, you will nurture your mind with great thoughts?
- ...there is much pleasure to be gained from useless knowledge?
- ...somewhere, something incredible is waiting to be made known?
- ...the most beautiful and inspiring thing we can experience is the mysterious?
- ...we ought use what talent we possess because the woods would be very silent if no birds sang except those that sang best?
- ...if you look inside yourself for the thing you can do well, you will be amazed at the happiness you uncover?
- ...although teachers open the door, you must enter by yourself?
- ...creative minds have always been known to survive any bad training?
- ...practice is the best of all instructors?
- ...we ought never be put off because we cannot do something well the first time?

IS SEEING REALLY BELIEVING?

On April 12, 1961, the Soviet Cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin made an orbit of the earth in a space capsule that would be considered less than primitive by today's standards. This event was a shock to our government and an opportunity for the atheistic rulers of the Soviet Union to spread some anti-religious propaganda. Upon his return to earth, Gagarin was quoted as saying: "I traveled the heavens and I didn't see God anywhere."

That statement touches upon a very real problem that many have with the existence of God: "I don't see, therefore, I don't believe." Do we really need to see to believe? Science tells us absolutely! You need proof and verification for everything. But there are many things we don't see, yet we believe in them. Would anyone dare say the wind doesn't exist? Although you can't really see it, we do feel the wind and its effects. In like manner, we feel God's presence as well.

The very definition of faith is to believe in what we do not see. The reward of faith is to, one day, see what we believe in. Yes, we all live for that day when our faith becomes knowledge.

The Apostle Thomas will always be remembered for his "Yuri Gagarin" approach to life. Somehow, he could not bring himself to believe that the Lord had risen until he finally was shown indisputable proof. Although we can't be given the visual proof that Thomas received, the testimony of the Gospels — the eyewitness accounts of those who knew Christ intimately — should be more than enough for us!