



This group of devout women carried the message to the Apostles that the Lord had Risen!

Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Sunday of Myrrhbearers

April 29, 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!"

+++ The next Pirohi Sale will be **Saturday, May 12**. Please secure orders to assure its success. We will also be having a Memorial Day Bake Sale on **Friday, May 25** at which all the rolls will be available as well as some specialty cookies. The final Pirohi Sale for this season will be **Saturday, June 1**.

+++ We are pleased Eleanor Korba offered the candles for the 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 today 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, May 6 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, [REDACTED], Candles, [REDACTED], Food Coupons, [REDACTED], Kitchen, [REDACTED], Holyday, [REDACTED], Resurrection of our Lord, [REDACTED], for a total of \$[REDACTED]. We express our profound gratitude to the parishioner communicants who offered their God-given treasure and labored for the sake of the Lord and the good of our parish. God bless and reward you good and faithful souls! The attendance was 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, Anna Zacharyczuk, Eleni Pallas, Debra Szmaida, Paul Szmaida, Eleanor Korba and Pani Buletza.

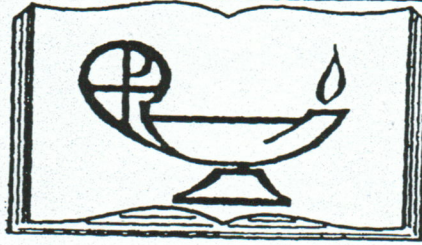
+++ We make a **PENNIES FROM HEAVEN** Canister available for our faithful to bring in pennies for our altar and its appointments. We are already in receipt of [REDACTED] from this apostolate. Even your pennies can help and are a blessing to our parish.

+++ For the expansion of our much needed parochial facilities, our parish pledge support to date totals [REDACTED]. As we thank the Lord for inspiring generosity in the hearts of our faithful, we also thank the donors for accepting the challenge of the Lord in building up His Body. We cordially invite and look forward to receiving additional and increased pledges from all our devoted parishioners.

+++ Please be certain to see 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!

+++ **The Clothing Drive is a permanent on-going project in our parish. Please bring any type of clothing and fabrics along with stuffed animals and shoes for the benefit of our parish. The bags can be left in the vestibule or on the front porch of the rectory. Please invite your friends and neighbors to assist us in disposing of unwanted clothing, shoes and fabrics.**

LORD



TEACH
US

God's Freedom

If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed John 8:36.

If you hold to my teachings, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free John 8: 31.

Wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, men's souls are set free 2 Corinthians 3: 7.

I, the Lord your God, brought you out of Egypt so that you should no longer be slaves. I broke the power that held you down and let you walk with your head held high Leviticus 26: 13.

You have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor Isaiah 9: 4.

You were once slaves of sin and have become obedient from the heart...and having been set free from sin have become slaves of righteousness Romans 6: 17.

We should no longer be slaves to sin, because anyone who has died has been freed from sin Romans 6: 6.

I give you my assurance, everyone who lives in sin is the slave of sin. No slave has a permanent place in the family, but the son has a place there forever. That is why, if the son frees you, you will really be free John 8: 34 - 36.

Wisdom, Be Attentive!

The noble Joseph took down your most pure body from the cross. He wrapped it in a clean shroud, and with fragrant spices, laid it in burial in a new grave. But You arose in three days, O Lord, bestowing great mercy upon the world Troparion, Sunday of the Myrrh-Bearing Women.

The angel stood by the grave and cried out to the women bearing ointment: "Ointment is for the dead, but Christ has shown himself not subject to corruption. So now cry out: 'The Lord is risen, bestowing great mercy upon the world!'" Troparion, Sunday of the Myrrh-Bearing Women.

When You descended to death, O Immortal Life, You destroyed the Abyss through the radiance of your divinity; and when You raised the dead from the depth of the earth, all the heavenly powers cried out: "O Giver of Life, Christ our God, glory to You!" Troparion, Sunday of the Myrrh-Bearing Women.

By your resurrection, O Christ God, You told the women bearing ointment to rejoice and you stilled the weeping of Eve, the first mother. You instructed the women to announce to your apostles, "The Saviour is risen from the tomb!" Kontakion, Sunday of the Myrrh-Bearing Women.

Although You descended to the grave, O Immortal One, You destroyed the power of death; You arose again as a Victor, O Christ God! You announced to the women bearing ointment, "Rejoice." You gave peace to your apostles and resurrection to the fallen Kontakion, Sunday of the Myrrh-Bearing Women.

Save your people, O Lord, and bless your inheritance Prokimenon, Sunday of the Myrrh-Bearing Women.

Receive the Body of Christ! Drink the Source of immortality! Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia! Communion Hymn, Sunday of the Myrrh-Bearing Women.

Eternal Life

When Christ our Lord died upon the cross and was laid in the tomb, how dark it seemed for the world! On the third day, the holy women came to the grave to anoint the Lord's body. They would have been satisfied to have had our Lord's cold lifeless body placed in their tender care even for a short time. But instead of dead hope, they found a living reality, Christ was alive! Our Lord had risen from the dead!

What if there was no living Christ? No Son of God? No Resurrection? St. Paul posed that question years ago at the inspired direction of the Spirit of God. His answer was, "...and if Christ was not raised, your faith is worthless. You are still in your sins and those who have fallen asleep in Christ are the deadest of the dead. If our hopes in Christ are limited to this life only, we are the most pitiable of people" 1 Corinthians 15: 17 - 19.

There is a shadow of death hovering over the very greatest of our earthly pleasures. Through our gift of intellect and human experience, we all know that life on earth has to end. No matter how many more years we may think we still have left to us, death will be too soon, far too soon, when it does come.

The modern pagan, the real pagans who have not heard of the true God, have some god or gods in whom they hope and trust. They will do all in their power to forget this dreadful thought of death, but they are reminded of it every day of their earthly lives. To live with this thought, that all they shall be in seventy, eighty years' time is a bucket of lifeless and useless dust, must be an anticipation of the hell they may also have to face after their deaths.

We do love life, sometimes too inordinately; we too want to live on. Life is good and we want it to continue. We know this cannot be on this fragile and limited earth. But thanks to the merciful revelation given to us in our faith, we know that an infinite love of God prepares us for the future. We know that Christ, our Lord, by His life, death and Resurrection, has made us adopted children of the eternal heavenly Father.

We know we have an eternal life awaiting us when we depart this life and for the Christian who do his best to remain a true follower and disciple of Christ, our Saviour and Redeemer, death is not the end, but the beginning of real and enduring life. The grave is not our goal at all, simply the key which opens the door to eternal life and never-ending happiness for us.

Let us ever be grateful to our God again and again for this feast of the Resurrection. Our personal Resurrection is not far away even for the youngest among us. We have a few more

Calvaries to climb in the meantime, but what are they when we see glorious victory on the horizon?

The risen Christ is not only the Master of life but of death as well. He knows all and provides answers for all. He teaches us not only by word and deed, but also by example. He died not only to save us by His death, but also to remove the sting of our own death. Death can no longer kill. In fact, death is given a real and distinct purpose, to permit us to enter into our own glory and that of our God with Whom we shall reign together for all eternity. Down through the ages the risen Christ stands at the open grave, our own, that of our loved ones, to make bearable and meaningful our transfer to eternal life.

Humanity has another question, that of suffering and sorrow. The question is constantly asked, "Why must I suffer?" Christ our Lord suffered innocently. No mortal person can ever know or understand how much our Lord really suffered, but we can gradually grow to grasp its meaning.

Christ imbued suffering with meaning by His passion, death and Resurrection. Before the Lord gave us the answer, suffering was sterile, a hopeless sort of series of events. We may even now not know exactly "why" we must suffer but we do know that suffering is "Christ-related," therefore "Christ-sanctified."

Sorrow must not discourage us. The passing sorrow of Golgotha gives way to the permanent joy of the glorious and triumphal Resurrection. The number of tears shed here upon earth can become the number of pearls invested in heaven.

Ill health need not bring on a useless existence if we permit Christ to touch the broken body with His pierced hand. A stroke need not be the end for a heart united with the spear-wounded heart of the Redeemer and Saviour. A fevered brow immobilized on a pillow of pain, perhaps for years or even a lifetime, can redeem with Christ whose head was crowned with piercing thorns. The Resurrection provides profound insights and explanation for everything! Christ has the answers! Our risen Saviour calls to each of us, "Look to me!"

Today grace is opened and for it has risen a Sun which will never set; a Sun Who creates new life. This new Sun is the crucified One, the Son of God.

Today as we celebrate the Resurrection, may our prayer be, "My risen Lord and Saviour, I experience Your strong protection; I see You stand among the graves today. I hear distinctly, "I am the Way, the Life and the Resurrection"; I sense You draw me to Yourself. And all the burdens I have carried sadly grow light as blossoms on a spring day. My Cross becomes a staff, supporting me. I journey gladly to this celebration of Your Resurrection!"

THE CENTER OF OUR FAITH

St. Paul once wrote about what was first in our priorities in faith commitment to our Saviour: *"For I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures; that he was buried; that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:4).* When he says *"in accordance with the Scriptures,"* St. Paul meant that we did not completely understand the books of the Law and Prophets from the Old Testament Scriptural revelation to us until the time of Christ's Resurrection. After His Resurrection, then, Jesus met with two of His disciples on the road to Emmaus and *"beginning with Moses and all the other prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in the Scriptures"* (Luke 24:27). The mystery of Christ's death, burial, and Resurrection are the very foundation and center of our faith and are called the Paschal Mystery because they happened during the Jewish Feast of the Passover. Pascha is the both the Greek and Old Slavonic word of reference for this feast. In the time of Moses, our God freed His people from slavery and idolatry to a foreign king by striking down the first-born in the land of Egypt, but **"passing over"** the homes of the faithful Israelites, which were marked with the blood of the sacrificed lamb. Our God allowed His first born Son to die on the Cross for our salvation, not from political slavery, but from the power of sin and death.

The blood of Christ marked the Cross and sanctified it, so that every time we are signed with the Cross and receive the Blood of Christ in Communion, our God **"passes over"** our weaknesses to grant us eternal life. This is the actual pivotal center of our blessed faith.

Therefore, then, we must all read and study the Scripture in light of this Paschal mystery. The Pontifical Biblical Commission encourages us to read God's Revelation to us in this light and from this perspective. *"The Paschal event, the death and Resurrection of Jesus, has established a radically new historical context, which sheds fresh light upon the ancient texts and causes them to undergo a change in meaning. In particular, certain texts which in ancient times had to be thought of as hyperbole (for example, the oracle where God, speaking of a son of David, promised to establish his throne 'forever.' 2 Samuel 7:12,13; 1 Chronicles 17:11-14), these texts must now be taken literally, because "Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more" (Romans 6:9)...as a general rule, we can define the spiritual sense, as understood by the Christian faith, as the meaning expressed by the Christian faith, as the meaning expressed by the biblical texts when read, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, in the context of the Paschal mystery of Christ and of the new exuberant life which flows from it. This context truly exists"* (The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church, B2). The salvation introduced by the salutary death and glorious Resurrection of Christ truly exists. St. Paul further writes, *"Our Paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed"* (1 Corinthians 5:7). This is simply a passage read on Holy and Great Saturday morning as the center of our faith.

Our profoundly important faith in the Resurrection is expressed throughout the year in the Divine Liturgy, especially when it is celebrated on the Lord's Day, Sunday. The changeable parts always glorify the Resurrection. The Troparion of Tone 1 exclaims, *"You, O Saviour, arose on the third day, granting life to the world...Glory to Your Resurrection, O Christ."* The Troparion of Tone 3 tells us, *"The Lord has delivered us*

from the depths of the Abyss, and has granted great mercy to the world." This of course, refers to the Icon of the Resurrection, showing Christ descending into the Old Covenant place of the righteous dead known to us in the Hebrew language as *Sheol*. He takes Adam and Even, who through their disobedience brought death into the world. Personally, touchingly, by the hand He leads them forth to life once again. Tone 4 reminds us that "...the joyful message of the Resurrection was heard by the faithful women from the angel." In Tone 5 we sing that the Word of God "...willed to ascend the cross as man and to suffer death and to raise the dead by His glorious Resurrection." The Resurrection, thereof is seen in many different ways by each of the Troparia, as the Church solemnly celebrates the Resurrection every "eighth day." Sunday is the first day of the week, which is seven plus one. Since our God rested from His work of creation on the seventh day (Saturday), on the Sunday of the Pascha, He began a new creation by His Resurrection. He raises to Himself, to enjoy His own dignity, a new and elevated humanity, no longer bound by the stricture of ancient sin, but redeemed and now free. If we celebrate the Resurrection every Sunday, what makes Pascha special? It is its annual association with the Passover, celebrated at the first full moon after the vernal equinox, the first day of Spring. On this historical remembrance, we solemnly retell the whole story of salvation through our worship and ritual. Through this we have a powerful experience of the life bestowed upon us by the Lord that sheds light by the power of the Resurrection filling our lives. On the Paschal feast, we sing, "It is the day of Resurrection. O People, let us be enlightened by it....Christ, our God has brought us from earth to heaven" (Irmos, Ode 1, Paschal Canon).

We are no longer, therefore, citizens of this world alone, but destined, as in the beginning of creation, to triumph with the Lord for all eternity. We are adopted by God and He imputes to us His own dignity and everlasting life. We, too, are risen and elevated to a new experience of Resurrection life. We participate with Christ in the life of the Blessed Trinity. The grace of God is upon us in a new and irrevocable way, making us His inheritance in a way not even the overwhelming power of the devil can change or alter. With Christ we are victors. The soul of the believer is now overwhelmed with its newly perceived and understood dignity. It cannot contain itself and sings out with joyous heart, lips, and mind that our loving Father has so favored us. The believer can only respond to such lavish exaltation with faith commitment and enduring and unchanging love.

Every celebration in the life of our blessed Church is the celebration of the Paschal Mystery: when we were baptized and chrismated, we died to sin to live in Christ (Romans 6:3-11), as we are reminded in the Epistle prescribed for the sacramental Mystery of Baptism. When we confess our sins and are reconciled to our God and to His Body, the Church, we receive as it were, a second baptism, as the Byzantine Fathers remind us. When we are anointed at times of sickness, we express our faith that through our suffering, we are united with Christ, the anointed One of God, and so attain eternal health and life. By Matrimony and by Holy Orders, we died to our selfish lives to live for the people of God. That is why St. John Chrysostom tells us, "For 'as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord.' The Paschal celebration is the proclamation of the death of the Lord. For the offering made today and the one carried out yesterday and the one made every day is the one and the same sacrifice happening that day of the week. This offering is not holier than that, and this is not less worthy than this; rather they are one and the same, equally awesome and salvific" (Orations Against The Judaizers 3,4). "There is always the same grace of the Spirit, it is always a Passover" (Homily 5 on 1 Timothy).



When the Holy Myrrhbearers came to the sepulcher, this is what they beheld; only the outward trappings of the Risen Christ. His Holy Shroud remained in the space of burial, the Redeemer having triumphed over our immortal enemy, death. The essential Truth was no longer present, only some illusions of Him.

In the same way, there are those about us who claim to belong to the Saviour, who claim to carry His most Holy Name of Christian, who are in fact not believers at all. Outwardly they appear to be Christian and even designate themselves as such; inwardly they are far from the Truth. Many outside the comfort, warmth, truth and security of our precious Orthodox faith do not even believe in God. To us Orthodox it seems incredible to call oneself Christian without being certain not only that God the Father is a reality, but that Christ is His Divine Son. This we can know and understand as well as believe only by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Some even tenaciously cling to Christ's name without being baptized. Many outside the unity of our Church declare that while they "believe" in God, they do not believe in a "personal" kind of God, whatever that means. Or they say that God is really just "nature", which after all, is merely a somewhat polite and reticent way of expressing the atheistic viewpoint. Among some it is considered rather naive and unsophisticated to believe in God and His revealed truth as we do, and it naturally follows that people of this sort also reject the ideas of heaven and hell, of personal holiness and responsibility, sin and its consequences. Once a sect decides for each individual's right to interpret Scripture privately, it is automatically stuck with whatever questionable theology emerges from any individual imaginary mind. The Risen Saviour is out of the picture, only the extraneous trappings remain.

Did You Know That ...

...experts are people who make their mistakes quietly?

...the key to willpower is wantpower because if you want something badly enough you will find the willpower to achieve it?

...to err is human but when the eraser wears out ahead of the pencil, you're over doing it?

...love is so powerful that you can leave it behind when you die?

...the reputation of experts is sometimes based on what they know, but more often on what others do not know?

...the trouble with the average family budget is that at the end of the month there's too much money left?

...to listen well is as powerful a means of influence as to talk well, and is as essential to all true conversation?

...we have to learn how to be our own best friends because we fall too easily into the trap of being our own worst enemies?

...an expert knows all the answers if you ask the right questions?

...you should not compromise yourself because you are all you have?

...doing the right thing at the right time makes all the difference between winning and losing?

...having a sense of humor means accepting a setback and realizing the world has not come to an end?

...the worst thing about an argument is that it always disrupts a discussion?

...mountains appear loftier the nearer they are approached but leaders resemble them not in this particular?

...the most difficult things to handle in life are failure and success?

WHY WAS THE STONE ROLLED AWAY?

There can be no denying the important role the Myrrh-bearing Women played in the Resurrection narrative. Matthew's Gospel tells us that because of concerns expressed by the Jewish Sanhedrin to Pontius Pilate, Roman soldiers were sent to guard the tomb of Christ, lest some "grave robbers" would come and steal His Body and perpetuate the "myth" that He had risen from the dead. These men were trained to do whatever was necessary to carry out their orders. The Myrrh-bearing Women had their own "orders." Their assignment was to anoint the Body of their fallen Master so that, according to Jewish law, proper burial could be given to it. One can only wonder what would have transpired if the Myrrh-bearers had confronted the Roman soldiers!

Thankfully, they did not, for the guards were nowhere to be found. Furthermore, their chief concern of "Who will roll away the stone for us?" was eliminated. To their surprise, when the Myrrh-bearers arrived at the tomb, they discovered that the stone had already been rolled away!

The removal of the stone did not happen to accommodate the Lord's exit from his three-day grave. On the contrary, the stone was removed so that the WITNESSES — and us as well — could clearly see into the tomb and gaze upon its vast emptiness. The Myrrh-bearers were able to follow the command of the angel and "... see where they laid Him." Indeed, CHRIST HAD RISEN!

Because of their faithful service to Jesus, not only did the Myrrh-bearing Women see the empty tomb — they were privileged to be among the first who encountered the Risen Lord Himself.

Icon by Austin Kachek - Marville, NJ

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