

## Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 25, 2011

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.

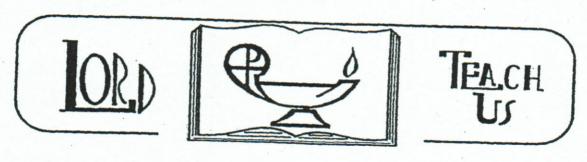
We are a beacon on a hill with the eyes of many upon us; that beacon is the inspired Light of Christ which must shine brightly in our lives.

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 at the request of Helen Pallas and family, we celebrate at 9: 15 AM a Memorial Service for the repose of the soul of their departed spouse and father, +Paul Pallas. We pray our gracious Lord continues to comfort Helen and her loved ones in their loss and that He grants to the soul of +Paul a blessed repose and creates for him Eternal Memory!

- +++ This Saturday is the simple feast of the Protection of the Birthgiver of God. In anticipation, the vesperal Divine Liturgy will be celebrated Friday evening at 7: 30 PM. Please come and join us in prayer and praise.
- +++ The monthly Pirohi Sale will take place this coming Saturday and preparations will be made Thursday morning Helping Hands are needed both days. Please offer yourself in making this first sale a huge success. We are in need of orders as well.
- +++ 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: Tithe Offering, Candles, Holyday, Food Coupons, Bulletin, Bulletin, Christian Fellowship, for a total of We express our profound gratitude to the parishioner communicants who offered their Godgiven 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, Robert Gorbich, Anna Zacharyczuk, Debra Szmaida, Paul Szmaida, 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 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 \$109,000. 00. 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 be certain to see **Helen Karpiak** or a member of the Parish Council if you would like to help our parish by using **Shop Rite Food Coupons** available in \$20.00 denominations. We invite **ALL** to be caring and supportive and use Grocery Coupons for food shopping as we have gratefully realized on this project to date!
- +++ 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."



# God Is Impartial

Who says to a king, 'Worthless one' and to nobles, 'Wicked man'; who shows no partiality to princes, nor regards the rich more than the poor, for they are all the work of his hands Job 34: 18, 19?

He is not impressed by the world's wisest men Job 37: 24.

God is mighty, yet he does not despise anyone! He is mighty in both power and understanding Job 36: 5.

O Lord, what is man that you even notice him? Why bother at all with the human race? For man is but a breath; his days are like a passing shadow Psalms 144: 3, 4.

I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right Acts of the Apostles 10: 34, 35.

But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure. It is also peace-loving, gentle at all times and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and good deeds. It shows no partiality and is always sincere James 3: 17.

Yet though God does not bring back life, he does take thought how not to banish anyone from him 2 Samuel 14: 14.

Many shall look on in awe and trust in the Lord. Happy the man who makes the Lord his trust, who turns not to idolatry or to those who stray after falsehood Psalms 40: 4, 5.

# Six Habits for Handing on the Faith

As parents, our first job is to hand on our precious faith to our children. In the rite of baptism, we learn our primary job is to teach them what it means to love God and neighbor as Christ did. These holy habits can help both parents and children learn the delicate and awesome art of Christian love and living.

## Teach your children gratitude.

This is the first movement of knowing God. Children learn best from parental expressions of gratitude, not only toward God, but also for others, for life itself. To quote Madame Blueberry of *Veggie Tales* fame, "A grateful heart is a happy heart." There, one will find God.

### Teach your children to talk with God.

Teach them God is near and loving, always hearing our heart's desires and sticking with us no matter what. God is just like Mom and Dad in that way. And like them, God cannot fix every problem in just the way we think it should be fixed. But God will listen to what we say and ease our troubles. Teach them that God is within and always listening, no matter what we have done or what we need.

## Tell the stories of Sunday and holy day Divine Liturgy over and over.

The whole of the Divine Liturgy is storytelling, not just the prescribed readings or the various hymns. The great Eucharistic Prayer tells a story, as do the various other prayers, gestures and liturgical rituals. All our actions and responses have a profound richness that can be learned, enjoyed and conveyed by sharing. Being gathered together by the Holy Spirit to glorify God, and participating in processions, standing, sitting, blessing ourselves, even kneeling during some services. Children love to hear and love to learn by stories. Help them to better understand the meaning of this glorious worship experience, particularly how important it is to be worthily prepared to receive the Body and Blood of the Saviour.

#### Celebrate the Church Year.

Find ways to keep all the seasons of the Church's liturgical year. The Nativity Fast, the Great Fast, the fasting period which prepares for the Dormition of the Birthgiver of God and the prime Apostles, Peter & Paul.. The one-day fasts of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross as well as the Beheading of St. John the Baptist give an opportunity to emphasize the values of these holy days in the lives of believers. Teach them the meaning of the various colors of vestments and altar covers. Explain the icon on the sacramental table as it is changed. Fast and pray as the

Church leads us to salvation. Be certain you have a Paschal Food basket for the Resurrection and proudly display the palms and pussy willows received on Palm Sunday. Make certain you are in church for the Dormition holyday with a fistful of freshly cut flowers that are blessed and returned in their sacred fragrance to the home to beautify it and connect it with the holyday celebration. Do not neglect to take fruit and grapes in a basket to be blessed and enjoyed for the Feast of the Transfiguration of Christ. Holy Water celebratorily drunk as a family event after the Theophany Divine Liturgy and water blessing can be a compelling moment in the cohesive factor it spreads in family unity. Greeting the parish priest during the season of homeblessing is a warming experience as the grace of Christ's baptism is shared with each communicant in the home. Birthdays can be celebrated not only in the prayer corner of the home, but with a robust singing of "God Grant You Many Years" for the celebrant. Even anniversaries of the departed can be remembered with a soul-stirring "Eternal Memory, Blessed Repose" as prayers are offered for the repose of their souls. Bringing their bicycle to church for blessing on the feast of St. Elias the Prophet shows how all facets of life can be dedicated to God and receive his protective blessing.

Use sacramental signs to teach your children who God is.

When giving baths, washing dirty hands and feet, splashing in the pool or witnessing a baptism, talk about how God is like the water that cleanses and renews us. When you anoint cuts, scrapes, bruises, chapped lips and runny noses, talk about how God is like the holy ointment which cures and makes us better. When you bake bread or prepare and share festive meals together speak about how God is like the food nourishment, good parties and loving sacrifices and how He provides for us in Communion with the Body and Blood of the Saviour. When you forgive them, soothe their troubles and wipe away their tears, tell them how God is like a strong and sure embrace and steady hand. When you encourage your children and promise them your steadfast love and boundless commitment speak to them about God's unconditional love, how He heals in word and endless promise. Before you you're your confession of sins, which should be done on a regular consistent basis, gather your family together and ask their forgiveness of the way you may have offended them and eagerly offer them your blessed forgiveness.

#### Engage the culture.

We mistakenly think sometimes that Christianity demands rejection of this world. The gospel says quite a different thing. Jesus engages the culture He lived in, critiqued and changed it for the better. Watch the news with your children and talk to them about social and political issues, big and small, local and global. Add the Christian perspective and help them understand the vital choices we must make on behalf of good, contributing to our society in just, loving and creative ways.

## Fifteenth Sunday

As long as we keep God first in our lives, He will grant us everything else we need. However, if we allow anything else to take His place, if we relinquish the number one spot that belongs to Him, to someone or something else, make no mistake about it, He will remove it if we truly belong to him. Christ teaches us,

"And you shall know the truth and the truth will set you free" John 8: 32. Only God's truth can set us free and we should make it ours as well. We don't mind facing the truth about everyone and everything else, but we refuse most times to face up to ourselves. Then Christ's words become quite a different situation. It is difficult to face up to the fact that our security is tied up in our own self-perceptions and misunderstandings about reality and truth.

Some think importance comes from funds earned, positions held, the esteem of others. Like the pharisees in today's gospel narrative, it is difficult to admit "I am insecure. There are times I don't like myself and I need God's help and His healing in this area of my life." There are two kinds of pain in the world: the pain of never changing and the pain of changing. If we refuse to face the truth, we remain in bondage to the evil one and we nitpick others and their perceived faults like we heard in today's gospel narrative.

They wanted Christ to be addicted to their approval, to submit to their judgments. But if we truly recognize ourselves as children of God, created in his image, we have enough security to recognize who we are in Christ apart from what we do or do not do.

Yes, it is true we should please God and others as well, but we should not be devastated if they are not pleased with us and our truly pure efforts to follow in the footsteps of Christ. As long as we know our heart is right as did the Lord and the disciples in the gospel narrative, we cannot be intimidated by the values of the world. If we do the best we can in achieving our salvation and other people do not approve, what they think has to remain between them and our God. It is territory we should avoid and not be walking in.

In providing this reading today, the Church is teaching us not to let anything become more important in our lives than it should be. If we keep God first in all our actions, our thoughts and our motivation, so He can bless us with everything we desire, then we distinctly follow His will. Has He not taught us, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all things shall be given to you" Matthew 6: 33?

We cannot see ourselves as failures because others do not see us as successes. Do not consider yourselves failures just because you failed at certain things in the past. Nobody is good at everything. Do not let the picture you carry of yourself, your self-image, be marred by past mistakes. Sometimes the only way we can find out what we are meant to be doing in life is to step out and make sincere attempts. The process of elimination is often helpful, but we may make some mistakes in the process. Just because we fail at one responsibility does not mean we cannot be successful with something else. But a lot of people permit the past to dictate their future.

That is how the pharisees were acting in the today's gospel narrative. We cannot do that and be pleasing in God's sight! We have to get past our past. Yes, we all have a past, but we also have a future and it should include our God. St. Paul tells us, "We are truly his handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to lead the life of good deeds which God prepared for us in advance" Ephesians 2: 10. In our baptism we have been recreated, reborn in Christ so that we might do the good works He planned beforehand for us and live the good life prearranged and made ready for us. The word recreated means we were born physically and spiritually messed up and in need of repair.

If we look through the Old Covenant Scripture we notice a profound observation made known through Jeremiah: "This word came to Jeremiah from the Lord: Rise up, be off to the potter's house; where I will give you my message. I went down to the potter's house and there he was, working at the wheel. Whenever the object of the clay which he was making turned out badly in his hand, he tried again, making of the clay another object of whatever sort he pleased. Then the word of the Lord came to me. Can I not do to you, house of Israel, as this potter has done? Indeed, like the clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, house of Israel" Jeremiah 18: 1-6.

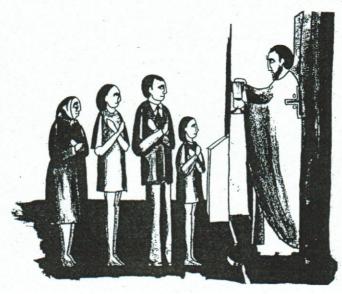
If we are wiling, our God, who created us, can remake us. The potter who had to remake his vessel because it had a mar in it, is the picture of us in the hands of the Lord, the Master Potter. We are said to be new creatures when we were baptized and entered into a new relationship with our God. We have to let old things pass away because we have a new opportunity for a new beginning.

We become new spiritual clay for the Holy Spirit to mold, to form anew, to work with and fashion in His image. God makes arrangements for each of us to have a new start, but we must be willing to let go of the past and go forward. We make a way for the new by actually believing what He says about it: "For I know the thoughts and plans that I

have for you, says the Lord, thoughts and plans for welfare and peace and not for evil, to give you hope in your final outcome" Jeremiah 29: 11.

It is the devil who wants us to have a negative attitude and to feel hopeless. It is the devil who inspires the thinking of the pessimist who in time becomes his greatest disciple. Negative attitudes and feelings of hopelessness do not have their basis in God's revelation to us. It is God alone who teaches us to be prisoners of hope. Another Old Covenant prophet sounds out word of inspiration and joy, even great and abiding hope: "Return to the stronghold of security and prosperity, you prisoner of hope, even today do I declare that I will restore your former prosperity to you" Zechariah 9: 12.

So while it seems Christ and the disciples ignored the so-called twisted insights of the pharisees, what they really were doing is emphasizing the value of hope and hanging on to it. The fourth chapter of the Roman epistle teaches us that Abraham had no human reason to hope that God's promise would be fulfilled, but he hoped in faith. It says that no doubt or unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong as he gave praise and glory to God. Abraham remained positive and hopeful and we know from God's revelation to us that he received his promised blessing of a child. The past failures of the pharisees and their emphasis on the letter of the law left them without hope about future success of salvation. Our future as believers has no room in it for the failures of the past. What ever satan has stolen from us by deception and our eager cooperation with his superficiality, our God will restore gladly in depth and beyond our comprehension if we continue to press forward, dependent on His mercy, on His love, forgetting the past. Let go of the past and all its mistakes in order to go on to making the future a glorious one for ourselves and our loved ones.



# Something To Offer

There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good

1 Corinthians 12: 4 – 7

There are many people who seem to think poverty is solely a state of not having resources, but sometimes it is a matter of not using the resources we do have. This kind of impoverishment is the saddest because it is self-imposed. This truth becomes apparent from the story of one person telling how, after a long period of self-pity, even laziness and lack of discernment, he finally rose from a very poor background with no education to a stable economic status. His life changed for the better once he realized in the Church of God that he had something worthwhile and beneficial to offer.

This occurred when he volunteered to clean the pews weekly in the parish church. A visiting priest came by to see the church which had a reputation for its appealing and inspiring beauty. He noticed the young man cleaning the pews as usual. This prompted the priest to inquire about him. Soon an opportune time came when the impressed priest offered to provide for his education and direct him to a job placement where he continues to work while taking classes. It is interesting to note He never gave up his volunteer work at the church.

Our heavenly Father gives each one of us the resources of time and ability. Our problem is not always lack of time but rather failure to use what is available to us. We have so many opportunities for holiness in and sanctify in our parish church. Likewise there are so many times during the week we can assure and strengthen the possibility of our salvation if we but cooperate with them. Instead, how many, ignore God's provision? We have healing services, devotions during each of the four fasting periods of the liturgical year, holyday celebrations, penitential services; all sorts of opportunities to affirm our faith commitment. Perhaps, and unfortunately, it will only be in eternity that we finally learn how spiritually ill we were and in need of healing and restoration, but then it will be too late. Here we are provided with every sort of opportunity that one finds in the largest Orthodox parish.

We please our Creator God when we utilize what is made available to us for transformation of our body and soul, to improve the living conditions of all among us. Here we learn our God teaches us to use our resources, those personally endowed and those provided by the inspired wisdom of the parish eager to lead souls to paradise. If we wish to influence and effect change in our community, how responsible are we in responding to the myriad opportunities for sanctity in our midst? How are we using our abilities to better serve our God?

# Did You Know That ...

- ...appeasers continue to believe that if you keep throwing steaks to a tiger, the tiger will become a vegetarian?
- ...art is the expression of an enormous preference?
- ...iconography washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life?
- ...beauty is that which excites the soul?
- ...a monk is not someone who wants to pray, he is someone who has to pray?
- ...the Church is always on the lookout for people to whom it is imperative to save their souls?
- ...after silence which comes nearest to expressing the inexpressible is the hymnology of the Church?
- ...an atheist is a man who has no invisible means of support?
- ...beauty has no cause; it simply is?
- ...beauty is how you feel inside and is reflected in your eyes?
- ...he who takes a stand is many times wrong, but he who fails to take a stand is always wrong?
- ...men who borrow their opinions can never repay their debts?
- ...the most positive men are the most credulous?
- ...what a man thinks of himself is what determines his fate?
- ...if you believe what you like in the Gospel and reject what you do not like, it is not the Gospel you believe, but yourself?
- ...Scripture is the sacred revelation of God to us, as distinguished from all the false and profane writings on which other faiths are based?

### WHAT SEASON ARE YOU IN?

few years ago, a Swiss physician named Dr. Paul Tournier wrote a book entitled "The Seasons of Life." In it, he compared the stages of life to the seasons of the year that we all enjoy so much. The comparisons are quite obvious: spring corresponds to our childhood, summer to our youth and the early years of adulthood, fall to our "mature years" and winter to those senior citizen days that everyone likes to call the "golden years." Each of us lives with the hope and expectation of experiencing all of life's four seasons. It seems like the natural progression of life, but it doesn't always happen that way. Death can break the "cycle of the seasons" at any time. Pick up a newspaper on any given day, and we will certainly find a story about someone dying in each of these stages.

It has been written that the mystery of life is that each man, though he sees others dying all around him, never believes that he himself will die. Indeed, thoughts of our own demise are usually exiled to the outer recesses of our mind. Yet a Christian is called upon to live totally within the particular season we find ourselves, fully realizing that we may not have the opportunity to automatically pass into the next. The Church constantly reminds us that at any time, our earthly existence may come to an end, be it spring, summer, fall or winter. The Scriptures bluntly tell us: "For what is your life? It is but a vapor that soon passes away quickly." There is no one among us that is invincible or immortal.

We must also remember that whenever death does call us, we will pass into a new "season:" THE SEASON OF ETERNITY. Our place there will be determined by how our faith grew and developed throughout the course of our lives.

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