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Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Sunday of Myrrh-Bearing Women

May 3, 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

+++ We sincerely thank all the good souls who labored this past week to make yesterday's monthly Pirohi Sale a success. We Invoke on them and their loved ones the generous blessing of good health for Many & Blessed Years, Christ Is Risen!

+++ Next Sunday is Mother's Day and special prayers will be offered during the Divine Liturgy on our beloved mothers. Following the Divine Liturgy, we will have a Memorial service for our departed mothers.

Please be certain you are with us as blessed flowers are distributed to honor our living mothers. We invite our faithful to remember both living and departed mothers in prayer and a seven day light.

+++ 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.

+++ Next Sunday at 9: 15 AM, we will have a Memorial Service for the repose of the soul of +Michael Wanca, on the anniversary of his death, beloved father of our good parishioner, Debra Szmaida and Michael Wanca Jr. We pray the gracious Lord continues to comfort Debra, Michael and their loved ones in their loss and that He creates for the soul of +Michael blessed repose and Eternal Memory, Christ is Risen!

+++ 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: Tithe Offering, ~~████████~~ Candles, ~~████████~~ Food Coupons, ~~████████~~ Christian Fellowship, ~~████████~~ for a total of ~~████████~~. 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: Debra Szmaida, Father Lucas, Pani Lucas, Kent Pasquino, Pani Buletza, Robert Gorbich and +Paul Szmaida.

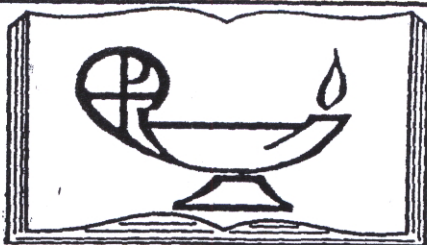
+++ We make a PENNIES FROM HEAVEN Canister available for our faithful to bring in pennies for our altar and its appointments. We are already in receipt of ~~████████~~ from this apostolate. Even your pennies can help and are a blessing to our parish.

+++ For the expansion of our much needed parochial facilities, our parish pledge support to date totals ~~████████~~. 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.

+++ The offering for the Resurrection of our Lord received to date amounts to ~~████████~~. We thank those who take seriously their conscientious support of the parish and its temporal needs and ask the Lord's blessings on them in rich abundance. We look forward to receiving generous donations from those who were away or did not yet turn in their Victory Offering.

LORD



TEACH
US

Eternal Life

My health fails, my spirits droop, yet God remains! He is the strength of my heart; he is mine forever! Psalms 73: 26.

With all my heart I will praise you. I will give glory to your name forever Psalms 86: 12.

But I cried out to him, O God, you live forever and forever. Do not let me die half through my years! In ages past you laid the foundations of the earth, and made the heavens with your hands! They shall perish but you will go on forever. They will grow old like worn-out clothing, and you will change them like a man putting on a new shirt and throwing away the old one! But you yourself never grow old. You are forever and your years never end. But our families will continue, generation after generation will be preserved by your protection Psalms 102: 24 – 28.

He keeps his eye upon you as you come and you go and always guards you Psalms 121: 18.

Harmony is as refreshing as the dew on Mount Hermon, on the mountains of Israel. And God has pronounced this eternal blessing on Jerusalem, even life forevermore Psalms 133: 3.

I will praise you, my God and King, and bless your name each day and forever Psalms 145: 1, 2.

The godly have a refuge when they die but the wicked are crushed by their sins Proverbs 14: 32.

PSALM 70:17-24



God, You have taught me from my youth
and I proclaim Your wonders still.

Now that I am old and gray-headed,
do not forsake me, God.
Let me tell of Your power to all ages,
praise Your strength and justice to the skies,
tell of You who have worked such wonders.
O God, who is like You?

You have burdened me with bitter troubles
but You will give back my life.
You will raise me from the depths of the earth;
You will exalt me and console me again.

So I will give You thanks on the lyre
for Your faithful love, my God.
To You will I sing with the harp
to You, the Holy One of Israel.
When I sing to You my lips shall rejoice
and my soul, which You have redeemed.

And all the day long my tongue
shall tell the tale of Your justice:
for they are put to shame and disgraced,
all those who seek to harm me.



**The upright man
is glorified
in the Resurrection
of Jesus Christ!**

Myrrhbearers

About the beginning of his thirty-second year, when going throughout Galilee, preaching and working miracles, many women who received his grace left their homes and followed after him. They ministered to him out of their own possessions, even until his crucifixion and entombment; and afterwards, never losing faith on the occasion of his crucifixion or fearing the wrath of the Jewish temple rulers. They came to the sepulcher very early in the morning, bearing myrrh-oils to complete the burial prayer procedures since his hasty burial precluded these.

Of those whose names are known, first of all, is the most holy Virgin Mary who in Scripture is called "Mary, the mother of James and Joseph" Matthew 27: 56; Mark 15: 40, the sons of Joseph from his first marriage, so she is therefore, their step-mother. She is accompanied by Mary Magdalene, Mary the wife of Clopas; Joanna, wife of Chouze, a steward of Herod Antipas; Salome, the mother of the sons of Zebedee; Martha & Mary, the sisters of Lazarus, and Susanna. As for the

names of the rest of them, the evangelists have maintained silence. (Matthew 27: 55, 56; 28: 1 – 10; Mark 15: 40, 41; Luke 8: 1 – 3; 23:55 - 24: 11, 22, 24; John 19: 25; 20: 11- 18; Acts of the Apostles 1: 14).

Together with them we celebrate the secret disciples of the Saviour, Joseph and Nicodemus. Of them, Nicodemus was probably a Jerusalemite, a prominent leader among the Jews and of the Pharasaic order, learned in the law and instructed in Scripture. He believed in Christ when at the beginning of our Saviour's teaching ministry of salvation and redemption, he came to him by night. At that time, he bought some hundred pounds of myrrh/oils and an aromatic mixture of aloes and spices out of reverence and love and respect for the Lord (John 19: 39).

Joseph, who was from the city of Arimathea, was wealthy and noble and one of the counselors in Jerusalem. He went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus and together with Nicodemus, provided burial according to Jewish custom. Since time did not permit the preparation of another tomb, he placed the Lord's body in his own tomb which was hewn already out of rock as the Evangelist witnesses, "...and laid it in his own new tomb which had been hewn from a formation of rock" Matthew 27: 60, "for the tomb was close at hand" John 19: 42.

Prophets

A prophet is one who is called which means one who speaks on behalf of others. The prophets of Israel were called by our heavenly Father to impart his message to his chosen people. Lest there be questions, Isaiah identified the source of his words, "Hear, O heavens and listen, O earth, for the Lord speaks..." Isaiah 1: 2. Jeremiah began, "The word of the Lord came to me..." Jeremiah 1: 4. Ezekiel says, "Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites" Ezekiel 2: 3. And Habakkuk told the people, "The oracle which a prophet received in a vision" Habakkuk 1: 1.

The work of the prophets in the Old Testament is compared to what our God expects from his bishops and priests today. Our understanding of the priestly prophetic vocation is nothing extraordinary. The admonition and command "Go out to the whole world and proclaim the good news to all creation" is plain enough. The message must be convincing and enunciated with zeal so that souls hearing it are convinced it applies to them. Their response must be such that lives are altered for the glory of God.

For priests and bishops, the knowledge consists in an absolutely clear understanding acquired through light of prayer for God's will to be manifested.

There has to be an absolutely certain conviction of truth and veracity, of no chance for deception, that the message advanced is the truth of God for salvation of souls. This abiding confidence is not born of presumption, yet it is so strong, so much a part of the modern day prophet.

And it must be the same for all that is taught by the Church of Jesus Christ. The prophet, the priest or bishop today must be willing to so advance the truth of the Lord without deviation that they are willing to lay down their lives for it. Even if the listener insists the prophet is all wrong, he must never change conviction because the normal development of grace upon grace shows the end to be in God's purposeful hands.

Of fundamental conviction for priests and bishops is to teach man that our Lord's promise, "If any man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him and will come to him and make our abode in him" is held out to all souls, regardless of calling and is the perfect realization of his prayer and ours: "Your kingdom come." The immediate objective is to sanctify the faith community by bringing to them by force of example and word that our heavenly Father desires with an ardent desire to become one spirit with them and that is life of union, far from being incompatible with their state in the world, is the one thing necessary for upon it depends the fruitfulness of an active life in Christ.

If man would but realize our heavenly Father holds out to him grace not only sufficient for salvation, but for holiness, how differently he would act. Our God yearns to exalt man for himself and yet man persists in groveling in the dust of the earth. Nor is any excuse feasible; distractions of the duties of one's state in life; temptations of the world which undoubtedly abound; lack of appropriate knowledge how to live a successful spiritual life, lack of time because of the press of legitimate duties. How often does man ask himself, "Was there anyone more ignorant than I? What other distractions of the world, of seeking an education to prepare for a successful earthly life, or running a home for upright family living?"

The trouble at the root of every opposing argument is lack of good will. With it, all is possible; without it, nothing good happens. It is the lone and bare essential our heavenly Father asks; if denied, even He cannot act in our lives, so powerful is our indifference. But finding it, He will pour into the soul that peace which is himself, promised to all men of good will, for which the angels sang on that first Nativity night, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men of good will." This sublime hymn of praise contained not only the promise to well-disposed souls of all generations, but the essence of the mission of the new-born Redeemer, who left to his disciples as their legacy, his own peace, "My peace I give to you, peace I leave with you. Not as the

world gives do I give to you." And then, once again, repetitive affirmation, "...your joy no man shall take from you."

Can our priests and bishops truthfully say to themselves, could they ask today as the prophets of old, whose office and responsibility, indeed, in dignity and privilege they possess, "The Lord said to me...?" And then, thus, do their actions identify them of being aware of the awesome dignity they possess of being leaders and teachers of salvation? Or are they satisfied with their perceived status as simply, "liturgical functionaries?" Apparently in so many cases we like to excuse ourselves and the Lord's message; we explain, is directed to others. Are we reinforcing the truth to our priests and bishops that they must with firm conviction permit their lives to express the expectation of our God for the salvation of his chosen people?

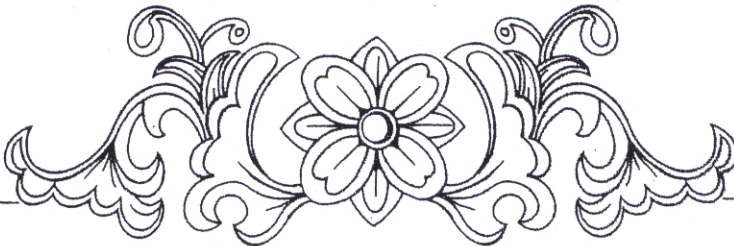
And then, convinced of the vocation of our priests and bishops, do we ourselves as Orthodox believers take that message seriously and live it? Do we seriously apply the prophetic message to our own lives so that we are transformed? This is what the ancient prophets did and it is what modern day prophets must also do. And last but not least, this is the affirming positive response believers in today's world must manifest if souls are to be saved. Let us listen to and apply what our prophets are teaching us! .

A Special Prayer for the Resurrection

Dear Lord, make us aware,
that the Saviour died
and He was nailed to a cross
and crucified
and gloriously rose
in triumph from death
not to redeem just a chosen few
but to save all who ask
for forgiveness from You.

The Waking Earth

The waking earth in springtime
reminds us it is true
That nothing really ever dies
that is not born anew.
So trust God's all-wise wisdom
and doubt the Father never,
For in His heavenly kingdom,
there is nothing lost forever.



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.

Did You Know That ...

...the secret of happiness is not to expect?

...in order to live freely and happily, you must sacrifice boredom?

...to find out what one is fitted to do and to secure an opportunity to do it are the keys to happiness and fulfillment?

...right thoughts, right efforts and right intentions inevitably bring about right results?

...the doors we open and close each day decide the lives we live?

...we ought to do what we can with what we have where we are?

...welcome whatever comes to you, but do not long for anything else?

...our riches consist not in the extent of our possessions, but in the fewness of our wants?

...real riches are the riches possessed inside?

...if we believe life is worth living, our belief will help create the fact?

...you ought forget regret, or life is yours to miss?

...we must be true to God, to your word and to your friend?

...patience in one moment of anger, will escape a hundred days of sorrow?

...you should never look down on anybody unless you are helping him up?

...being kind to others is also the greatest kindness you can do for yourself as well?

...when you are content to be simply yourself and do not compare or compete, everybody will respect you?

...where there is love, there is life?

TRUE HEROINES

The story of the Myrrh-Bearing Women is found in St. Mark's account of Christ's Resurrection. We read how ". . . when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him." (Mark 16:1) The women knew that Jesus, because the time of the coming of the Sabbath was rapidly approaching, was hastily placed in a tomb by Joseph of Arimathea. A proper burial was necessary; His Body had to be anointed according to the rituals and prescriptions of the Law. Often in our attempt to praise the Myrrh-Bearers for their devoted love for their Lord and their willingness to serve Him - even in death - we overlook another equally important characteristic of these amazing women: THEIR BRAVERY.

As we ponder this astounding tale, we must remember what a tense time this must have been in Jerusalem. The Apostles had fled and went into seclusion when Christ was arrested - and for good reason. In the crazed climate of hatred, it would be logical to assume that anyone associated with Jesus might find their own lives at risk. Furthermore, the tomb was guarded by an elite band of Roman soldiers with a task to perform. Anyone attempting to interfere with the execution of their orders would likely suffer dire consequences. Surely the Myrrh-Bearers knew this, but still, they pressed on, determined to fulfill their obligation and duty to their Master and Friend. Imagine their surprise when they reached their destination ". . . very early in the morning, on the first day of the week." (Mark 16:2) The stone to the tomb was rolled away! The tomb was empty! Indeed, Christ has risen! Yes, the heroism of the Myrrh-Bearing Women was rewarded, for they were the first witnesses to the Resurrection.



*Front icon by Nataliya Zharsky
from The Prosopon School of Iconology*