

Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

All Saints Sunday

June 10, 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

+++ We have Festal Anointing today on the occasion of this glorious feast of Pentecost, the Descent of the Holy Spirit, the birthday of our blessed Church and subsequent feast of the Holy Spirit celebrated Monday. The customary greeting is "Christ Is Among Us!" to which we respond, "He Is And Shall Be!"

a renewal of the challenge and expectation for us to remain forever faithful and devoted to the task of the salvation of our souls. God bless you devoted souls with continued good spiritual and physical health for Many Years!

+++ 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: Tithing Offering, [REDACTED]; Candles, [REDACTED]; Food Coupons, [REDACTED]; Flowers, [REDACTED]; Pentecost Offering of Gratitude, [REDACTED]; Kitchen, [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, 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 [REDACTED] from this apostolate. Even your pennies can help and are a blessing to our parish.

+++ 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.**

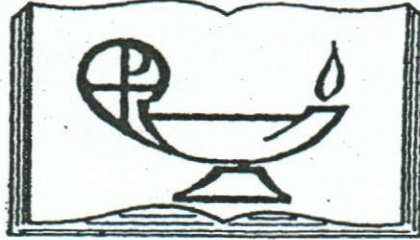
+++ **We remember only those who are present for the entire Divine Liturgy should come forward to receive Communion. The entire Liturgy means "Amen" to "Amen."**

+++ **Please pray the Lord our God grant us an enrichment of our spiritual lives for his glory.**

+++ **We need a volunteer to be in charge of arranging trips to the Lancaster Co., Pa. Theater for our parishioners. Please see Father immediately.**

+++ **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!**

LORD



TEACH
US

PRAYER

Father, the hour has come! Give glory to your Son that your Son may give glory to you. Inasmuch as you have given authority to him over all mankind that he may bestow eternal life on those you gave him....I have given you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. Do you now, Father, give me glory at your side, a glory I had with you before the world began. I have made your name known to those you gave me out of the world. These men you gave me were yours; they have kept your word. Now they realize that all you gave me comes from you. I entrusted to them the message you entrusted to me and they received it. They have known that in truth I come from you; they have believed it was you who sent me. For these I pray, not for the world, but for these you have given me, for they are really yours. Just as all that belongs to me is yours, so that all that belongs to you is mine. It is in them that I have been glorified I am in the world no more, but these are in the world, as I come to you, O Father most holy, protect them with your name which you have given me that they maybe one even as we are one. As long as I was with them, I guarded them with your name which you gave me. I kept careful watch and not one of them was lost but him who was destined to be lost, a fulfillment of Scripture. Now, however, I come to you. I say all this while I am still in the world, that they may share my joy completely. I gave them your word, and the world hates them for it; they do not belong to the world anymore than I belong to the world. I do not ask you to take them out of the world, but to guard them from the evil one. They are not of this world any more than I belong to the world. Consecrate them by means of truth. Your word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. I consecrate myself for their sake now, that they may be consecrated in truth. I do not pray for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their word, that all may be one, as you, Father are in me and I in you; I pray that they may be one in us, that the world may believe that you sent me. I have given them the glory you gave me that they may be one, as we are on, I living in them, you living in me, that their unity may be complete. So shall the world know that you sent me, and that you love them as you love me. Father, all those you gave me I would have in my company where I am, to see this glory of mine which is your gift to me because of the love you have for me before the world began. Just Father, the world does not know you; but I know you and these men know that you sent me. To them I have revealed your name, and I will continue to reveal it so that your love for me may live in them and I may live in them” John 17: 1 – 26.

HOW TO TELL A WINNER FROM A LOSER

A loser says, "Nobody knows." A winner says, "Let's find out."

When a loser makes a mistake, he says, "It wasn't my fault."
When a winner makes a mistake, he says, "I was wrong."

A loser tries to go around a problem and never gets past it. A winner goes through a problem.

A loser makes promises. A winner makes commitments.

A loser says, "I'm not as bad as a lot of other people." A winner says, "I'm good, but not as good as I ought to be."

A loser tries to tear down those who are superior to him. A winner tries to learn from them.

A loser says, "That's the way it's always been done here." A winner says, "There ought to be a better way to do it."

A STATE OF MIND

*If you think you are beaten, you are;
If you think you dare not, you don't;
If you'd like to win but think you can't,
It's almost a cinch you won't.
If you think you'll lose, you've lost;
For out in the world you'll find
Success begins with a person's will:
It's all in the state of mind.*

*Life's battles don't always seem to go
To the strongest or fastest man,
But sooner or later the man who wins
Is the one who thinks he can.*

No Hesitation

Before Pilate, Christ did not hesitate. Pilate, as a pagan had a realistic, but limited understanding of Christ. He knew Christ was innocent; as a matter of fact, so did his wife, whom Scripture depicts sending him a message about Christ and His vocation. If Christ announces His purpose and vocation; if the chief pagan leader grasps and

understands it, why do some of us - who are beneficiaries of the sacramental Mysteries - have trouble acknowledging Christ for Who He is and responding to Him? Is that why we have trouble identifying ourselves as faithful and devoted followers? Is that why we are not absolutely certain we are called to become saints?

**YES, I AM A
KING.
I WAS BORN
FOR THIS—
TO BEAR WITNESS
TO THE TRUTH**



Jesus, Our Shepherd

Some six hundred years after David was inspired to compose his Shepherd Song, Psalm 23, our Lord said with quiet assurance: *I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep...I know my sheep and my sheep know me – just as the Father knows me and I know the Father – and I lay down my life for the sheep* John 10: 1 – 15.

This is our Lord Jesus Christ, *that great shepherd of the sheep* Hebrews 13: 20. He saw us as *sheep without a shepherd* Matthew 9: 36. He came *to seek and to save that which was lost* Luke 19: 10. He is the one who left the ninety nine on the hills and went to look for the one that wandered away, forever establishing the value of one person and the Father's desire that not one of them should perish (Matthew 18: 12 – 14).

He has a shepherd's heart, beating with pure and generous love that counts not his own life-blood too dear a price to pay down as our ransom. He has a shepherd's eye, that takes in the whole flock and misses not even the poor sheep wandering away on the mountains cold. He has a shepherd's faithfulness, which will never fail or forsake, leave us comfortless, nor flee.

The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. Since the beginning of time, various religions have decreed and accepted that a lamb should give up its life for the shepherd. The shepherd would bring his lamb to the sanctuary, lean with all his weight on the lamb's head and confess his sin. The lamb would be slain, a life for a life.

What irony! Now the Shepherd gives up his life for his lamb! *He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon him and by his stripes we are healed. We all like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all* Isaiah 53: 5, 6.

Jesus dies for all sin, the obvious sins of murder, adultery, and theft as well as the secret sins of selfishness and greed and pride. He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross. This was sin's final cure. God loves us so much that He himself assumed our guilt. He internalized all our sin and healed it. When it was over He said, *It is finished!* John 19: 30. God has done all He could for the salvation of mankind, now it is up to individual man to assume the grace offered him, live daily a life transformed by Christ and remain faithful to the gospel message.

The Shepherd calls to us and listens carefully for the slightest sounds of life. He hears the faintest cry. If He hears nothing at all, He will not give up and go away. He lets us wander, hoping that weariness and despair will turn us around. And when we turn to him, He is there to greet us. He is there all along. *The Lord is near to all who call upon him* Psalms 145: 18.

Some will say, "Why would He want me? He knows my sinfulness, my wandering, my long habits of yielding to life's misery. I am not good enough. I am not sorry enough for my sin. I am unable not to sin."

Our waywardness does not have to be explained to our Good Shepherd. It just has to be confessed and repented of. He is not surprised by anything we do. He sees everything at a single glance, what is, what could have been, what would be apart from our sinful choices. He sees into the dark corners and crannies of our hearts and knows everything about us there is to know. But what He sees only draws out his deeper and more enduring love for us. There is no deeper motivation in our God than love. It is his nature to love; He cannot do anything other, for *God is love* 1 John 4: 8. Jesus says to us: *Come to me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest in your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden light* Matthew 11: 28 - 30.

To know and understand our God is like this and to know He provides rest from the delusions of the world provides a profound lesson that He is all we need. The word shepherd carries with it thoughts of tenderness, security, and provision, yet it means nothing as long as an individual in faith cannot say, *The Lord is MY shepherd*.

What a dynamic difference that monosyllable makes: all the difference in the world. It means I can have all of God's attention, all of the time, just as though I am the only one in the world. I am a part of a flock, but I am one of a kind in the sight of God. I am unique in value before the Lord.

It is one thing to say "The Lord is a shepherd." It is quite another to know, *The Lord is MY shepherd*. How true it is that faith response to God's first shown love is a matter of personal pronouns. *My Lord* and *My God*. This is the faith that saves!

The Seventy

In St. Luke's gospel, (10: 1 – 17), the Lord appoints seventy men to go out as missionaries – as apostles. Though not so prominent as the Twelve, the Seventy carried out their mission with fervor and enthusiasm. The tradition of the Church confirms that the Seventy remained true to the Lord and their calling, fulfilling a vital role in the spread of the gospel. These were not random choices or accidental volunteers but true disciples, true apostles, whose labors carried the message of their Lord throughout the Roman Empire and beyond.

Though lists of the Seventy vary somewhat, all these men are remembered in the liturgical calendar of the Church. One day, January 4, is set aside to remember them all in general as a group, and the record of their work is preserved in the accounts handed down through the centuries from place to place, especially in those locations where they labored. Individually, they are remembered in the life of the Church as well.

To tell all the stories in narrative, passed down by the Church concerning the Seventy would fill a large book of considerable size, but even the stories of a few will convey the conviction and faith of this illustrious body so inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Barnabas, a Jew of the tribe of Levi, was born in Cyprus of wealthy parents. He is said to have studied under Gamaliel with Saul of Tarsus, who was to become Paul the apostle. Originally named Joseph, he was called Barnabas which means *Son of Consolation*, by the apostles (Acts 4: 36), because he had the rare gift of comforting people's hearts. He sought out Paul when everyone else was afraid of him, bringing him to the apostles. It was Barnabas whom the apostles first sent to Antioch with Paul. Their long association was broken only when Barnabas was determined to take his cousin, Mark, whom Paul did not trust just then, on a mission journey. The three were later reconciled (Colossians 4: 10). Many ancient accounts say Barnabas was the first to preach in Rome and in Milan, but he was martyred in Cyprus, then buried by Mark in the western gate of the city of Salamis.

Among the more prominent of the Seventy was the apostle Titus, whom Paul called his brother (2 Corinthians 12: 18) and his son (Titus 1: 4). Born in Crete, Titus was educated in Greek philosophy, but after reading the prophet Isaiah, he began to doubt

the value of all he had been taught. Hearing the news of the coming of Jesus Christ, he joined some others from Crete who were going to Jerusalem to see for themselves. After hearing Jesus speak and seeing his works and his signs, young Titus joined those who followed him. Baptized by the apostle Paul, he worked with and served the great apostle to the Gentiles, traveling with him until Paul sent him to Crète, making him bishop of that city. It is said that Titus was in Rome at the time of the beheading of St. Paul and that he buried the body of his spiritual father before returning home. Back in Crete, he converted and baptized many people, governing the Church on the island until he entered into rest at the age of ninety - four.

Many less prominent among the Seventy also labored for Christ until their death in the flesh. Aristarchus whom Paul mentions several times (Acts of the Apostles 19: 29; Colossians 4: 10; Philemon 24), calling him a *fellow laborer*, became bishop of Apamea in Syria. Sosthenes (Acts of the Apostles 18: 17; 1 Corinthians 1: 1) became bishop of Caesarea and Tychicus (Acts of the Apostles 20: 4; Ephesians 6: 21; Colossians 4: 7; 2 Timothy 4: 12; Titus 3: 12) succeeded him in that city. Simeon (Matthew 13: 55; Mark 6: 3), son of Cleopas, who was the brother of Joseph the betrothed of the ever-virgin Mary, succeeded James as bishop of Jerusalem. Arisobulus (Romans 16: 10), the brother of the apostle Barnabas, preached the gospel in Britain and died peaceably there.

The lives of these few are quite representative of the Seventy who were instrumental in the helping to plant the Church throughout the world. Many became bishops, but the names of all are numbered in heaven in the Book of Eternal Life as faithful servants of the Lord as apostles and foundation stones of the Church.

After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before his face into every city and place where he himself was about to go. Then he said to them "The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest send out laborers into his harvest. Go your way and behold I send you out as lambs among wolves Carry neither moneybag, knapsack, nor sandals and greet no one along the road. But whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house.' And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest on it; if not, it will return to you. And remain in the same house, eating and drinking such things as they give, for the laborer is worthy of his wages....Whatever city you enter and they do not welcome you, go out into their streets and say, 'The very dust of your city which clings to us, we wipe off against you...It will be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city' Luke 10: 1 - 12.

The Seventy

NAME	COMMEMORATED	N.T. REFERENCE(S)
Achaicus	June 15	1 Cor. 16:17
Agabus	Apr. 1; May 26	Acts 11:28; 21:10
Amplias	Oct. 31	Rom. 16:8
Ananias	Oct. 1	Acts 9:10-17; 22:12
Andronicus	May 17; July 30	Rom. 16:7
Apelles	Sept. 10; Oct. 31	Rom. 16:10
Apollos	Mar. 30; Dec. 8	Acts 18:24; 19:1; 1 Cor. 1:12; 3:4-22; 4:6; 16:12; Titus 3:13
Aquila	July 14	Acts 18:2, 18, 26; Rom. 16:3; 1 Cor. 16:19; 2 Tim. 4:19
Archippus	Feb. 19; July 6	Col. 4:17; Philem. 2
Aristarchus	Apr. 15; Sept. 27	Acts 19:29; 20:4; 27:2; Col. 4:10; Philem. 24
Aristobulus	Mar. 16; Oct. 31	Rom. 16:10
Artemas	Oct. 30	Titus 3:12
Asyncritus	Apr. 8	Rom. 16:14
Barnabas	June 11	Acts 4:36; 9:27; 11-15; 1 Cor. 9:6; Gal. 2:1, 9, 13; Col. 4:10
Caesar	Mar. 30; Dec. 8	
Carpus	May 26	2 Tim. 4:13
Clement	Sept. 10	Phil. 4:3
Cephas	Mar. 30; Dec. 8	
Cleopas	Oct. 30	Luke 24:18; John 19:25
Crescens	July 30	2 Tim. 4:10
Crispus	Oct. 4	Acts 18:8; 1 Cor. 1:14
Epaphras	Jan. 4	Col. 1:7; 4:12; Philem. 23
Epaphroditus	Mar. 30; Dec. 8	Phil. 2:25; 4:18
Epaenetus	July 30	Rom. 16:5
Erastus	Nov. 10	Acts 19:22; Rom. 16:23; 2 Tim. 4:20
Euodia	Sept. 7	Phil. 4:2
Fortunatus	June 15	1 Cor. 16:17
Gaius	Nov. 5	Acts 19:29; 20:4; Rom. 16:23; 1 Cor. 1:14; 3 John 1
Hermas	Mar. 8; Nov. 5	Rom. 16:14
Hermes	Apr. 8; May 31	Rom. 16:14
Herodion	Mar. 28; Apr. 8; Nov. 10	Rom. 16:11
James, the brother of the Lord	Nov. 23	Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3; Acts 12:17; 15:13; James
Jason	Apr. 22	Acts 17:5-9
Justus	Oct. 30	Acts 1:23; 18:7; Col. 4:11
Linus	Nov. 5	2 Tim. 4:21
Lucius	Sept. 10	Acts 13:1; Rom. 16:21
Luke, the Evangelist	Oct. 18	Col. 4:14; 2 Tim. 4:11; Philem. 24
Mark, the Evangelist (called John)	Apr. 25	Acts 12:12, 25; 15:37-39; Col. 4:10; 2 Tim. 4:11; Philem. 24; 1 Pet. 5:13
Mark	Sept. 27; Oct. 30	
Narcissus	Oct. 31	Rom. 16:11
Nicanor	July 28	Acts 6:5
Olympas	Nov. 10	Rom. 16:15
Onesimus	Feb. 15	Col. 4:9; Philem. 10
Onesiphorus	Sept. 7; Dec. 8	2 Tim. 1:16; 4:19
Parmenas	July 28	Acts 6:5
Patrobus	Nov. 5	Rom. 16:14

NAME	COMMEMORATED	N.T. REFERENCE(S)
Philemon	Feb. 19; July 6; Nov. 2	Philem. 1
Philip, the Deacon	Oct. 11	Acts 6; 8; 21:8
Philologus	Nov. 5	Rom. 16:15
Phlegon	Apr. 8	Rom. 16:14
Prochorus	July 28	Acts 6:5
Pudens	Apr. 15	2 Tim. 4:21
Quadratus	Sept. 21	
Quartus	Nov. 10	Rom. 16:23
Rufus	Apr. 8	Mark 15:21; Rom. 16:13
Silas (Silvanus)	July 30	Acts 15:22-40; 16:19-40; 17:4-15; 18:5; 2 Cor. 1:19; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1; 1 Pet. 5:12
Simeon, son of Cleophas	Apr. 27	Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3
Sosipater	Apr. 28; Nov. 10	Rom. 16:21
Sosthenes	Mar. 30; Dec. 8	1 Cor. 1:1
Stachys	Oct. 31	Rom. 16:9
Stephen, the Archdeacon	Dec. 27	Acts 6:5-7:60; 8:2; 11:19; 22:20
Tertius	Nov. 10; Dec. 30	Rom. 16:22
Thaddaeus	Aug. 21	Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18
Timon	July 28; Dec. 30	Acts 6:5
Timothy	Jan. 22	Acts 16:1; 17:14, 15; 18:5; 19:22; 20:4; Rom. 16:21; 1 and 2 Timothy
Titus	Aug. 25	2 Cor. 2:13; 7:6-14; 8:6-23; 12:18; Gal. 2:1-3; Titus
Trophimus	Apr. 15	Acts 20:4; 21:29; 2 Tim. 4:20
Tychicus	Dec. 8	Acts 20:4; Eph. 6:21; Col. 4:7; 2 Tim. 4:12; Titus 3:12
Urbanus	Oct. 31	Rom. 16:9
Zenas	Sept. 27	Titus 3:13

All Saints Prayer

Heavenly Father, receive our gratitude for that "great cloud of witnesses" with which we are surrounded, those faithful followers of every age whose lives were graced with our own goodness in such a way that others might behold and benefit and give you praise for your own light made visible in them.

By their example, grace us with your goodness, that we may share their triumphant faith in Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours, and follow them in selfless acts of Christian love and charity. By the power of your Holy Spirit, continue to call us to sainthood, to gather us into the communion of those already glorified, to enlighten us with your gifts and to sanctify us in your service. And when our life on earth is over, gather us with all your saints in glory everlasting, through the grace of him who loved us even to his death, Jesus Christ, our Lord, God and Saviour. Amen.

WISDOM! BE ATTENTIVE

You came down from on high, O merciful Lord. You accepted the grave for three days to deliver us from our passions. O Lord, our resurrection and our life, glory be to You! Troparion, Sunday of All Saints.

Your Church, throughout the world, O Lord, is clothed with the blood of Your martyrs as with fine linen and purple robes. And so, the Church cries out to You, O Christ our God: "Send down Your goodness upon Your people; grant peace to Your Church and great mercy to our souls" Troparion, Sunday of All Saints.

To You, O Lord, Author of the whole creation, the universe offers the God-bearing martyrs as the first fruits of nature. Through their prayers and the intercession of the Mother of God, preserve Your Church, Your dwelling place, in perfect peace, O most Merciful One! Kontakion, Sunday of All Saints.

Make vows to the Lord and fulfill them Prokimenon, Sunday of All Saints.

Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him in the highest. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia! Communion Hymn, Sunday of All Saints.

Come, O believers, let us today stand in order and rejoice with true worship. Let us extol with praises the memory of the all-honored, all revered saints, saying aloud: Rejoice, O glorious apostles, prophets, martyrs and bishops! Rejoice, O company of the righteous and just! Rejoice, rank of honored women! Vesper Hymn, Sunday of All Saints.

You are the pillars of the Church, and the fulfillment of the gospel, O divine ranks of martyrs. By your deeds you have fulfilled the words of the Saviour; for through you the gates of Hell, once opened against the Church, have now been closed; and through the shedding of your blood, you dried up the sacrifices poured out for the idols. And having built up the faith of believers through your martyrdom, you filled the heavenly spirits with admiration. You stand before Christ, wearing your crowns; intercede with Him for our souls Vesper Hymn, Sunday of All Saints.



OPPORTUNITIES

Every individual knows many people in the neighborhood and at work. We have friends and relatives, many of whom go nowhere to church.

Instead of being sad about their circumstances, these are opportunities not acted upon or needs responded to.

Not only should we pray for these souls, but we can provide for them an example of what Christ has done for us as Orthodox Christians in his Body, the Church.

A non-believer or a non-church goer is an opportunity for us to live our faith more intensely and be grateful we responded to and cooperated with heavenly grace for our salvation.

Did You Know That ...

...always offer guests something to eat or drink when they drop by because, unaware, you may be entertaining angels?

...we ought encourage everyone who is attempting to improve mentally, physically or spiritually?

... "Out of debt, out of danger" is a truism which should more closely be observed?

...fools often assume kindness for weakness?

...because truth is a serious business, when critical of others, remember that a little goes a long way?

...we ought never be ashamed of laughter that is too loud or singing that is too joyful?

...among self-help books the Bible should be first on the list?

...the more you know about God, the more you love him?

...there are some things in a person's life that ought to remain a mystery?

...anyone who works for recognition is not worthy of recognition?

...there are some things which are understood not by the mind, but only by the heart?

...man's nobles virtue is to love someone who does not deserve it?

...when you mean no say it in a way that is not ambiguous?

...private thoughts should be kept private?

...no one should be allowed to intimidate you, not even the devil?

...it takes only one person or one idea to change your life forever?

...no one else should be allowed to determine your response or your course of action, or your behavior?



FREEDOM AND OUR RELIGIOUS HERITAGE

*The future of the United States depends upon
upholding its founding Judeo-Christian principles.*

Every believer offers thanks for the blessings of American liberty, a freedom that, in its extent and endurance, is unique in human history. We also affirm our determination to preserve that liberty, for us and for our fellow citizens, and to ask the Lord's guidance in doing so.

There are times when we need that help more than others. This is such a time when the very nature of our government is going to be changed if the plans of socialists are not intercepted. We venture to say that never in our lifetimes has the religious liberty of the American people been as threatened as it is today.

Of some things we should not need to be reminded. There are some truths and some historical realities that should not need repeating. But in today's society, and in official Washington, we must repeat them. We must remind fellow Americans and especially those who exercise power and authority, that religious liberty - the freedom guaranteed by the First Amendment - has been essential to the founding, development and improvement of the American Republic.

Before the American Revolution, there was what historians call the First Great Awakening, which swept through the colonies and transformed their outlook. This was the Protestant revival that affected the thinking of so many and guided their insight about the religious

underpinnings of the country. Subsequently, the Second Great Awakening led to the abolition of slavery, as well as the other great reform movements of the 19th century. A third wave religious energy led to reforms in education, labor and women's rights.

Alexis de Tocqueville observed the profound connection between religion and liberty in American national life when he visited here. "Religion does not give Americans their taste for freedom," he said, "it singularly facilitates their use of it."

We may ask: Is this historical connection between Christianity and liberty an accident of history or is it something fundamental? Our founders answered that question unequivocally. They declared that we are "endowed" by our "Creator" with inalienable rights.

The Rights of Man are the Gift of God

The farewell address of George Washington insisted that religion and morality are "indispensable supports of our political prosperity," warning that "reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can be retained without religion." And John Adams asserted, "Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."

Those views have echoed down through our history perhaps most notably in 1961 when President John F. Kennedy, in his Inaugural Address, spoke of the rights for which our "forebears fought," namely "the belief that the rights of man come not from the generosity of the state, but from the hand of God." According to a poll conducted for the fiftieth anniversary of that speech, 85 % of Americans still agree with Kennedy's statement.

This belief was also the driving force behind the life work of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. In his historic *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*, Rev. King said that he and his followers "were in reality standing up for what is best in the American dream and for the most sacred values in our Judeo-Christian heritage, thereby bringing our nation back to those great wells of democracy which were dug deep by the founding fathers in their formulation of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence."

But perhaps we do need to be reminded that King's letter relied on the tradition of the Church. He cited St. Augustine that "an unjust law is no law at all." And he asked, "How does one determine when a law is just or unjust? A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. It is rooted in eternal and revealed law. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law. He then went on to say, "To put it in terms of St. Thomas Aquinas, an unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal and revealed law."

There you have the teaching of the Church of Jesus Christ summed up by a Baptist preacher under arrest for living it.

When you visit the new memorial to Dr. King on the national mall, read carefully the fourteen quotations inscribed there. You will not find a single reference to God. Not one! Imagine how those in authority must have searched and searched to come up with fourteen quotes of Rev. King without one mention of God. There is no more shocking symbol of the ongoing campaign to drive religious faith out of our public life.

King's statue looks across the Tidal Basin to the Jefferson Memorial, dedicated to the president who is now championed by secularists for inventing a "wall of separation" between Church and state. Ironically, while the King Memorial was scrubbed of any reference to our Creator about whom Dr. King always spoke and eagerly referenced, in the Jefferson Memorial, the walls tell us, "The God who gave us life, gave us liberty." And they ask us, "Can the liberties of a nation be secure when we have removed a conviction that these liberties are a gift from God?" A great deal hinges on how we answer these questions.

On the occasion of receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1970, the Orthodox believer, Alexander Solzenitsyn spoke of the ideological manipulation of history that occurred in Russia under Soviet communism. It was, he said, "a closing, a locking up, of the national heart and an amputation of the national memory." He warned that when his happens, a nation "has no memory of its own self. It is deprived of its spiritual unity and inspiration. And even though compatriots apparently speak the same language, they suddenly cease to understand each other."

Solzhenitsyn devoted his life to preventing the militant atheism in his country from destroying the soul of the Russian people by rewriting their history. How would Solzhenitsyn have viewed the controversy surrounding the King Memorial? Would he have seen it as preserving the spiritual unity of America or as one more symptom of a trend to separate Americans from their religious heritage?

It is interesting both in Greece and here in America Orthodox hierarchs have maintained their silence about religious liberty assaulted, having had it defiled in their own European churches and being aware of its ramifications. How could socialism ever have been acceptable in a so-called Orthodox country like Greece? St. Paul's references about personal responsibility in contributing to the common good are inspiration enough. Where was the witnessing voice of bishops, priests and deacons? This raises the serious question of how our religious leaders are leading us and what they believe themselves. Are they in fact, by their silence helping to create an atmosphere in which socialistic communism will once again surface? If we are to thrive in this American culture, Orthodoxy must learn how to participate in safeguarding Christ's truth. Orthodox bishops are supposed to be bishops, fathers not only of Orthodox faithful, but of the entire community of people within their diocesan boundaries. Thus they have a dual responsibility. Of course in this nation, sadly, our bishops still have not attended to their task of establishing residential diocesan sees and dividing territory into individual diocese and fixing spiritual responsibility, so how can we expect them to attend to the greater at hand task of protecting the Church and defending it from the expansion of anti-God irreligious behavior in the country?

New Intolerance of Religion

Today we find a new hostility to the role of religious institutions in American life at a time when government is expanding its reach in extraordinary ways. This is precisely how it started in Russia, Czechoslovakia and in near-by Cuba, slowly and stealthily. And it is not only because of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services contraception mandate. This may have gotten the most attention, but it was not the first. Historically we note acceptance of governmental interference in the life of believers has always ended with disaster as we saw a number of times in the life of the Chosen People. Our God used pagan governments to punish them for the abandonment of revealed faith. The Byzantine Empire was smashed after God's patience of 1100 years ran out because the so-called emperors in succession thought they were more important than our heavenly Father and so, descended

into faithlessness. Was Islam allowed to dramatically arise and grow and succeed because we dismissed the absolute importance of faith commitment to God? Today after the fall of communism, the on-going repetition of the Patriarchs of Moscow is "we must do on-going penance because it was our neglect as Church that permitted and tolerated the atmosphere in which Godlessness was able to succeed."

Arguing before the U.S. Supreme Court in *Hosanna-Tabor Evangelical Lutheran Church and School v. EEOC* last year, the Obama administration sought unprecedented limits on the autonomy of churches and religious institutions. The administration argued that if any "ministerial exception" in employment exists, it should be strictly "limited to those employees who perform exclusively religious functions."

That caused Chief Justice John Roberts to ask during oral argument whether even the Roman pope would meet the administration's definition of a religious minister. The Supreme Court *unanimously* disagreed with the administration, saying, "We are unsure whether any such employees exist." because even the highest ranking churchmen have "a mix of duties."

Similarly, the Health and Human Services mandate allows only the narrowed exemption for religious institutions. The exemption exists only for institutions that, among other things, hire and serve only members of their own faith.

So we see that Jesus himself or the Good Samaritan would not qualify as "religious enough" for the exemption, since they insisted on helping people who do not share their view of God. Christians are called to reach beyond their own denominations in "teaching all nations," and considering everyone their "neighbor" and doing "good to those who hate" them.

In the *Hosanna-Tabor* case, the administration sought to impose a new definition of ministry or serving spiritual needs of people so narrow that no minister could fit it. In its Health and Human Services mandate, the administration insists on an exception so narrow that organizations can qualify only by violating the teachings of their own church. We cannot burn incense before these statues and join the idolaters!

Consider if the administration's view in the *Hosanna-Tabor* case prevailed, churches and religious institutions would have found themselves at the mercy of what the Supreme Court unanimously characterized as "government interference with an internal church decision that affects the faith and mission of the church itself."

Precisely the same can be said of the Health and Human Services mandate. A government willing to affect the faith and mission of the Church is a government willing to change the identity of the Church. And what can we expect of the future? The National Right to Life Committee makes a compelling case of the Obama administration's "accommodation" for the Health and Human Services mandate – if accepted – paves the way for mandated coverage of "abortion on demand."

In Moslem dominated countries which were primarily consistent of Orthodox populations, bishops were forced to silence and when the Islamists closed in and shut down seminaries where theological education was imparted, in time priest-fathers teaching their sons was totally inadequate and priests because of their abject lack of spiritual formation were forbidden to preach and in time to hear confessions because their theological illiteracy was so seriously abysmal, it would only lead to plain heresy. They were only trusted to by rote celebrate the Divine Liturgy. For generations people did not have the grace of forgiveness of sin and came to America, this so-called land of the free. Our bishops who colluded with anti-Christian governments in Europe continued their limited functioning here in this country. Among many national Orthodox groups it is a considered foreign and "Roman Catholic" to go to confession before a priest. Further we are teaching them to come on Great and Holy Wednesday and receive a general absolution which is not at all the meaning of that anointing service. It does not mean nor intend to exclude and denigrate the sacramental Mystery of Reconciliation, forgiveness of sin. We have so over burdened, our faithful, like the Pharisees about receiving Communion regularly that no one in most cases comes forward except if they wish to carry up their children who can receive on the basis of the faith of their parents

Governmental interference, not opposed, in the past has left us a legacy of sadness in our Church and in this so called free country, our bishops still have not taken the opportunity to actually teach people an Orthodox way of life. Governmental interference in the past has meant a great chasm between Orthodox theory and Orthodox practice. And worst still, when we received a conscientious hierarch who wished a change from mishmash to precious faith,

both bishops and lay politicians banished him from the country and invited one who was eager to pay lip service to Christ just to maintain the status quo. And from on high these bishops were elevated in title to elevated status. Evil succeeds when good people stand by and do nothing. Politicians with infamous reputations are given recognition by bishops of the Church.

And if the Health and Human Services mandate and the *Hosanna-Tabor* case have been among the most egregious assaults on religious liberty, they are not the only ones. Last year, the administration denied renewing funding to the Roman Church's work with victims of human trafficking. Their Conference of Bishops had successfully administered the program for five years, but after the ACLU filed suit demanding that the program also refer women for abortions and contraception, Health and Human Services restructured the program. As a result, highly qualified providers such as the Roman Church are now barred from the program because they in good conscience cannot provide what the government calls a "full range" of reproductive services, namely abortion and contraception. Once again, the administration's secular logic is consistent. Faith based groups may apply only if their "faith and mission" are acceptable to the government.

Earlier, the Obama administration applied a similar standard to individual rights of conscience when it "rescinded most of the federal regulation that protected workers who refuse to perform services they find morally objectionable." (Washington Post, *February 18, 2011*). Health care workers now face the choice of holding onto either their religious beliefs or their jobs. In other words, if the health care institution provides services contrary to Christian moral teaching, such Christian doctors and nurses need not apply.

So, we increasingly witness a new government intolerance of religious values. Perhaps this is why religious souls refer to the Obama administration as the most secular anti religion administration ever seen in this country.

Christians in such circumstances are easily tempted to conform themselves to the spirit of the age. *Do not conform yourselves to this age, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, so that you may judge what is God's will, what is good, pleasing and perfect. Thus, in virtue of the favor given me, I warn each of you not to think more highly of himself than he ought. Let him estimate himself soberly, in keeping with the measure of faith that God has*

apportioned him Romans 12, 2, 3. Unquestionably, the spirit of our age is profoundly secular and anti - God. And secularism accepts religious faith – if it accepts it at all – only on its own terms. Under this view, religious faith is subordinated to the political interests of the secular state to be used by the state to its own advantage. And it is precisely this subordination of religious faith to the state that the First Amendment seeks to prevent.

We must be clear: We value religious liberty not only because it protects our personal conscientious autonomy; we value religious liberty because of the good that religious faith brings to the life of the individual believer and into the very life of our nation.

A Time for Witness and a Time for Choice

Neither embrace nor hate can solve for the Church her problem of secular society. Instead, we must constructively engage secularism. The question for us is: How do we as believers in Jesus Christ go about doing this in the United States today?

Last year, Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius told a luncheon audience, “We are at war.” How can believers sincerely hope to put away such partisan and unhealthy rhetoric? We do not need a government that sees itself at “war” with its own citizens. We must pray and devotedly labor for another different solution.

As disciples of Christ, as followers of the Lord, as Christians, we are called to be witnesses. But to be true witnesses we must preserve an authentic Christian identity. And we must preserve it especially from the heavy hand of government. We must stabilize our own commitment through prayer. Publicly we ask the Holy Spirit to guide our nation and its leaders, but privately, in our own prayer closet we must raise sincere and concerned intercessory prayer for religious freedom.

During the current Health and Human Services controversy, some have asked, “What kind of Christian is it that would impose such government mandates on our religious institutions?”

In December, 1941, with Britain in mortal peril and America reeling after Pearl Harbor, Winston Churchill addressed the United States Congress. In that worst of times, he scorned the enemies of freedom and defiantly asked: "What kind of people do they think we are?"

Today, with the same defiance of believing hearts and souls, trusting in the grace guidance of the Holy Spirit, we can declare: "What kind of believers in Jesus Christ do they think we are?"

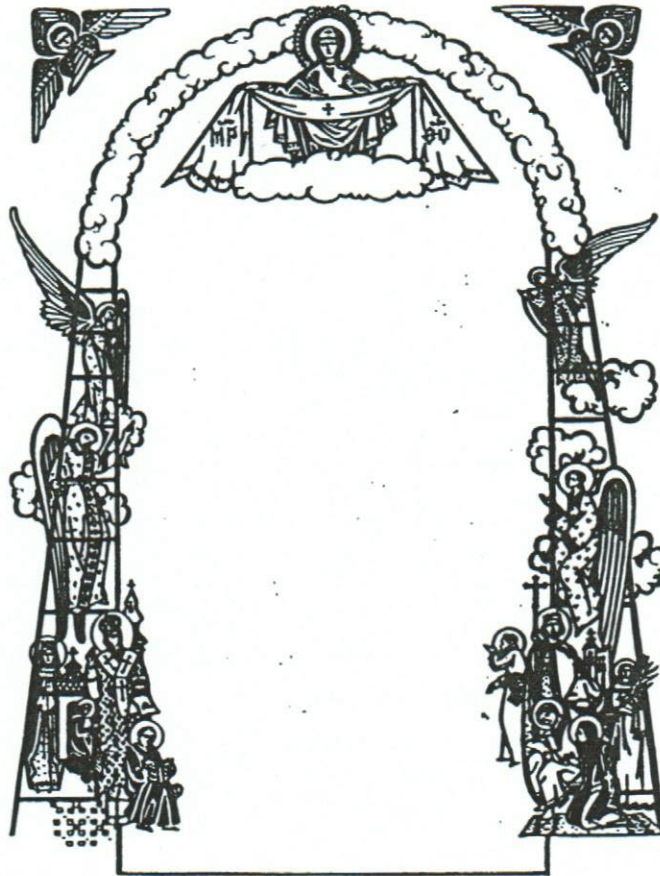
Do they really expect us to go gently and submissively into the dark night they prepare for religious liberty in America? Do they not know that people who believe in "one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church" can never agree to compromise the Body and Bride of Christ, our blessed Church by entangling intrinsically evil acts? Do they not see that faithful believers will never accept cynical political strategies of "divide and conquer" to separate us from Christ our Saviour?

As believers in Jesus Christ, we have reason for hope. When we seek by prayerful and peaceful means to preserve our own spiritual identity, we are not a divisive force to society. To the contrary, actions that respect our religious diversity benefit all Americans and contribute to our nation's unity. Although we live in a time, from the standpoint of religious liberty, it seems there are more doors closing than doors that are opening. But we must believe it is for the purpose of our witness that our heavenly Father has brought Orthodox people to this nation for a new springtime of the Gospel message. We can play a great role in the renewal of American life.

We can look to our past history. When Islam deathly threatened the imperial capital city of Constantinople, faithful believers prayed in the Church of the Blacherne and because of the sincerity of their devotion, faith and prayer, our heavenly Father showed by the presence of the Mother of God his devoted love and caused the destruction of the invaders and saved the city and empire. We celebrate this event as the feast of the Protection of the Birthgiver of God on October 1. Let us likewise gather in our churches and pray for continued freedom of religious expression in our nation for our Church.

Every great religious renewal in America has led to an advance in civil rights – from the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights to the end of slavery and the pursuit of racial equality in which one of our own Bishops participated to advance its cause.

So this is a time for choosing, choosing and praying, choosing whether as believers in Jesus Christ we will stand together to keep open the doors of religious liberty. If we rightly do so, we will make possible the next Great Awakening in America that will bring us closer to building that culture of life and civilization of love in which Christ insisted we participate and advance. May we not be afraid of our choosing!



ONUPHRIUS THE DESERT-DWELLER

The pages of Church History are filled with stories about men and women who literally sacrificed everything and dedicated their lives to perfecting their relationship with Jesus Christ. The extreme measures that some of them took to attain their spiritual goals often defy description. Such is the story of Onuphrius the Desert-Dweller. If it were not for another monk named Paphnutius, the world would never have known of the spiritual exploits of this amazing man. Paphnutius himself spent time in the deserts of Egypt, living the life of a hermit. One day, he decided to go further into the wilderness to see if he could find someone who labored for the Lord more than he did. It was on the seventeenth day of this journey that he discovered St. Onuphrius. When Paphnutius first saw him, he was frightened by his appearance — his snow-white beard extended down to the ground and he was clothed in a humble garment made from the leaves of desert plants. Onuphrius told his fellow monk that he had been raised in a monastery, but that one day an angel appeared to him and instructed him to go into the desert and live alone. For 60 years, he lived in total isolation. God attended to his needs — there was a spring right beside the cave in which he lived, as well as a fruit-bearing palm tree, which not only provided him with food, but with refuge from the hot desert sun. According to Onuphrius, an angel brought him Holy Communion every Saturday and Sunday. That evening, the two monks spent hours in prayer, and in the morning, Onuphrius greeted Paphnutius with these words: “Today, I shall finish the course of my life. God has sent you here to bury my body.” After instructing Paphnutius to return to his monastery and relate his story to his monastic brothers, Onuphrius lay down and uttered his final words: “Into Thy hand, O God, I commend my spirit.”