



# Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

July 15, 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

+++ Today we celebrate the feast of St. Vladimir, Enlightener of the ancient Rus-Ukraine as well as of the Fathers of the Ecumenical Councils. The greeting is "Christ Is Among Us!" to which we respond, "He Is And Shall Be!"

+++ Yesterday the priests of the diocese gathered in Johnstown to unanimously ask our Holy Father, the Ecumenical Patriarch to appoint Archimandrite Gregory of the Cathedral parish in New Orleans to be our diocesan bishop. Please pray the Holy Spirit guides our spiritual destiny.

+++ This Friday is the simple feast of St. Elias the Prophet. In anticipation, the vesperal Divine Liturgy will be celebrated Thursday evening at 7: 30 PM. Please 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.

+++ Next Sunday is the feast of St. Vladimir, equal to the apostles. Our celebration will conclude with festal anointing.

+++ Father is still attempting to secure a carpenter contractor for the bathroom work. We have the electrician and plumbing people, but seemingly too many think the carpentry work is too little at this time of the year. Father will continue trying.

+++ The annual blessing of vehicles of travel will take place next Sunday, July 22 following the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. Please be with us on that day.

+++ We offer thanks to the Blessed Trinity for inspiring generosity in the souls of our faithful and the blessing of abundant grace in our midst with the offering received this past week: Tithe Offering, ~~XXXXXX~~; Candles, ~~XXXXXX~~; Holy Day, ~~XXXXXX~~; Food Coupons, ~~XXXXXX~~, for a total of ~~XXXXXX~~. We express our profound gratitude to the parishioner communicants who offer 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, Eleni Pallas, Anna Zacharyczuk, 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 ~~XXXXXX~~ from this apostolate. Even your pennies can help and are a blessing to our parish.

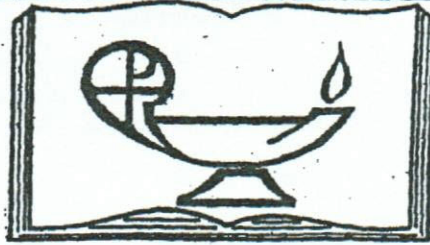
+++ Please be certain to see a member of the Parish Council if you would like to help our parish by using **Shop Rite Food Coupons** available in \$20.00 denominations. We invite **ALL** to be caring and supportive and use Grocery Coupons for food shopping as we have gratefully realized ~~XXXXXX~~ on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

**LORD**



**TEACH  
US**

## **Faith Exemplified**

*The Lord is my strength, my song and my salvation. He is my God and I will praise him. He is my father's God – I will exalt him. Terror and dread have overcome them, O Lord, because of your great power they won't attack us! Your people whom you purchased will pass them by in safety. You will bring them in and plant them on your mountain, your own homeland, O Lord Exodus 15: 2, 16, 19.*

*But if the Lord is with me I shall drive them out of the land Joshua 14: 12.*

*Yes, let us go across to those heathen, Jonathan said to his bodyguard. Perhaps the Lord will do a miracle for us. For it makes no difference to him how many enemy troops there are 1 Samuel 14: 6!*

*I have done this to both lions and bears and I will do it to this heathen Philistine too, for he has defied the armies of the living God. The Lord who saved me from the claws and teeth of the lion and the bear will save me from this Philistine 1 Samuel 17: 36!*

*For you are indeed God and your words are truth; and you have promised me these good things 2 Samuel 7: 28.*

*Yes, God has made an everlasting covenant with me; his agreement is eternal, final, sealed. He will constantly look after my safety and success 2 Samuel 23: 5.*

*O Lord, he cried out to God, no one else can help us! Here we are, powerless against this mighty army. Oh, help us, Lord, our God! For we trust in you alone to rescue us, and in your name we attack this vast horde. Do not let mere men defeat you 2 Chronicles 14: 11, 12.*

*We don not know what to do, but we are looking to you 2 Chronicles 20: 12.*

## Directed by God

*In all your ways acknowledge him and he shall direct your path* Proverbs 3 :6.

If you have ever carried a lantern on dark road at night, you know that you cannot see more than one step ahead of you. But as you take that one step, the lamp moves forward and another step is made plain. And the amazing thing is this: you reach your destination in safety without once walking in darkness, tripping, stumbling or falling. You have light the entire way, even though it is only enough for one step at a time. After all, one step at a time is all you can take whether the journey is short or long.

What a remarkably beautiful illustration of how our Lord guides his children through life! Those who have walked with the Lord can say from personal experience that his is the way He has led them and they are assured of reaching their destination. Nevertheless, the dark curtain of the unknown does veil the Christian pilgrim's pathway. This along with the prospect of lurking dangers, possible pitfalls, and tragic missteps, often upsets even the most experienced of travelers who then weary on their journey through life.

They lose the peace and confidence the Lord intended for them to enjoy. But as they refuse to worry about the "tomorrows" and begin to trust him today, they find grace and guidance for each step of the way. The wise and insightful writer of Proverbs teaches us, "Trust in the Lord and do not rely on your own intelligence; in all your ways be mindful of him and he will make straight your paths" Proverbs 3: 5, 6.

And David recorded this promise from our Creator: "I will instruct you and show you the way you should walk; I will counsel you, keeping my eye on you" Psalms 32: 8.

If we hold firmly the lantern of truth found in our blessed Church, it will always guide us rightly.



*This Tiny Cross of Pain*

Though prayers for healing  
seemed in vain,  
God helped me learn  
to live with pain;  
to use the very  
thing I dread  
for closer walk  
with Him instead;

And how to lend  
a listening ear  
to those who hurt  
and shed a tear  
of sympathy,  
or press their hand—  
worth more because  
I understand.

Dear God, if that's  
the only way  
You'd have me serve  
from day to day,  
please use this  
tiny cross of pain  
for others  
and for Heaven's gain!

## Day Of Rest

*Therefore a Sabbath rest remains for the people of God Hebrews 4: 9.*

Sunday for believers is always a special day. We should be able to recall from our childhood the reverence parents have for God's day. Faithful followers only do the most necessary chores and worship in church should be paramount. Reading books that have spiritual content and inspiration ought to be vital. Sunday, as the day our heavenly Father chose for the triumph of the Resurrection is seen as a time set apart, especially for honor and glorification of our God. While we must not be legalistic (Colossians 2: 16), we must accord to God what the Sunday celebration expects and provides time for. It should be observed in a way that calls attention to the spiritual rest Christ provides through his redeeming work. "Let no one rob you of your prize by insisting on servility in the worship of angels" Colossians 2: 18. It is an honor and great dignity to join the angels and the saints in singing the praises of our God. It is our Church alone that understands this mystery and puts it into practice. It is not we alone who worship, it is that we join the powers of heaven in the never-ending worship of the Blessed Trinity. Thus the honor and dignity of Sunday can never be forgotten or replaced. It is uniquely our awesome understanding and approach to authentic worship and must be upheld and faithfully practiced. It must be an eager response to a heavenly offered privilege.

We learn that Jesus was confronted by legalists. They charged him with breaking the Sabbath when He healed a man. They were wrong; he violated only some erroneous and misunderstood man-made rules and silly interpretations. And his reply, "My Father is at work until now, and I am at work as well" John 5: 17 is significant. It implies that although God's creative work essentially ceased on the seventh day, his redemptive work continues uninterrupted after man sinned.

The writer of the Hebrew epistle picks up this theme when he declares that through faith in Christ we enjoy a spiritual rest, a rest which will finally reach its culmination in heaven. "And he who enters into God's rest rests from his own work as God did from his. Let us strive to enter into that rest so that no one may fall, in imitation of the example of Israel's unbelief" Hebrew 4: 10, 11. From the inspired soul of St. Paul, we

deduct rather simply but realistically and truthfully that neglecting the purpose of Sunday and its opportunity and privilege for worship is placing ourselves in the company of unbelief which characterized the chosen people of the Old Testament from time to time. We thereby set ourselves outside of the ability of our God to save us.

Because we remember most solemnly the triumphant victory of Christ in the Resurrection each and every Sunday in the liturgical practice of the Body of Christ, believers are encouraged to recall the victory they themselves personally will celebrate with Christ. Appropriate time must be given to prayer and preparation if we wish to have the grace of resurrection ourselves.

New Testament church history both show that from the first century believers in Christ met for worship on Sunday. Just as the seventh day celebrated the completion of God's physical creation, so the first day commemorates the completion of God's redemptive work.

Communicants of the Church have been taught to place paramount importance on worship and praise of God in the Holy Trinity each and every Sunday. It is our God who provides us with eternal rest so we ought to be eager to participate in the temporary rest from time to time, on Sundays and holy days so that we are impelled thereby to seek after the never-ending rest provided in the Resurrection.

How the believer invests his time in the value of Sunday identifies his faith response to the Lord. It provides evidence and proof of his faith commitment to the first shown love of our God for mankind. It is rather a simple understanding; if the individual excuses himself here and now from the bond with Christ, he will be inevitably excused from being present with God for all eternity.

Your week is not complete until you make it your goal  
to honor the Lord's Day and nourish your soul;  
the help that you need for the duties you face  
will come as you worship and draw on God's grace.

If the believer makes Sunday his strong day, his full day, his day of worship, the rest of the days will not be weak days.



## Sixth Sunday

*Man ought always to pray and not lose heart*

Luke 18: 1.

There are things we ought to do, but do not take time to do: (a) Balance our check book; (b) Change our car's oil and filter; (c) Get a regular physical examination; and last but certainly not least: (d) Pray! Our Lord has taught us that we always ought to pray and not lose heart. The apostle Paul exhorted believers to "...pray without ceasing" 1 Thessalonians 5: 17. St. Paul speaks today of the varying and differentiated gifts we have been allotted and if we are to utilize them for God's glory, we must pray to be guided and led by his merciful grace.

We know that our lives would be deeper and certainly fuller, and that we would be better prepared to face life's challenges if we would talk to God regularly. But so often we do not take the time and as a result we feel spiritually dry and weak. All the gifts enumerated by St. Paul in the epistle reading today find their total fulfillment in the cooperation of individual faith with the love-inspired grace of our Lord. Not only is the source of our giftedness the Lord himself, but its fulfillment is completed for his glory simply because it is expressed and manifested "...according to the proportion of faith" Romans 12: 7. If we live as we have been gifted, our lives are enriched and our God is glorified.

We can hinder the time that should be spent with our heavenly Father by constantly reminding ourselves we have other things to do so we continually think to ourselves, "I do not have time." In our preoccupied world, of course we do not have time. But we must take time, strangle some other interests and make time to realize the center of power in our life is the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus St. Paul advises us strongly, "Hate what is evil, hold to what is good" Romans 12: 8. We must prioritize and recognize the values of Christ should become ours.

If we fail to balance our checkbook, service our car, or get a physical exam, we can run into serious problems. But if we neglect prayer, we will lose all spiritual power. We will be doomed as were the scribes in today's gospel narrative. Scribes were the ones who copied and wrote the scripture in the time of our Lord. Because they were so often exposed to the law of God, to his revelation among us, they assumed they knew and understood it best. Instead of being instructors and examples of the law of God, they became its dictators and lost love for others who perhaps did not understand it as well as the Scribes thought they themselves did. Their love was with pretense, to show they were on top of the heap when it came to living in response to God's challenges for man. But today they expose their hypocrisy because they did not live up to a fundamental challenge: "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse"

Romans 6: 14. In response to the healing and blessed words of the Lord, within themselves, they murmur, "This man blasphemes."

Our Lord is then constrained to make simplicity plain for them. Yes, He can very easily offer forgiveness to the paralytic because no one will see nor detect it. Unquestionably, forgiving sin cannot be proven except to its recipient. But without doubt these Scribes can readily understand the difference between a man lying on a pallet and in an instant, in response to the explicit command of Christ, rising up and walking away. Thus if Christ can cure this man of physical constraint, obviously, He can also offer forgiveness of sin, something the offending Scribes would not have questioned or lamented if their prayer life enriched them with spiritual wisdom and perception that with God all things are possible. They were so busy doing their outward physical copying work, they had no time enough to pray; so instead of their vocation leading them closer to sanctity and holiness they became too busy to save their souls. Instead of simply inscribing written letters on papyrus, they should have been preoccupied with writing the law of God's love on their hearts and souls so they might live it.

This all sounds a bit like so many of us. Think for a moment of all the things our God has inspired us to do, for example, "Rejoice always..." 1 Thessalonians 5: 16. We are able to rejoice and we have been instructed to demonstrate the joy of the Lord. We know it's a good idea, but we cannot seem to make it a habit. So we need to train ourselves to thank our God regularly, to praise and honor his name in every situation.

Then, of course, we have to think of some of God's other specific commands: "Trust in the Lord" Proverbs 3: 5; "Be filled with the Holy Spirit" Ephesians 5: 18; "Pray without ceasing" 1 Thessalonians 5: 17; "Be holy because God is holy" 1 Peter 1: 15, 16.

Today's gospel narrative teaches us we must encounter the Lord seriously, not as if we are paralyzed and need desperately to be cured, but simply as if we had faith and are believers. Instead of questioning the Lord, we must ask ourselves if we take God's commands seriously ourselves. We must responsibly ask ourselves if we are relying on him for the ability to do what He wants us to do, or do we prefer to go it alone, depending on our own ability and then miserably failing. Obedient to the Lord's initiative and direction, doing what He commands, we should joyfully follow Christ willingly with heart and hands.

Let us never forget servants of Christ must be masters of themselves.



# THE BOOK OF JOSHUA

*Author*—Traditionally ascribed to Joshua, whose name means “salvation.”

*Date*—Although the initial writing was done after entering Canaan, likely the work as it comes down to us from sixth-century BC sources.

*Major Theme*—*God is faithful to fulfill His promise to the children of Israel. The Israelites will inherit the land of promise through (1) obedience to God’s Law and His commands, and (2) Joshua’s leadership and God’s intervention. The failures are the result of Israel’s disobedience.*

*Background*—Under Joshua’s leadership, the Israelites are poised to enter the promised land from the east side of the Jordan River, just north of the Dead Sea. Upon entering the land they would meet Canaanites and Amorites, who had settled there some 500 years previously and had an established system of city-states. The geography the Israelites would encounter consisted of both rugged, barren mountains and fertile farmland. The pagan religion of the Canaanites consisted of numerous gods and goddesses.

## *Outline*

- I. Conquest of the Promised Land (1:1—12:24)
  - A. Command and preparation for the crossing of the Jordan (1:1—18)
  - B. Reconnoiter of Jericho (2:1—24)
  - C. Israel crosses the Jordan (3:1—17)
  - D. Reaffirmation of the Mosaic Covenant (4:1—5:16)
  - E. Defeat of many kings and cities (6:1—11:23)
  - F. Summary of Israel’s conquests (12:1—24)

- II. Division of the Land of Promise among the Israelites (13:1—22:34)
  - A. Command and God’s promise regarding territory not yet conquered (13:1—14)
  - B. Territories of the Trans-Jordanian tribes (13:15—32)
  - C. Division of the territories west of the Jordan (14:1—22:34)
- III. Settlement and Conclusion of Joshua’s Ministry (23:1—24:33)



**Author**—Moses is the author, by the testimony of the book itself (1:5; 31:9, 22, 24) and by the tradition and consensus of Israel and the Church.

**Date**—This book is dated near the end of Moses' life, before the entrance into Canaan.

**Major Theme**—*Loving God with all our heart and strength* (see 6:5). This is a call to commitment to the Lord in worship and obedience. Moses' second address (chs. 4—26) is the heart of this message. Another emphasis that is first introduced in this book is the specific location, Jerusalem, in which worship of the Lord is to take place. Moses frequently repeats the theme of reward for keeping the covenant and punishment for ignoring it.

**Background**—The book was written in the territory of Moab where the Jordan River flows into the Dead Sea. The end of Moses' life is imminent. He has given his final addresses, transferred his authority to Joshua, and is sending the Israelites into the promised land. Their nomadic lifestyle is about to end, and Moses has prepared them for life in Canaan. The narrative of Moses to the people of Israel has a different tenor now; the Book of Deuteronomy, which means the "second lawgiving," comes from Moses' heart in a warm, personal, homiletic form as compared to his other books.

## Outline

- |                                                                                     |                                                          |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| I. Introduction (1:1–5)                                                             | IV. The Third Address (27:1–31:8)                        |
| II. The First Address (1:6–4:49)                                                    | A. The law inscribed and obedience commanded (27:1–10)   |
| A. Historical prologue (1:6–3:29)                                                   | B. Curses (27:11–26)                                     |
| B. A call to obedience (4:1–40)                                                     | C. Blessings (28:1–14)                                   |
| C. Transjordan cities of refuge appointed (4:41–49)                                 | D. Solemn curses (28:15–68)                              |
| III. The Second Address (5:1–26:19)                                                 | E. Stipulations (28:69–31:8)                             |
| A. The stipulations of the covenant (5:1–33)                                        | V. Leadership Succession under the Covenant (31:9–34:12) |
| B. Posterity to be instructed in the Horeb revelation (6:1–25)                      | A. Change of leadership (31:9–29)                        |
| C. Exhortations to fidelity and obedience (7:1–11:32)                               | B. Song of Moses (31:30–32:52)                           |
| D. Statutes governing worship and holiness (12:1–14:29)                             | C. Moses' testamental blessing on the tribes (33:1–29)   |
| E. Laws relating to specific domestic, moral, and religious situations (15:1–26:15) | D. Death of Moses and succession of Joshua (34:1–12)     |
| F. Concluding exhortation (26:16–19)                                                |                                                          |

## Sustained By Hope

*Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Saviour and my God* Psalms 42: 11.

The gospel of St. Luke tells us how Cleopas and his companion walked to their home in Emmaus on the day Jesus rose from the grave. Their faces were downcast and their hearts were heavy. The seven mile walk that Sunday afternoon was a long, laborious slow one.

On the road they met a stranger who talked with them and found out they were sad because they lost hope in Jesus of Nazareth, God's Son, the Christ who died on a cross and had been laid to rest in a stranger's tomb. In his death their hopes had died. The stranger, however, talked earnestly with them about the Messiah and later, Cleopas and his friend suddenly recognized the stranger as Jesus himself, arisen gloriously and triumphantly!

At once everything changed for them. The two who had walked dejectedly toward Emmaus ran excitedly back to Jerusalem to tell the other disciples that Jesus was alive. But the disciples already knew the gladdening news because Jesus had also appeared to them.

And Peter, no doubt knew about placing hope in God's promises because he already echoed its hope in a message to young Christians who would be tested for their faith: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ...and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade" 1 Peter 1: 3, 4.

What better hope to sustain us in the experiences of our life! While so much power is exercised by other human beings, while so power is granted elected leaders, above all we know God keeps everything graciously under control.

## Living Scared?

*...you alone, O Lord, bring security to my dwelling* Psalms 4: 9.

The contemporary world is truly a frightening place. The threat of nuclear war hangs over our heads. Economic pressures cause many to worry about maintaining their standard of living. It seems all we work for are increased tax payments because the government never has enough money. Terrorism and violence are commonplace. Crime rates are on the increase in nearly every category, forcing large parts of the population to fear going out alone at night. One analyst has indicated that many people today are living scared.

In reality, there never has ever been a really safe place in life. The only safety and peace of mind that is discoverable on earth comes from a firm belief in an afterlife, so it is no surprise that so many people hold to such beliefs. Many social commentators agree that the only people who seem to feel safe today are people with faith in God, people who are believers.

Secular society cannot understand what the Church has always taught, what the psalmist expressed centuries ago: security is a matter of trust. Believers in Christ know in whom they trust. Followers of Christ do not live in fear, for they have the promise of God's protection and presence. Every physical, emotional and spiritual need can be more than met in Christ. And above all, we have the comfort of knowing that we will one day enter the place of perfect safety and overall security, the presence of our Lord and Saviour, the kingdom prepared before all time for man created in God's own image.

For the contemporary soul "living scared," Jesus Christ is the only answer since He alone can "bring security to my dwelling," since safety is not the absence of danger which is everywhere present, but the simple presence of God.

## **WISDOM! BE ATTENTIVE**

*Let us the faithful praise the Word eternal with the Father and the Spirit. Let us adore Him Who was born from the Virgin for our salvation. For He willed to ascend the cross as a man, and to suffer death, and to raise the dead by His glorious Resurrection Troparion, Resurrection Tone Five.*

*O Saviour, You descended into the Abyss. Being the Almighty, You destroyed its power. Being the Creator, You raised the dead and dulled the sting of death. Adam was delivered from the curse and we all cry out to You: "O Lord, Lover of mankind, save us!" Kontakion, Resurrection Tone Five.*

*You, O Lord, will keep us and preserve us always from this generation Prokimenon, Resurrection Tone Five.*

*The Lord, Who bestows Resurrection upon the race of men was led like a lamb to the slaughter. The powers of the Abyss trembled; its gates opened. Christ the King of glory entered it. He said to those in chains: "Come out!" To those in darkness, He said, "Let light surround you!" Vesper Hymn, Tone Five.*

*We offer You this evening worship, O Light Who never fade! In the fullness of time You filled the world with light, Your flesh being a mirror of Your splendor. You descended into the Abyss, dispelling its darkness. You revealed the light of Your Resurrection to the world. O Lord, Giver of light, glory be to You! Vesper Hymn, Tone Five.*

*O Virgin most pure, you are a temple, palace, the throne of the King. Through you, Christ the Lord has appeared. He is the Sun of Justice and the Saviour. He willed to enlighten those in darkness, those fashioned in His image by His hand. We beseech you, worthy of our praise, You are His mother. Intercede for the salvation of our souls Vesper Hymn, Tone Five.*

*A symbol of the pure Virgin and bride is revealed in the Red Sea: There, Moses divided the waters; here Gabriel is the minister of a wonder. There, Israel crossed the deep as on dry land; here the Virgin gives birth and remains a Virgin. There, the sea remained uncrossable after Israel passed; here, the immaculate one remains a Virgin after the birth of Immanuel. O immortal and eternal God, have mercy on us! Vesper Hymn, Tone Five.*

# VESPER VERSES ACCORDING TO THE EIGHT TONES

## TONE 5

1. By your precious cross, O Christ,  
You have put the devil to shame  
By your resurrection, You destroyed the sting  
of sin;  
You saved us from the gates of death.  
We praise You, the only-begotten Son.
2. The Lord who bestows resurrection upon the  
race of men was led like a lamb to the  
slaughter.  
The powers of the Abyss trembled; its gates  
opened.  
Christ the King of glory entered it.  
He said to those in chains : " Come out! "  
To those in darkness, he said : " Let light  
surround you! "
3. Truly, it is a great wonder :  
Because of his love for man, the Creator  
suffers.  
Now He is risen again—immortal.  
Come, all you nations and peoples,  
Let us bow to Him in worship.  
Because of his love, He saved us from error,  
And we have learned to praise  
One God in three Divine Persons.
4. We offer You this evening worship, O Light  
who never fade!



In the fulness of time, You filled the world with  
light,  
Your flesh being a mirror of your splendor.  
You descended into the Abyss, dispelling its  
darkness.  
You revealed the light of your resurrection to  
the world.  
O Lord, giver of light, glory be to You!

5. Let us praise Christ, the Author of our salvation :  
By his resurrection from the dead,  
He has saved the world from error.  
The angelic host rejoices; the deceit of the  
demons vanishes;  
Adam fallen is raised again.
6. The guards were told to deny the resurrection :  
Bribed with money they were told to say :  
“ While we slept, his body was taken away. ”  
When has a naked and embalmed body ever  
been stolen,  
Leaving the burial cloth in the tomb?  
Do not be deceived—learn from the prophets  
and understand  
That Christ is truly the Savior of the world  
and the almighty Lord.
7. O Lord and Savior,  
You despoiled the Abyss and conquered Death.  
You enlightened the world by your cross :  
Have mercy on us!
8. Glory be to the Father ✝, and to the Son,  
and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and  
forever. Amen.

A symbol of the pure Virgin and bride  
Is revealed in the Red Sea :

There, Moses divided the waters;  
Here, Gabriel is the minister of a wonder.  
There, Israel crossed the deep as on dry  
land;  
Here, the Virgin gives birth and remains a  
virgin.  
There, the sea remained uncrossable after  
Israel passed;  
Here, the Immaculate One remains a virgin  
after the birth of Immanuel.  
O Immortal and eternal God,  
You appeared as man :  
Have mercy on us!

*At the Apostichon*

1. O Christ our Savior,  
Not leaving heaven, you became man.  
You suffered and died for us because of your  
love.  
We extol you in song!  
You crushed the gates of the Abyss;  
You arose on the third day  
Granting salvation to our souls.
2. O Christ, Giver of life,  
From your side pierced by the lance  
There flowed pardon, salvation, and life for all.  
Accepting death, you gave us eternal life :  
Your burial has made us free.  
Being God, you raised us with you in glory.  
We cry out to you :  
“ O Lord, Lover of mankind, glory be to  
you! ”
3. O Christ, Lover of mankind,  
Your death and descent into the Abyss are  
marvels.

You conquered death by raising with you in  
glory

Those bound for ages by the chains of death.  
Grant to us who praise your resurrection

The forgiveness of our sins; make us worthy  
of paradise :

You alone love mankind.

4. O Lord, You suffered for us;  
On the third day you rose from the dead.  
Heal our bodily passions;  
Raise us from our sin, and save us :  
You alone love mankind.
5. Glory be to the Father ✝, and to the Son,  
and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and  
forever. Amen.

O Virgin most pure,  
You are a temple, palace, the throne of the  
King.

Through you, Christ the Lord has appeared.

He is the Sun of Justice and the Savior.

He willed to enlighten those in darkness,

Those fashioned in his image by his hand.

We beseech you, worthy of our praise,

You are his mother.

Intercede for the salvation of our souls.

## AN ALL-WISE GIVER OF LAWS

**T**HE PROPHET EZEKIEL lived in the 6th century BC and is thought to be the author of the Old Testament book that bears his name. He was a contemporary of the Prophet Jeremiah, whose teachings were well-known in Jerusalem. The son of a priest from the city of Sarir, Ezekiel was taken into captivity to Babylon along with thousands of other Israelites. It was here that Ezekiel prophesied for some 27 years. The ministry of Ezekiel was marked by vivid and mysterious visions. One day as he sat by the Chebar River, he saw the heavens open, and a cloud appeared with fire and lightning. In this dazzling brilliance, Ezekiel saw four creatures: the first having the face of a man (symbolizing the Incarnate God), the second having the face of a lion (symbolizing His Divinity), the third the face of a calf (symbolizing His Sacrifice) and the fourth the face of an eagle (symbolizing His Resurrection and Ascension). The Church later attached further meaning to these four faces, making them symbolic of the 4 Evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and their corresponding Gospels. In another vision, Ezekiel saw a valley filled with the dry bones of the dead. When the Spirit of God came upon them, the bones came to life and stood on their feet — a foreshadowing of the resurrection of the dead promised by God.

Ezekiel was the first of the prophets to stress personal accountability for one's sins. "The soul who sins, he shall die," were his words of warning to the Israelites. As was the case with most of God's prophets, Ezekiel was treated cruelly by his own people. Because he spoke critically of their godless way of life, Ezekiel was murdered by his fellow Israelites around 571 BC.

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