

ΗΑΓΙΑ

ΦΩΤΕΙΝΗ



Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Sunday of the Samaritan Woman

May 17, 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

+++ The sign-up sheet for both the Web Site and Bulletin sponsors is on the bulletin board in the kitchen. Please sign up as soon as possible. Do NOT make payment until your sign-up month has arrived. This will make it easier for Father to keep track of payments. Thanks in advance to all who support the parish in this way.

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

+++ We offer thanks to the Blessed Trinity for inspiring generosity in the souls of our faithful and the blessing of abundant grace in our midst with the offering received this past week-end: Tithe Offering, \$██████; Candles, ██████; Food Coupons, ██████; Christian Fellowship, ██████; Pennies From Heaven, ██████; Kitchen, ██████; May Bulletin ██████; Camp; Nazareth Raffle, ██████ 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 Szmajda, Father Lucas, Breanna Sorochka, Pani Lucas, Kent Pasquino, Elizabeth Simon, Nina Harrison, Kyra Choti, Pani Buletza and +Paul Szmajda.

+++ 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.

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

+++ We thank all who responded to our invitation to remember in prayer with a lighted candle the living and departed mothers of our parish. God bless you devoted souls!

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

+++ Please see Marilyn Korba TODAY who has drawing tickets for the Family Day Raffle at Camp Nazareth, our diocesan youth facility and conference center.

+++ Today we will honor the marriage anniversary celebrants at the Divine Liturgy and next Sunday, the birthday celebrants for this month will be remembered.

+++ May all glory, adoration and worship be accorded our God in the Holy Trinity by all the faithful of our parish with one mind, one soul and one heart each day of the week!

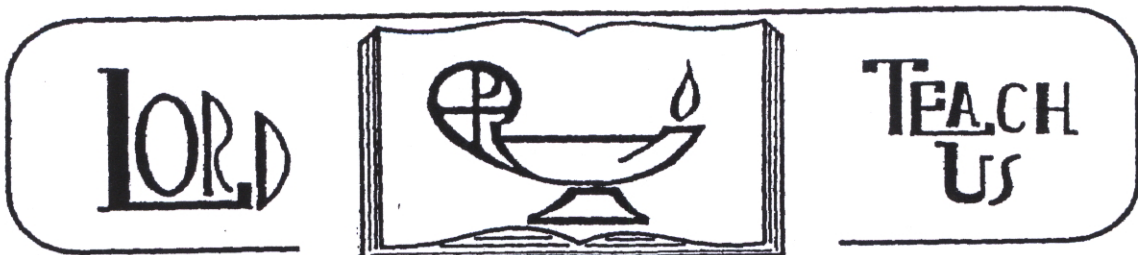
He Lives In Me

He lives in me, I know He does,
He guides my steps, and through His eyes
I see the beauty of the days,
The earth, the rivers and the skies.
Throughout the stillness of the night,
I am at peace because I feel
His presence deep within my soul,
And never doubt that He is real.

He lives in me . . . what miracle,
That made from only humble clay,
This heart of mine can reach right up,
And touch His own, each time I pray.

His ways are wiser than my own,
And so within His loving hands,
I place my little hopes and dreams,
Because He truly understands.

Nor will I fear what lies ahead,
Before His light all shadows fade,
In His good time shall come to pass,
The plans for me that He has made.
And so I need no tongue to speak,
No ears to hear, no eyes to see,
My needs are well provided for,
. . . Because I know God lives in me!



Discouraged

Peace is what I leave you; it is my own peace that I give to you. I do not give it as the world does. Do not be worried and upset; do not be afraid. You heard me say to you, I am leaving, but I will come back to you John 14: 27.

And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character, and character, hope Romans 5: 3, 4.

Weeping may result for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning Psalms 30: 5.

I will bless the Lord at all times. His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul makes its boast in the Lord; let the afflicted hear and be glad. O magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt his name together! Psalms 34: 1 – 3.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven Matthew 5: 3.

We are troubled on every side, yet not discouraged; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed 2 Corinthians 4: 8, 9.

Therefore, do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all 2 Corinthians 4: 16, 17.

This makes us very glad, even though now you are sad because you have troubles of many kinds, but they are only for a very short time 1 Peter 1: 6.

THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA

No place in all Palestine was dearer to the ancient Hebrew heart and soul, at least during the early period of national life than Sichern and its very lovely physical characteristics. Abraham and Sara first encamped here and built an altar to the Lord God Almighty amid the oak trees that covered the plain and hillsides. Jacob purchased the field thus consecrated, built a well for his numerous family and flocks and bequeathed both, as a special inheritance, to Joseph; for from there Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers and there his remains were afterward buried with solemn pomp by Joshua. On the very shoulder of Mount Gerazim, on which stood one half of the people when they swore perpetual fidelity to their God, is situated in modern Nablous, which has succeeded to the populous Sichern of the New Testament era. The place was revered as the cradle of the nation. At Sichern, Roboam was crowned king, there, too, the ten tribes withdrew their allegiance from him and his father's house. Beneath the oaks of Sichern, Jacob buried the idolatrous images and amulets that his wives stole from Laban. It was an evil seed, planted in hallowed ground, and fated to bear, in after years, a fruitful and lasting crop of religious and political divisions. The neighboring Samaria became the capital of the northern kingdom, giving its name to Sichern and then entire territory of the separated broken away tribes. When these were swept into captivity by Shalmanezzer, they were replaced by a Babylonian colony, which intermarried with the remaining natives, and formed a population as mixed in religious belief as in blood, and ever ready to adopt the gods of their foreign masters. They played a most treacherous part during the Machabean struggle, aiding Antiochus to crush the Jewish faith and national identity. Hence the irreconcilable hatred with which the Jews justly regarded all that bore the name of Samaritan, and the apparent ever-eagerness of Christ to use Samaritans in his parables as examples of virtue and fidelity to God's law and revealed commandments.

To the historical Sichern, situated, as it was, on the great highway between Judea and Galilee, our Lord was led in the first year of his public ministry and few weeks after the celebration of the Passover and privileged conversations with Nicodemus.

It was about the month of May. The barley harvest was over and there are 'four months' before the wheat harvest. Thus our Lord and his disciples had to pass through the garden of

Palestine at its most appealing season. What this still enchanting area must have been at that time, we may only conjecture from the enthusiastic praise of ancient writers and even of Mohammed himself, who affirms the "the mountains of Mablous" to be the only spot in the Holy Land most beloved of Allah. The rich bottom lands abound in springs of purest water; and the modern city nestles at the foot of Mount Gerazim, embowered in shady groves and orchards filled with the sweetest song birds. The eastern suburbs in our Lord's time, extended nearly a mile along the plain towards Jacob's Well, which at present stands isolated amid a few scattered fragments of ruin. It is called by the Mohammedans, *Bur-el-Yakoub*, and by Christians, *Bires-Samariyeh*

The welcoming shelter once provided for travelers, and the troughs for watering the flocks have now disappeared. Under the western Latin kings of Jerusalem, a chapel stood nearby and the well was covered over with a vaulted chamber. The vault was allowed to fall in, and in time to partly fill up the deep shaft.

To this spot, in the calm and sultry evening, our Lord and his companions had come after a long day's journey and while they went to the neighboring town to buy bread for their sober meal, He, conscious of the approaching occasion of sowing the good seed in that hardly receptive soil, sat near the well. The soul He wished to reclaim and convert into a docile instrument of grace to others, came to draw water. Her known antecedents may account for her coming alone and so far to this solitary spring, while others were nearer the city and more convenient. The life she led and was still pursuing, may have made her loathsome to her peers and the sneers of repulsive disdain of her townswomen, so she did not approach the well when at its busiest time, when most others would be there to fetch water for daily use.

Sprung from the non-believing race of Samaritans and brought up with lax notions of morality and amid corrupting examples: endowed, too, with the ardent temperament of her people and with attractive graces of person, she had been early married and soon put away by her husband. The conversation with our Lord proves her to have been open, frank, and generous; one whose warm and trusting heart could easily be revolted by injustice or neglect, and as easily won by kindness; and in the society of Sicheim, when the heart's first trust had been betrayed, and the idols set up by the purest and earliest affections had been rudely shattered, the whole future lay open to despair and reckless enjoyment. Such, we are justified in believing, was the woman now approaching the Good Shepherd.

:Jesus said to her, "Give me to drink....' Then the Samaritan woman said him, 'how is it that you, being a Jew, asks of me a drink who am a Samaritan woman?'" For the Jews do not

communicate with Samaritans. Jesus answered and said to her, if you only knew the gift of God and who it is that asks of you, 'give me a drink,' you perhaps would have asked of him and he would have given you living water.'"

There is not one more passage in the Old or New Testament more pregnant with richest instruction than this. And if the gentle reader – mother or daughter – whose eyes rest on these words will give but a few moments of earnest attention to finding out its true meaning, she will be rewarded with a clear knowledge of vital truth as refreshing and reviving as the cool waters of a spring to the faint and beleaguered pilgrim.

The "gift of God" is a denomination applied in its highest sense to the Holy Spirit, whose characteristic quality is that from all eternity He is fitted to be imparted to the adopted children of God, as the first principle of their spiritual union with Christ and the eternal Father. Hence, wherever a soul receives sanctifying grace and with it the supernatural and divine life that makes it acceptable to God, the Holy Spirit becomes in it the very principle of new existence, the delight of the mind, and the active energy in the will corresponding to that light; so that, in the supernatural state, the Creator Spirit becomes the very soul of the human soul, enlightening it, and promoting it to the accomplishment of all godlike deeds, while respecting and preserving, in its inviolable integrity, the soul's inborn freedom of determination and action.

When to the soul, in the full exercise of its reason and faculties, light is communicated, making known that spiritual world in which God is Father and Christ the Saviour and King, and the corresponding impulse is given by the Spirit to the heart, to believe in the Father and Saviour, and to accept heavenly salvation, with the sonship which He offers, and membership in his kingdom, and when the vital acts of the soul – faith and sorrow and hope and love – have been put forth in answer to the touch of divine power; - then, by the permanent relationship established between the Creator and the creature, between the soul regenerated and the Spirit, between man become the adopted child of the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ, in whose blood we receive adoption – there is opened in the soul's inmost depths a fountain of new life, that it depends on our own generous fidelity to render unflinching and eternal.

The woman's curiosity is excited; but her soul darkened by a life of sensual enjoyment, has never yet had a glimpse of the unseen world that Christ is going to reveal gradually to her. "The woman said to him, 'Sir you have nothing with which to draw, and the well is deep, from where and how do you have living water?'" Jesus answered and said to her, 'whoever

drinks of the water that I give shall never thirst again. But that water that I give shall become in him a fountain of water springing up into life everlasting.”

The gravity of Jesus, the tone of his voice and the secret yearning created by his discourse within the poor sensualist's breast, prepared the way for further grace. She wishes to possess the magic water, to be relieved from the necessities of bodily thirst and labor. So, in her turn, she asks for water from the weary traveler beside the well. “Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here again to draw.” The first step in the road by which grace leads us to Christ is to become his petitioners, even if only for our bodily needs; prayer offered for such a purpose will be rewarded by the awakened desire of a higher benefit. And the gift pledges the Giver to continue and perfect the work of his initial grace. But He will have the woman, as preliminary to her conversion, disclose the deep wounds of her soul; so the Searcher of hearts asks her, “Go, call your husband. And the woman answers, ‘I have no husband.’ Was it an unblushing denial of the truth? Or, touched by the tender hand of the divine Physician, did her heart lay bare its inveterate sore, ‘I have no husband’? Jesus says to her, “You have spoken the truth, ‘I have no husband,’ for you have had five husbands and he whom you now have is not your husband. Thus you have spoken truth.”

There speaks the Godhead who knows and sees all. For it is a fundamental and most consoling principle of Christian theology that He alone who created the human soul and gave it the mysterious and marvelous faculties of thought, judgment, deliberation and free choice, reserves to himself to penetrate all times into that inmost sanctuary where free will and conscience abide. He alone, by the ordinary laws which regulate the intimate and essential relations of the soul with its Creator, can watch and play of these hidden springs which move the will to choose and act freely, in accordance with ideals of spiritual perfection revealed by the ever-present light in the sanctuary. So long as the act remains purely one of the spirit – thought, desire, or determination, not manifested by outward sign, or word or deed, - it remains the secret of God and the soul. So reverently, so jealously, does he guard that interior liberty, - the source of all our frustrations and limitations, of all our greatness and our deepest degradations – in its causes and immediate consequences! It is by an extraordinary exception to this law that our God permits, for some urgent need, any created being, angel or man, to read the secrets of our hearts. Hence it is esteemed as a great miracle to penetrate the mystery of one's conscience, concealed from one's nearest and dearest, as to raise the dead to life.

The power of doing so was communicated, for extraordinary purposes, to the great prophets under the old law; the people of Palestine, Samaritans as well as Hebrews, knew it to be an exceptional power. Hence the answer of the astonished woman, “Sir, I perceive that you are a

prophet.” Subdued and attracted by the man of God before her, the question of her having to submit to his authority, and to go to worship to Jerusalem will not yield the point of lawful authority to the woman’s prejudices of race and education, even while He is preparing her mind for the knowledge of that change and fulfillment in religious profession which is to do away with the Mosaic sacrifices and ritual, whose center was in Jerusalem. “You all worship that which you do not know; we worship that which we know and understand; for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming and is now here when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeks such to worship him.”

There lay the entire and whole difference between Samaritan and Jew. The one, descended of Babylonian ancestry, retained the gods and superstitions of Mesopotamia, together with a portion of the Hebrew law and ritual; they fear the Lord God Almighty, and hoped in the Messiah, while still clinging to Baal and Ishtar! Thus the Samaritan blindly adored and worshipped the true God and the demons of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. The other had a clear knowledge of the Lord God Almighty, the true eternal living God, who as the Creator and Judge of the whole earth, while they abominated the devil worship of the Gentiles. But even, when faith to the Lord God Almighty, the Israelite was too apt to make him exclusively a local and national God, to consider the promised Messiah as prophet-king, who could restore the supremacy of the Hebrew race, without admitting to full religious fellowship all other nations; besides they had made of the existing ritual an oppressive and impossible ceremonial. The Messiah is to make but one family of the whole earth, and to replace the Mosaic holocausts by the offering and consecration of every faculty to God as the end of all future worship. And for this transformation opportunity, Jesus assures her the hour has now come.

“The woman said to him, I know that the Messiah will come, who is called the Christ, therefore when he comes, he will teach us all things. Jesus said to her, I who speak to you am he about whom you speak.” She needs no more; heart and mind had been sweetly prepared for this revelation by him who made them both. He knows how to present the truth, that it would enter swiftly and victoriously, like the light of morning into the sound eye, flooding the soul with joy and life. She leaves her water pot, as well as her load of guilt, at the feet of the merciful Judge, and runs off to the city to speak of the “gift of God” promised her and to enkindle in every soul she meets a thirst for living water that overflows in her heart and soul. “Come and see the man who has told me all things I have done. Is he not the Christ?” But a few hours before, that poor guilty one shrank from public eye and sought ‘Jacob’s Well’ when she deemed no one

was there to scorn or slight her; now she hesitates not to declare what she was and to humble herself before all, in order the better to glorify the King of Israel, who is from that moment to have entire dominion over her life. The townspeople believe her. "They went out of the city and came to him. In the meantime the disciples address him, saying "Rabbi, eat." "But he said to them, I have meat to eat of which you do not know....My meat is to do the will of him who sent me, that I may perfect his work. Do you not say, 'there are four months yet and then the harvest comes? Behold I say to you, lift up your eyes and see the nations for they are white and ready for the harvest."

It was late in April or early in May, and even in, the favored place of Sichem, the grain was not yet in ear. But the land far and wide was ripe for the harvest of souls; it was for the work of that harvest that He had come; they were his first laborers and the spiritual parents of an immortal line of workmen. The success of the poor, weak woman, upon whom, as she stood near him, they had looked with suspicion and disfavor, was a sign of what was to come, and as earnest of the mighty harvest to be gathered in after his day by the men and women who caught his spirit. "Now out of that city many of the Samaritans believed in him, for the word of the woman giving testimony, 'He told me all things that I had ever done.' So when the Samaritans came to him, they desired that he would stay a while with them. And he did stay two days. And many more believed in him because of his own word; and they said to the woman, 'We now believe not because of your testimony and word, but because we ourselves have heard him and know that he is indeed the Saviour of the world.'"

The woman and her townspeople thus pass out of the gospel narrative, but not so from the history of salvation in the world. Nor does the sequel fail to continue to throw and shed a little light on the prophetic prospect that seemed to open up before the Saviour's eyes when He spoke so magnificently of the approaching harvest of souls. From the very earliest date, the universal Church celebrates on March 20 the feast of the woman of Sichem who is called by her baptized name, Photini. The martyrology of the Church teaches she converted both her sons, Joseph and Victor and her five sisters with whom she migrated to northern Africa. During the persecution of Nero, in the year 60 AD, these Christians, conspicuous probably, for their zeal in spreading the faith, were cast into prison at Carthage with Sebastian, a convert credited to Victor, and after three months of repeated torture, that recalls the terrible sufferings of the Machabees, they were flayed alive, broken on the wheel and finally beheaded. It was the fate that awaited the disciples themselves and a host of others then living, and was a glorious consummation of the work begun in that chosen soul by Christ himself. The water pot left at the well was like the old life left behind. The soul regenerated by the Word incarnate became a consecrated vessel, filled afterward with the Spirit of God, and under his impulsion, bearing the knowledge and love of the holy name wherever she went.

WISDOM! BE ATTENTIVE

The joyful message of the Resurrection was heard by the faithful women from the angel. And being freed from the ancestral curse, they boasted to the apostles: "Dead and despoiled is death; Christ our God is risen, giving great mercy to the world." Troparion, Sunday of the Samaritan Woman.

When the Samaritan woman came to the well with faith, she beheld You, O Water of Wisdom; You allowed her to drink abundantly, and glorified her eternally, for she inherited the eternal kingdom. Kontakion, Sunday of the Samaritan Woman.

When the Paschal feast is half-completed, quench my thirsty soul with the waters of devotion, for You, O Saviour, have announced to all: "Let him who is thirsty come to Me and drink." O Christ God, Source of our life, glory be to You! Troparion, Mid-Pentecost Feast.

O Christ God, Creator and Lord of all, when the Paschal feast was half-completed, You told those present: "Come and draw the water of immortality," Let us therefore adore You and cry out with faith: "Grant us Your goodness, for You are the Source of our life!" Kontakion, Mid-Pentecost Feast.

You fought the good fight with faith, O Martyr of Christ, George. You exposed the perversion of the persecutors and offered an acceptable sacrifice to God. Therefore, you also received a crown of victory and through your prayers, O holy one, obtained the forgiveness of sins for all. Troparion, Feast of St. George the Martyr.

Inspired by God, you sowed the seeds of piety, harvesting sheaves of virtue. You sowed in tears but reaped in joy; and having honorably fought and given your blood, you were received by Christ. Through your prayers, O holy one, obtain the forgiveness of sins for all. Kontakion, Feast of St. George the Martyr.

THE FIRST EVANGELIST

The story of the Samaritan Woman is one that is familiar to all of us. While passing through the town of Sychar, Christ is weary from His journey and sits at the town well while His Apostles go into the city to buy food. He strikes up a conversation with a woman and before their verbal exchange is completed, she fully understands that she is speaking to the Messiah: the One Who can offer her "living water."

The tradition of the Holy Orthodox Church is that this Samaritan Woman, later baptized and given the name "Photini" meaning "the enlightened one," was the first person to evangelize, or spread the news about Christ. This is based on the words of John 4:39: "And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified: "He told me all that I had ever done." Along with her two sons and five daughters, Photini went to Carthage, where she preached the Good News of Christ's Resurrection. They were soon arrested and taken to Rome, where the Emperor Nero placed the men in prison and had Photini and her daughters enslaved in his imperial court. Photini and her family were tortured relentlessly by the ruthless ruler. Still, their faith never wavered, and their examples caused others to convert to Christianity as well. Eventually, Photini and her children were all martyred. Ironically, Photini met her end by being thrown down a well, refusing until her dying breath to renounce the Savior she had met at a well many years before.