





# Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Second Sunday after Pentecost

June 21, 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 graciously welcome all today in celebrating honors to our beloved fathers. We are uplifted as we recall the exemplary faith of so many fathers who provide the vital security of response to God's first shown love in our families. We gratefully commend the souls of our departed fathers to the gracious repose of our heavenly Father whose common name inspired their fidelity to Christ. Today as we pray for all our fathers, living and departed, our wish for all is a happy celebration with loved ones of this Fathers' Day!



+++ Wednesday is the feast of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist. In anticipation of the holyday, the Divine Liturgy will be celebrated Tuesday evening at 7: 30 PM. Please come and join us in prayer and praise.

+++ 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.

+++ Father acknowledges with deep gratitude two gifts presented the church this past week in honor of ordination to the priesthood by MM Paul Pallas and Alexander Choti and invokes upon them blessings of the Lord for the manifestation of their love of Christ's the priesthood and the Church. Many and Blessed Years!

+++ 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, ██████ Refund, ██████; Utilities, ██████; Kitchen, ██████ 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 41 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: Father Lucas, Pani Lucas, Pani Buletza and Dolores Waller.

+++ 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.

+++ 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 ~~\$2,000.00~~ on this project to date!

+++ We are in the Apostles Fast in preparation for the coming feast of our parish patron, St. Paul, and St. Peter, prime apostles, whose feast is celebrated Monday, June 29. Please observe the prescriptions of the fast by giving up meat products as a sacrifice acceptable to the Lord for the success of our building program, particularly the variance we are applying for on the property previously thought to contain 4.67 acre while in fact our engineers and surveyors determine it is 4.72 acres from the tax map. This past week, Father was notified the County Board of Chosen Freeholders unanimously approved the purchase of our property at ~~\$602,100.00~~

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

+++ 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!

## **Bake Sale**

**On Friday, July 3, we will have a Bake Sale for Nut,**

**Poppy Seed, Apricot and Prune Rolls.**

**Please secure orders from your friends.**





## God Is Discerning

*But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at outward appearances, but the Lord looks at the heart" 1 Samuel 16: 7.*

*Get to know the God of your fathers. Worship and serve him with a clean heart and willing mind, for the Lord sees every heart and understands and knows every thought. If you seek him, you will find him, but if you forsake him, he will permanently throw you aside 1 Chronicles 28: 9.*

*For a man's ways are in full view of the Lord and he examines all his paths Proverbs 5: 21.*

*The Lord's light penetrates the human spirit, exposing every hidden motive Proverbs 20: 27.*

*O Lord you have examined me and known me. You know my sitting down and my arising, you understand my thoughts afar off. You search my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, but you know it beforehand. You are before me and behind me and have laid your hand on me. Such knowledge is wonderful for me to understand and it is so exalted I cannot grasp it. Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend into heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold you are there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the innermost parts of the sea, even there shall your hand lead me and your right hand shall hold me. If I say surely the darkness shall cover me, even the night shall be light about me. Yes, the darkness does not hide me from you but the night shines like the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to you Psalms 139: 1 - 12.*



# Did You Know That ...

...there is a fountain of youth; it is your mind, your talents, the creativity you bring to your life and the lives of the people you love?

...when you say that you agree to a thing in principle you mean that you have not the slightest intention of carrying it out in practice?

...we seldom attribute common sense except to those who agree with us?

...few are qualified to shine in company, but it is most men's power to be agreeable?

...ambition is an overmastering desire to be vilified by enemies while living and made ridiculous by friends when dead?

...no bird soars too high if he soars on his own wings?

...the slave has but one master, but the ambitious man has as many as he thinks can help make his fortune?

...we grow neither better nor worse as we get older, but more and more like ourselves?

...age does not depend upon years but upon temperament and health; some are born old and some never grow old?

...the test of a vocation is the love of the drudgery it involves?

...if you think you can, you can, and if you think you cannot, you are probably right?

...one never notices what has been done; one can only see what remains to be done?

...the reward of a thing well done is to have done it?

...everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself?

...every man has three characters: that which he shows, that which he is and that which he thinks he is.

...every thief thinks everyone else is a thief?



## Turning Evil Into Good

The apostle Paul told believers at Thessalonica that he and his co-workers wanted to visit them but satan hindered them. "We wanted to come to you...but satan hindered us" 1 Thessalonians 2: 18.

Does it disturb you to read that a child of God can be blocked by the devil from doing what he believes to be the will of God? Are you offended that even St. Paul was detoured from fulfilling God's will in his life by the influence and machinations of satan?

If it does, do not forget, always remember that nothing happens without God's knowledge, nor apart from his direct or permissive will. The Lord can take any deed, whether of satan or man, and turn it around for his own purposes and glory. The devil's hindering of Paul for example, resulted in great benefit for believing Christians! Because he could not speak to the Thessalonians personally, the apostle wrote them a significant letter. This portion of God's revelation to us in Scripture has been a source of rich blessing, instruction and comfort to believers down through the centuries.

Thus, once again, we are reminded of the insightful and benevolent response of the Old Covenant Joseph to his brothers who sold him into slavery. They feared in his new position of exalted authority in Egypt, he would seek just and terrible revenge, but instead he said, "You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good" Genesis 50: 20.

What a joyous comfort it is to know that nothing, absolutely nothing happens apart from the will of our heavenly Father! "We know that God makes all things work together for the good of those who have been called according to his decree...If God is for us, who can be against us" Romans 8: 28, 31?

There is a certainty of love  
that sets my heart at rest,  
a calm assurance for today  
that what God does is best.

Our God can easily bring showers of blessing out of incessant storms of adversity.

# The After People

## **Orthodox believers in our parish are there**

- ... after you've washed and returned the last casserole dish.
- ... after the divorce papers have been served and the bottom falls out of your life.
- ... after the last child honks the horn, waves, and drives away—and the house suddenly seems incredibly empty.
- ... after you arrive home following the funeral service and the emotions you've held at bay come crashing in on you.
- ... after the relationship has ended but the wounds are still bleeding and painful.
- ... after the doctors have said, "There's nothing more we can do."
- ... after the door has slammed shut—for the very last time.
- ... after the phone call you'd always hoped you'd never get.
- ... after you realize the hands on the gold watch you received at your retirement party move more slowly than you ever imagined.
- ... after the nursing home director shakes your hand and says, "Welcome to your new home."
- ... after the gavel goes down, the handcuffs go on, and your loved one is led away.
- ... after the baby has arrived, putting more demands on you than you ever dreamed possible.
- ... after you find the pink slip inserted with what is now your final paycheck.
- ... after your family and friends have heard your story one too many times, but you still need to talk it out.

**Orthodox believers** are the "After People." We are ready to come alongside you—or your friends, neighbors, coworkers, or relatives—and provide comfort and support for as long "after" as we are needed.



## HIS MISSION

*And the whole crowd sought to touch him; because power went out from him which healed all*  
Luke 6: 19.

During his entire sojourn on earth among us, was He not ever ready to heal diseased bodies? And do we think, even now that He is unwilling to serve the needs of distressed souls? Perish the thought! He is always at the disposal of the maimed, the blind, the distressed, yes, even of the repellent leper too. He was ever prepared, uncomplainingly, to relieve suffering, though it cost him something, a share of heavenly grace with the needy "...because power went out from him..." And is true even so much unbelief was expressed by those whom He befriends and heals. As it was then a part of his mission to heal the sick, so it is a part of his service ministry to bind up the brokenhearted. What a Servant we have in Jesus Christ!

How similar s the vocation of our fathers! What a servant we are to have in our fathers! And fathers today in our time and age, are called upon to duplicate as much as is possible the service of the Lord in family life, to share whatever prayer virtue they possess with their loved ones, with family members, particularly the young and needy. How much of a good example the Lord provided, even in times when it was not appreciated, even castigated and vilified!

The life and tender compassion of our Lord is a challenge for fathers to imitate. The brokenness in family life, the hurt, the fractures must be covered by living faith response to need in our midst. The almighty God, the all tender Man, the one who is infinitely above us in his original nature stoops to heal, to make whole, to revive and nourish. He who is overall beyond us in present glory, who became flesh and blood, lived on the same plane as we do, experienced the same troubles and suffered as we do, though far more acutely, invites and asks our fathers to be faithful to their vocation in family life today. Fathers, permit your family members to cast their cares upon you so that you may call upon the Lord on their behalf and obtain healing and blessing from heaven!

Jesus was a dynamic personality, full of zeal for the salvation of mankind. His listeners inherently sensed this in their very depths. Jesus calls and invites the mind is attentive and responds. Jesus calls and the soul is filled and heads in his direction. Jesus calls and the feet are vitalized and run after him.

The gospel writers show at the very beginning of his public ministry an urgent concern for continuing the work of salvation beyond his earthly sojourn.

He calls particular people to follow him. Immediately, they dropped what they were doing and went with him. How often do we meet someone who is so strong and so attractive and so compelling and so thoroughly credible that we would leave our jobs and even our relatives and loved ones and follow that person? What kind of personal power could move you that much?

Jesus began his ministry along the shore of the Sea of Galilee. This large inland lake, some 13 miles long, is in the northern district of Palestine. The lake is fed by the Jordan River, which springs further north and runs like a thread southward through the Holy Land to the Dead Sea in the Negev Desert. In the time of Jesus, nine towns of varying sizes lined the lakes' shoreline for it provided several

kinds of livelihood, including fishing. The first disciples called by Jesus were fishermen from one of those towns. These men had a fleet of boats large enough to need hired hands; but they left it all to follow Jesus.

Jesus preached the arrival of the kingdom of God. He gathered a few followers and promised them new and special work. His personal power was evident and the disciples responded to him. Jesus also spoke in the synagogue in Capernaum. Since he was new in town, it was customary that he would be invited to speak. Visitors or newcomers in a synagogue were usually asked if they had something to offer the gathered congregation. The astounding response and reaction of his hearers to spellbinding insights was extraordinary.

Have you ever heard anyone speak with such authority St. Mark describes in his gospel narrative? Such people are rare. They speak from strong personal conviction and experience and they have a clear sense of their own personal identity. This is the way





Jesus spoke. He taught what He knew, not what He heard from others or read in books. It must have been exciting to hear him as He spoke with authority!

The quality of authority that spellbound and attracted the first disciples and people of Capernaum is still available to us today. It comes in a variety of ways. We can find Jesus at the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, in the sacramental Mysteries, in the forgiveness offered a soul who is repentant. Some find him in private prayer. Still others met him in responding to the needs of those less fortunate. We can see him and recognize him in experiences of deepest beauty or shared love and in worship. Suddenly an event takes on a new quality as we recognize his presence in our midst.

**Jesus**

**Still**

**Calls**

**Disciples**

*Teach*

*me*

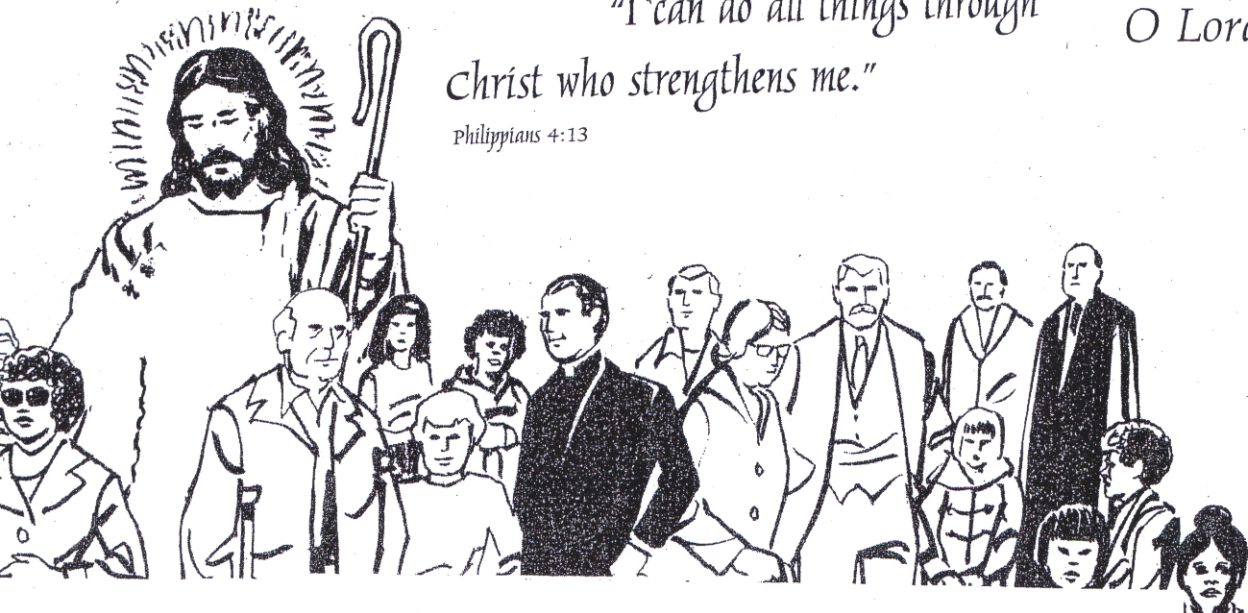
*your*

*ways,*

*O Lord.*

*"I can do all things through  
Christ who strengthens me."*

*Philippians 4:13*





COME!

FOLLOW ME!



# Prayer for Vocations

O Lord, our God, You created us out of nothing and brought us to perfection in Christ Jesus, your only-begotten Son. You granted us the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter



and Spirit of Truth, to be with us always, to impart to your Church all the gifts we need for sanctification. Today we humbly implore You, grant us an abundance of vocations to the holy priesthood, to the sacred diaconate in Christ, to the monastic and religious life, to those who would lead the faithful in singing your praise at worship. Do not permit the Church to be deprived of spiritual gifts as the manifestation of your ineffable glory. Turn our hearts to hear the words of your invitation and recognize its dignity: "Come, follow me!" Grant to your Church eager servants ready to follow You with zeal and devoted courage. Give to your Church servants who, in their limited weakness, receive the Spirit of wisdom and understanding and are strengthened by your

grace. Open our deaf ears that we recognize our importance in the spread of your gospel message. Give to your Church servants ready and willing to lead and serve, to teach and comfort, to give of themselves only for heavenly reward. Indeed, do not permit us to be orphaned but make us aware of your presence through your Holy and adorable Spirit, Who is present everywhere and fills all things, Who raises up mere mortals to divine service in love of your people, of your Body, the Church. Fill our hearts and souls with an appreciation for your servants in our midst, that we always be inclined to follow their example to eternal salvation. Permit us the grace to show our appreciation for the sacrifices made in our behalf by your hand chosen servants in our midst. For You alone are holy and the Giver of sanctification, Who together with your Son and your all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit are praised forever and ever, Amen.



## Sunset Hours

*They shall still bear fruit in old age; they shall be fresh and flourishing* Psalms 92: 14.

If you are still young and energetic, you may find it difficult to sympathize, never mind empathize, with sentiments and feelings that afflict many older people. But those who have passed the midpoint on one's life journey and have begun to descend the westering slope can appreciate what David had to say, "I have been young and now am old" Psalms 37: 25.

And because aging often brings with it pain and loss, deprivation and sickness, there may be those who vainly wish that their summer time days would never end.

As they sit silently in the quiet isolation of older years, no doubt the thought enters their mind, "Some day my life's little day will soften down to eventide. My sunset hours will come...and then, I know there will arise, out of the dusk, a dawning fairer than any dawn that has yet broken with light upon me. Out of the last tints of sunset there shall rise a day such as I shall never have known before, a day that shall restore to me all that the other days have taken from me, and a day that shall never fade into twilight."

So no matter where we are on the heavenward pilgrimage, if we are walking with Jesus we can rejoice. If by his grace, we have maintained Christ first and foremost in our life practice, the sense of angels guiding us is assured. And since we know that our faithful everlasting Father will abide with us until our journey on earth is over, we can actually be thankful for the lengthening shadows and the setting sun which anticipate our reunion with heaven's glory.

It is only in old and advanced, experienced years that we can more easily espouse the inner thoughtful conviction of St. Paul: "To live is Christ and to die is gain" Philippians 1: 21. If our living is Christ, then our dying will even be more so. If our devotion is to Christ above everything else, our eternity will be unity with the Holy Trinity and company with the saints and bodiless powers.

Longer years on earth provide insights not available to those more immature and inexperienced. He now knows and understands that both sunshine and shadow both alike serve the will of God. He better recognizes God's work is not over at our baptism, that it has just begun and must persevere until the victory of Jesus' Resurrection reaches and touches all men.



# **WISDOM! BE ATTENTIVE**

*The stone was sealed by the Jews, soldiers guarded Your most pure body! And You, O Saviour, arose on the third day granting life to the world. The heavenly powers acclaimed You, O Giver of Life: Glory to Your Resurrection, O Christ! Glory to Your majesty. Glory to Your plan of salvation. You alone love mankind Troparion, Resurrection Tone One.*

*You, being God, arose in glory from the grave, raising the world with You. Mankind praises You as God; Death reigns no more. Adam sings with exultation, O Lord; Eve freed from bondage cries joyfully: O Christ, it is You Who gives Resurrection to all! Kontakion, Resurrection Tone One.*

*May Your kindness O Lord, be upon us who have put our hope in You! Prokimenon, Resurrection Tone One.*

*Let us sing a hymn of praise to the Lord; He freely was crucified. He suffered and was buried for us; He arose from the dead. Let us all say: O Christ, confirm Your Church in the Orthodox faith. Give us Your peace. You are gracious and You love mankind Vesper Hymn, Tone One.*

*The prophecy of Isaiah has been fulfilled in you, o Virgin! You have given birth, and after birth you remained the same. The Lord born of you is God; He has renewed all creation. Do not reject the supplications we offer to you, O Mother of God. You have carried the compassionate Lord; have pity on those who come to You. Intercede for the salvation of our souls Vesper Hymn, Tone One.*

*Let creation rejoice; let the heavens be glad. Let all people cheerfully clap their hands. Christ our Saviour has nailed our sins to His Cross. He has crushed death by His death. He has granted life to us by raising Adam; he alone loves mankind Vesper Hymn, Tone One.*

*Let us sing a hymn of praise to the Word. He is co-eternal with His Father. He was born of the Virgin in a wondrous way. He freely accepted crucifixion and death for us. He arose in glory. Let us all say: Glory to You, O Lord, Life-giver and Saviour of our souls! Vesper Hymn, Tone One.*

Jesus continues to call us to himself. We can receive him by opening ourselves to his dynamic personality. When we hear his authority, we are invited joyfully to respond to him, to go along with him, to stay in his company. His call to us as disciples means – at least – that He wants to be a participant in our lives.

One way we can easily open up ourselves to Jesus is to take a half hour of quiet time alone, or silent time as a family group and read the Sunday gospel lesson slowly and meditatively. Permit yourself, in imagination, to be beside the lake, near the boats and nets and fishing gear. Smell all the smells and hear all the sounds.

Place yourself right in the middle of the scene. Then think about Jesus walking down the path and approaching you there on the shore.

Let your inner ear hear his voice and his words. Ponder how you feel in his presence. What kind of personality do you experience? How do you respond to him? Is there a gentle warmth that takes over your entire frame because He is beside you?

Permit these realistic imaginative reflections to become clear and lively. Then respond to Jesus as He inspires your soul. It is a wonderful form of meditative prayer to participate with the disciples as you slowly begin your earthly pilgrimage in their midst following after him. Hear his spell-binding call in your own heart and enthusiastically join the others!

## The Call Of Christ

**Jesus calls with compassion.**

**He seriously invites us to follow him.**

**Jesus constantly invites.**

**His voice is unmistakable.**

**His invitation is intended for response.**

**He invites because our talents and gifts are valuable to the kingdom.**

**His call includes carrying the cross.**

**His call responds to our need.**

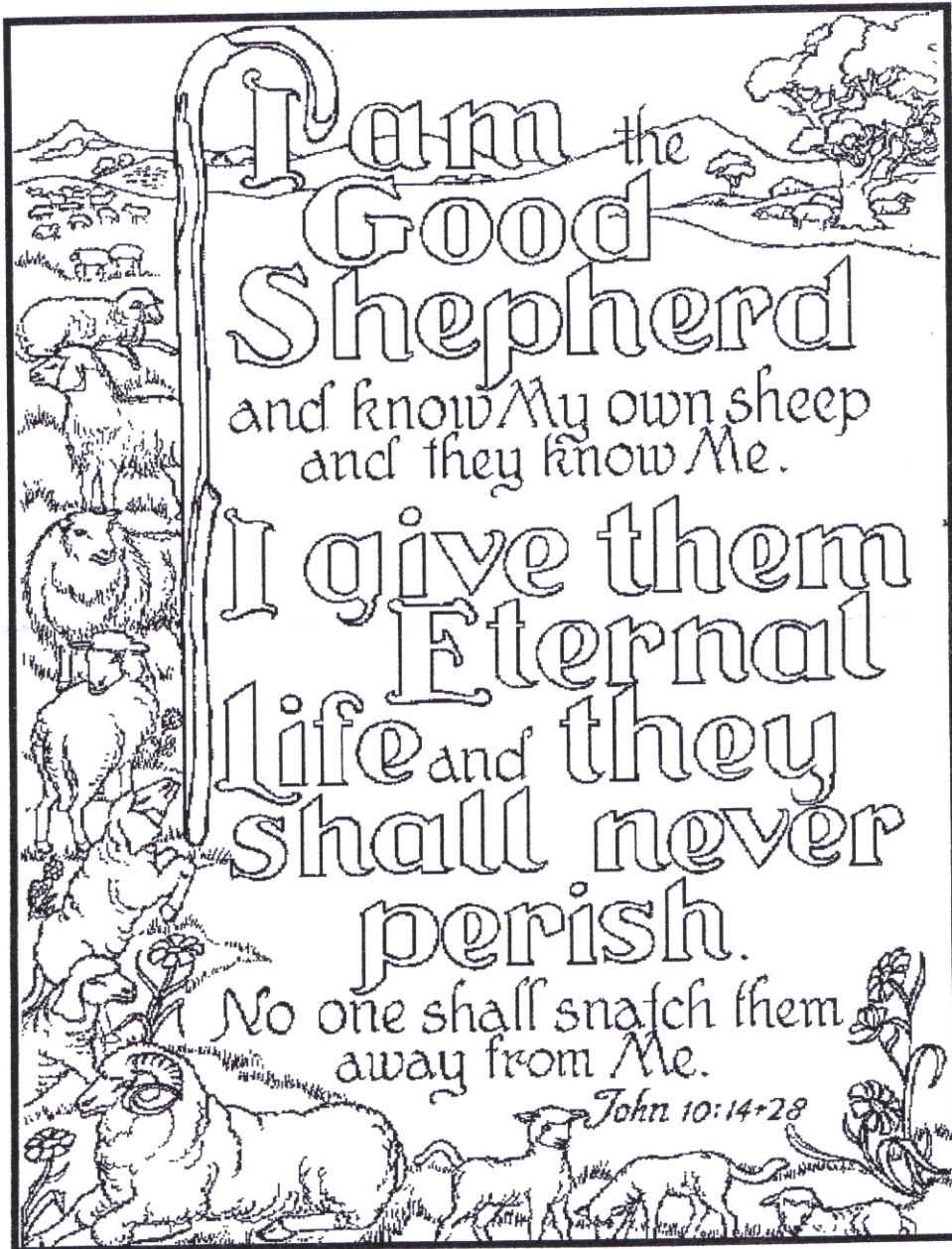
**His call is an invitation to intimacy with God.**

**Heavenly Treasure is our reward.**

**Unimaginable joy accompanies our response.**

**We make a mistake to ignore him.**





I am the  
Good  
Shepherd

and know My own sheep  
and they know Me.

I give them  
Eternal  
Life and they  
shall never  
perish.

No one shall snatch them  
away from Me.

*John 10:14+28*

# A quiet man with **much** to say

Fathers' Day in the United States especially, has become a day to recognize the important place of dad. While the celebration itself may be focused on a Fathers' Day card, or a special meal, at its heart is the recognition that a father plays a singularly important role in the life of a family. Children need a father. Fathers have a God-given responsibility to their children. The father vocation is mapped out in God's revelation to us; it is not learn as you go.

There was a time when this seemed to be a truism. Today that cannot be taken for granted. We live in a culture where the family is under tremendous pressure, not to say assault. Under the banner of personal freedom, more and more fathers and mothers are walking away from their mutual responsibility to their children and leaving them to the care of either one of them or to a third party, or just about abandoning their responsibility entirely even through they remain in the home. Parents today are not providing a morally upright example for their children, thus we see the slow and gradual erosion of values and religious faith. Movies and television shows often emphasize the single-parent family and increasingly exclude the role of the father. In instances where he is depicted as present, he is ridiculed as a bungling fool, to be tolerated, or just used as an excuse for jokes.

---



**In some segments of our community it has become commonplace for fathers to walk away from their responsibility to the children they have generated. In other instances, they make children their gods by substituting them and their alleged needs for the Triune God and according children the same deference they would the Creator. What makes this all the more disconcerting is the silence on the part of so much of our society about the erosion of God's values as if the democratic majority can substitute itself for the promises of our God. This is construed too readily by younger people as approval.**

**The contrast between the dysfunctional culture that beckons us to the future and the family's values which are woven into our tradition challenge us to pay more attention to family life. We need to examine more carefully the role of the father and the vocation to fatherhood with all of its joys and responsibilities. Aware of the significant cultural changes in societies around the world and against the backdrop of the assault on family life, the Church holds up St. Joseph as an example for our age. We are called upon to look more deeply into the values of our Orthodox faith and its meaning in our time.**

**We can underscore the marriage of St. Joseph to Mary. This is the foundation of his role in salvation history. Joseph, son of David, was asked by God to take Mary as his wife. She was to bear a son, conceived by the Holy Spirit whom he was to call Jesus. "Joseph, son of David, have no fear about taking Mary as your wife. It is by the Holy Spirit that she has conceived this child. She is to have a son and you are to name him Jesus because he will save his people from their sins" Matthew 1: 20, 21.**

**The divine messenger introduces Joseph to the mystery of Mary's motherhood, but Joseph was to have a singular role in the unfolding of the mystery of our redemption. He would join Mary in being the first guardian of this divine mystery. Together with Mary and in relation to her he is intimately involved in this final stage of God's revelation that takes place in Christ.**

**To accept all of this, Joseph, like Mary, had to be a person of faith. What strikes us when we look at the pages of Scripture and see the figure of Joseph – even if he is sketched somewhat faintly against all other dominant figures – is his great and abiding faith. When the angel comes to him in a dream and says to him that he is to take Mary as his wife, Joseph never hesitates. "When Joseph awoke he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and received her into his home as his wife" Matthew 1: 24. When he has to set out with very little provision to Bethlehem where his wife's child will**

be born, he does so unflinchingly and without complaint. “And so Joseph went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to David’s town of Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to register with Mary, his espoused wife, who was with child” Luke 2: 4. And when God tells him to flee with the child for safety, his response is total and complete. “After they had left, the angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph with the command, ‘Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you otherwise. Herod is searching for the child to destroy him.’ Joseph got up and took the child and his mother and left that night for Egypt” Matthew 2: 13, 14). Little is said of St. Joseph in the New Testament but what does come through is the brief introduction is a man of great faith.

Joseph’s role in salvation history is linked to Mary because of his marriage to her. This marriage is the juridical basis of fatherhood. While Joseph was not the true father of Jesus, nonetheless he was son of the Blessed Mother and therefore, in that capacity he assumed responsibility for the child Jesus and for his mother as well.

The service of fatherhood is a tremendous gift. Mary’s marriage to Joseph and their relationship with each other is the starting point for our understanding of Joseph’s relationship to Jesus. It is interesting our heavenly Father insists on marriage in the framework into which Jesus from heaven enters earthly life. God does not create such an astoundingly public fanfare over the perpetual virginity of Mary to exclude the necessity of marriage for her giving birth. Instead, He honors the original covenant between Adam and Eve and requires marriage as the stage upon which family life is to be lived. He invites Joseph to honor this salutary tradition and in positively responding, the foster father to be does not make excuses. He too recognizes and realizes the holiness of family life as vital and necessary for the rearing of a Godly family.

Because Joseph becomes the spouse of Mary they form a family as the only God-generated and blessed plan for bringing life into the world. As spouses come together to exchange vows publicly and have their marriage blessed by the grace of the Holy Spirit, they become a foundation for a family. It is only upon this foundation that God can truly build a holy and sanctified group of souls eager to glorify him and save their souls.

Marriage in its nature is indissoluble and intended to provide mutual support to spouses. In a society where family life is visibly collapsing and our social order is unraveling, the teaching of the Church on the indissolubility of marriage and the privileged obligation of parents to their children, is a timely remedy. Today, we



observe the spread of surrogate families and all kinds of nonsensical interpretations and misunderstandings of what family life consist in.

In some communities pernicious criminal gangs serve as substitutes for families. We even have new terms, “at-risk youth” to describe children and teenagers who feel alienated from family and society. Many of us expect that somehow the state or society should assume the responsibilities of the family. In a time like this the wisdom of the Church’s teaching becomes obviously apparent.

In God’s plan for our salvation the second person of the Blessed Trinity was to become one of us. To do that, Mary would bring forth her child. St. Joseph would be called by God to serve the person and mission of Jesus Christ through the exercise of his fatherhood. Thus we can rejoice that St. Joseph through his marriage to Mary, the Birthgiver of God, was caught up in the mystery of spiritual fatherhood and became a model of marriage, care of one’s child and as an exemplar of the Holy Family.

The family is essential because it is the original cell of social life. It is the natural society in which a husband and wife come together in love and invest themselves in mutual support. From the original cell the whole human community grows in an ever-widening set of relationships. While the generation of Jesus is entirely unique in all of human history, the responsibilities of Joseph remained rooted in his marriage to Mary and his relationship therefore, to Jesus.

The gospels clearly describe the responsibilities of Joseph toward Jesus. The Church reminds us how the responsibilities and privileges were discharged, beginning with the journey to Bethlehem and the protection and care of Mary at the Nativity of Jesus Christ where Joseph becomes eyewitness to God’s redeeming love. Joseph goes on to discharge his spiritual responsibility as father with his son’s circumcision and the conferring of the name Jesus. The presentation and Meeting of the Lord in the Temple, the flight into Egypt and the finding of the child Jesus in the temple are all examples in Scripture of Joseph’s care for and nurture of Jesus. Can fathers today say all they do is for the cause of nurturing Jesus in the souls and lives of their families?

From one perspective, the most telling line in Scripture relative to Joseph’s relationship to Jesus is found in the Gospel of St. Luke. The Evangelist notes that Mary and Joseph returned to Nazareth with Jesus where He grew “...in wisdom and age and favor before God and man” Luke 2: 52. Here one’s imagination can depict the daily

routine of this adolescent – this teenager – growing up and coming to know the faith and values of his family, his response to God’s first shown love, and his place in the affection of his parents.

It is sometimes difficult to realize that Jesus had to learn to speak, to read and to write. He had to be taught manners and how to relate to others. He had to learn his prayers. He had chores and responsibilities to family life which He discharged so it would run smoothly. In all of this we can envision the role of Joseph. At the same time Jesus was becoming more fully aware of his deepest inner identity and his mission as Redeemer of the world.

As a just man, as a husband, the Church unfolds for us a picture of Joseph who is enveloped in love: love for God, love of life, love of his spouse for the sake of God, and love for the child committed to his care. Jesus becomes the focal point of Joseph’s life because in married life, enormous challenges surfaced daily and Joseph realized it was love that makes all this part of his vocational blessing, for himself and for the world.

A Christian **family** is a sign and image of the **Father**, the Son and the Holy Spirit, just as every **believer** is a manifestation of God’s **love** within us and the world.

In the marriage ceremony the readings from Scripture remind us that a marriage – the coming together of a man and a woman – is a part of God’s plan expressed plainly in the book of Genesis. The fulfillment of God’s plan requires an enormous amount of effort on the part of both spouses. But without God’s grace the task is impossible. It is love that brings the effort to the fore every day – day in and day out.

Among the “hard sayings” of Jesus, “What God has joined together no man must separate” Mark 10: 9, is a particularly challenging one for many people today. Fifty per cent of all marriages fail in the United States today and the rate



continues to climb. Perhaps what Jesus was saying to all is that it is impossible to sustain a loving permanent relationship through all the difficulties of life without the firm commitment that in spite of all trials and tribulations, the partnership will endure. In a society that so lightly and easily sets aside personal commitment, we should not be surprised that marriage is in a state of decline. The vision of love and marriage left us by Christ continues to offer sound direction and true guidance, but America chooses to follow Hollywood guidelines rather than those of our Creator.

Work was the daily expression of love in the life of the family of Nazareth. Something as wondrous as a successful marriage and as beautiful as a functioning family does not happen accidentally or on its own. Much prayerful and purposeful effort has to be invested in it. A mother, a father, and children all need to work at making a family a success. Such effort is an expression of enduring upright love. The success of a good marriage is working at it every day. The picture of St. Joseph, as spouse of Mary and foster-father of Jesus invites the image of a gentle loving man wise enough to teach a child and strong enough to be present at the important moments to lead by example every day.

St. Joseph is clearly a patron for fathers and a model of parenting for our day. The child Jesus had what we would call today a “role model” in his young adolescent life because parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children and that means primarily education in Godly values and truths. The home should be a center for education in virtue. It is also to be what is called the “domestic” Church. A Christian family constitutes a specific manifestation and realization of ecclesial communion. It is a sign and an image of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit just as the Church itself and every believer are to be a manifestation of the love of God within us and at work in the world around us.

St. Joseph is a compelling example for all fathers and this patronage must be invoked as very necessary for the paternal vocation, not only as a defense against all dangers, but also and, indeed, primarily, as an impetus for renewed commitment to evangelization in the world so that fathers function as they ought and are received in the spirit Christ dispatches them into the world to be witnesses of heavenly love. Fathers must be primarily interested in spreading faith in their own families and homes. Just as St. Joseph was responsible for Jesus’ human understanding in faith, so St. Joseph is a model to every believer of the privilege of witnessing by example to the spread of Christ’s faith.

Each of us is called to evangelize and we will only be as excited about it and serious as are our fathers. We all know of friends, co-workers and neighbors who are not participants in the sacramental life of the Body of Christ. It is fathers first of all, who must reach out to them and invite them to join us in worshipping and glorifying our God so that those fathers can enjoy their dignity as God-inspired and God-approved. In this way, the ever-widening family of faith, God's family will be enriched and renewed.

Through his spiritual relationship to Mary and to Jesus and to the Church, St. Joseph, the model father is an example to each of us, as spouse, as parent and protector. Like St. Joseph we are called by our heavenly Father in a way that quietly but effectively spreads the faith and extends God's kingdom in every place and age.

Living up to the challenges of fatherhood as exemplified by St. Joseph the foster-father is a challenge and a fulfillment for every believing father today. In allying ourselves as fathers with the goals and principles of St. Joseph, we too can become blessed in the sight of our families and in the presence of our God.





## HEARING AN INNOCENT VOICE CALL YOU "FATHER"

**T**oday, our nation observes FATHER'S DAY. This annual commemoration traces its roots back to 1909, when Sonora Smart Dodd thought of it while, of all things, listening to a Mother's Day sermon in her church in Spokane, Washington! It seems that Sonora's mother died giving birth to her, and the responsibility of raising her and her five siblings fell upon the strong shoulders of her own father. She sincerely believed that fathers needed a similar day of recognition, and by the following year, Spokane celebrated the first Father's Day in June – the month in which Sonora's dad had been born. Within a few years, the entire country followed suit, and a new holiday had been born!

The word "father" is often used in reference to spiritual leaders, inventors and originator of ideas. In a family sense, a true father is this . . . and much more. As we read in the poem "What Makes a Dad?" he possesses the ". . . strength of a mountain, the majesty of a tree, the warmth of a summer sun and the calm of a quiet sea."

As Orthodox Christians, we are taught at an early age to honor our father EVERY DAY - not just once a year. Christ Himself, submitted to the will of God, His Heavenly Father, and was ever-obedient to Joseph, His earthly guardian. We must never forget the quiet sacrifices made for us by our fathers and the vital part they played in shaping our lives.

May God bless all fathers on their special day! May they strive to be role models and examples to their children at all times, being guided by the commandments set down by our Heavenly Father, and may they receive God's grace abundantly in their earthly lives as they look forward to the eternal joys of heaven in the world to come.

**The Orthodox Weekly Bulletin . . . . . Vestal, Cliffwood, New Jersey . . . . . Litho in U.S.A.**