



# Saint Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

24 BURKE ROAD

FREEHOLD, NJ 07728

Fathers of the First Council

June 5, 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

+++ The Scripture Study Class will meet this Tuesday at 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM. Please come and join us by investing time in learning our precious faith so we can better enjoy and live it! The public is invited to participate with us, so invite a friend or neighbor. In preparation for the next class, please read the twenty-fourth to twenty-sixth chapters of the Book of Genesis.

+++ We have festal anointing today on the occasion of this past week's feast of the Ascension of our Lord.

+++ **The last Pirohi Sale for the season will be this Saturday, June 11 and Bake Sale on Friday, June 17.**

+++ Next Sunday is the feast of Pentecost, the Descent of the Holy Spirit, the birthday of our blessed Church. A special holyday offering will be taken. Our First Confession Class will receive that day and will be

+++ This Saturday is the final All Souls' Day and the Divine Liturgy and Memorial Service will be celebrated at 9:00 AM. Please join us in prayer.

+++ 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.

+++ Today, the special offering for flowers to decorate the church for the coming feast of Pentecost, will be taken. Please offer generously.

+++ 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, ~~\$196.00~~; Candles, ~~\$9.00~~; Kitchen, ~~\$235.00~~ for a total of ~~\$440.00~~. We express our profound gratitude to the parishioner communicants who offered their God-given treasure and labored for the sake of the Lord and the good of our parish. God bless and reward you good and faithful souls! The attendance was 44 adults and 13 children last Sunday.

+++ As faithful believers, we intercede and associate ourselves in prayer with the following who have prayed and offered seven day lights for their intentions: Father Lucas, Pani Lucas, Louis Pasquino, +Paul Szmaida, Debra Szmaida, Kent Pasquino, Kyle Pasquino, Bob Gorbich, Marina Topsis, Anna Zacharyczuk 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 ~~\$1617.00~~ 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 ~~\$107,815.00~~. 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 ~~\$5300.00~~ 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.**

**EXPERIENCING**

**GOD**

## INTRODUCTION

Experiencing God is so much more than simply reading his revelation to us in Scripture, much more than just worshipping on Sundays and holydays. It is truly a full and complete way of life, a daily adventure for those who take seriously their relationship with our heavenly Father and their place in this world. It is transforming all circumstances with the grace of Christ.

Surely, it is this fact – that we can experience God in the here and now – that transports our Christian lives beyond, cold, tasteless ritual into the surging, exhilarating flow of God's eternal activity.

This is an invitation for you to enlarge your view of God, to embrace the love He has for you, and to embark on a lifelong journey of following him...wherever He desires to take you.

It is the only life that is really worth living.

For when God awakens in you a thirst for spiritual values, nothing else can satisfy your hunger for meaning and purpose but a real-life encounter with the living God. As the Holy Spirit speaks to you through heavenly inspired revelation in the Church and Scripture, He will be drawing you to a life beyond anything you have ever known, a life so dependent on the direction of God

that you will no longer find fulfillment in pursuing your own plans. The inspired thoughts of the Church and its Scripture will guide you beyond anything you have ever known, a life so dependent on the Holy Spirit that you will no longer find fulfillment in pursuing your own plans because you will be living in heaven on earth.

Are you ready for Almighty God to use you for his higher purposes, to surround you with other believers who are also experiencing his stirring in their souls, and to make your daily life a living witness to the power of the uncreated God?

Then open your heart to what our heavenly Father has to say. Submit your dreams and ambitions to the One who made you. And begin following him into the corners of your world where He has work to do, and you to do it with.



*Come experience God!*



"This is eternal life:  
that they may know You,  
the only true God,  
and the One You have sent—  
Jesus Christ."

—John 17:3

GOD IS AT WORK  
AROUND YOU



My Father is still working,  
and I am also working  
John 5: 17.

God has not left the world to function on its own. He has been actively involved throughout history, orchestrating time and events, doing what only God can do: seeking and saving all who are lost.

His revelation to us in Scripture teaches that no one desires to follow God on their own, that only God can draw people to himself. So when you see these things happening around you – when people are asking questions and wanting to talk about spiritual things – you can be sure that God is at work.

And you can be certain He has placed you right in the middle of his will.

Always assume God is at work. When He reveals a spiritual truth to you, another thing that only God can do, do not simply treat it with devotional thought to make you feel better through the day.

Ask him to help you take what you are hearing and connect it with what you see happening around you. Immediately look to see what He wants you to do with what He has revealed.

Once you join God in what He is doing, you will experience him accomplishing his will in activity through your life, in ways you have never known before.

*"The words I speak to you  
I do not speak on My own.  
The Father who lives in Me does His works."*

*—John 14:10*



Jesus always knew what to do throughout his earthly life among us, because He was always looking to see what the Father was doing. Whatever the Father did, the Son also did. If Christ himself was that dependent on the Father and in such intimate union with him, think how dependent we should be on the eternal Father working in and through us.

# ANTICIPATE

that God will start working with you.



Our heavenly Father usually came to people in salvation history right in the middle of their ordinary routine, right as they were doing the last thing they knew to do. You do not need to be doing anything special for God to use you. Simply be willing to submit to him at any time, even at a moment's notice.

God, our heavenly Father uses the circumstances of our daily living to remind us of this truth:

*It is far better to be  
still and do nothing  
with God than to be busy  
and do much  
without him.*

You never find God asking people to dream up what they want to do for him. The established pattern revealed to us looks like this: You submit yourself to God, and you wait until He shows you what He is about to do.

For unless God invites you to see where He is working, you will not see it. You can involve yourself in doing good things, but you may miss the work that God intended you to do.

The servant does not tell the Master what kind of assignment he needs. Instead, he waits on his Master to give him the assignment because He easily recognizes his relationship to the Father.

## MAKE IT YOUR REALITY

Can you identify times when our heavenly Father was at work around you – and you knew it? Or looking back, can you think of times when God was working around you, but you did not recognize it?

Invite God to initiate his work in you anytime He chooses. Start by making an act of love and adoration and then be listening for him.

*"What can we do to perform the works of God?" they asked.*

*Jesus replied, "This is the work of God: that you believe in the One He has sent."*

*—John 6:28-29*

**GOD PURSUES  
A LOVE  
RELATIONSHIP  
WITH  
YOU**



Love consists in this: not that  
we loved God,  
but that he loved us and sent his  
Son  
1 John 4: 10.



Do you realize that our heavenly Father is determined to love you? When you were not his friend, He drew you near with cords of love. When you were still his enemy, He gave his own Son to die for you. Is there any greater expression of love than this?

You should never look at anything that happens in your life without seeing it against the backdrop of the cross, where God proved once and for all just how much He loves you.

In order to experience God and know his will, you must be absolutely convinced of his love for you.



His Body, the Church, through revealed Scripture leads us to understand that God is saying, "I want you to love me above all else. When you are in a dynamic relationship of love with me, you have everything there is."

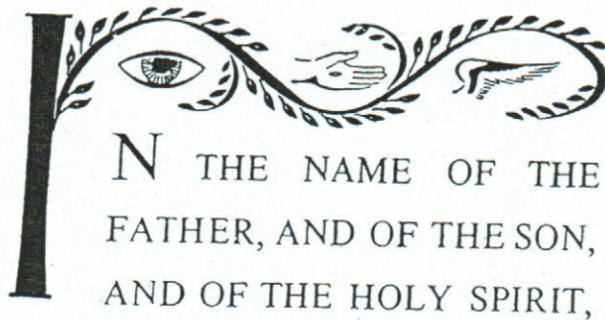
Everything in your Christian life, everything about knowing and experiencing God, everything about understanding his will depends on the quality of your love relationship with God. If that is not right, nothing else in your life will be right.

To be loved by God and to return that love is the highest relationship, the highest achievement and the most noble position in life.

*The one who does not love does not know God,  
because God is love.*

*—1 John 4:8*

God's very nature is love. Therefore, He will never express himself to his children in any other way except in perfect love. Even his discipline is an act of love, for in conforming us to the image of his Son, our God is enabling us to experience him at work in our lives.



N THE NAME OF THE  
FATHER, AND OF THE SON,  
AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT,

The ways of God are unchanging; they are one continuous act of love. Not as if love flowed from God; Love is God and God is Love.

There is God Love in the creation of man; in the making of a being to whom the All-Perfect could give himself; since man was not made to benefit God, whose delight cannot be increased, but for the multiplication of God Love.

There is God Love in the promise of redemption, in the tender care lavished on the seed of Abraham.

There is God Love in the privileges of the Chosen People, so clearly manifested in the miracles of the Exodus and commemorated in the liturgy of the Passover.

There is God Love in the songs of the kings, in the anxious warning of the prophets, in the hopes of a whole people for salvation yet to come.

There is supreme God Love in the sacrifice of the Lamb upon the cross, under which we live to this very day.

There will always be God Love, now and ever and forever and ever. Amen.



If you desire  
to experience  
God,  
if you want  
God  
to be  
real to you,  
learn about him  
so that you can  
**LOVE HIM**

The most important thing our heavenly  
Father wants from you is to love him.  
Yes, God calls you to obedience to do  
whatever He asks of you.

But you do not need to be doing something  
to be fulfilled. You are fulfilled completely  
in your relationship with God because you  
are filled with him and  
what else do you need?





Recognizing the reality of God is critical, but undeserving ragamuffin that I am, ought be grateful that He desires to have a love relationship with me. How can we possibly fathom He loves me with a completely unfailing, unchanging unconditional love – no matter how I disappoint myself or anyone else, even when I offend him! Grieve for people who only see the Word of God in the life of his Body, the Church, as a volume of endless rules and regulations because it is a love story enhancing the most sacred romance mortal creatures could ever imagine! One cannot possibly experience our God and not know divine love, the excellency of all love!



Perhaps you struggle to respond to God's love or to consistently have time alone with him. If that is a problem you face, make it a priority in your life to love him with all your heart. Obedience problems are really love problems.

Try to think of the time you invest with God as a sublime privilege. The purpose of quiet time is to get to know God. And as you come to know him more and more, you can walk out of your special times with God enjoying a living relationship with him that you can further cultivate all day long, throughout all your life.

## MAKE IT YOUR REALITY

Can you describe your relationship with our heavenly Father by saying, "I love God with all my heart?"

Go before the Lord, in his presence and ask him to open the eyes of your soul to the love He has for you. When you love him as you should, you will always be in fellowship with the Father of heaven and earth!

*"If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word.  
My Father will love him, and We will come to him  
and make Our home with him."*

*—John 14:23*

**GOD  
INVITES YOU TO  
JOIN HIM  
IN HIS WORK**



It is God who is working among  
you  
for his good purpose  
Philippians 2: 13.

When our heavenly Father was ready to judge the world with a flood, He came to Noah. When He desired to build a nation for himself, He turned to Abraham. When He heard his children groaning under Egyptian bondage, He appeared in a burning bush to Moses.

They were three of the most ordinary of men. But God had work to do and He just knew who to do it with.

God has always given his people assignments that are far too big for them to handle alone, so that a watching world can see – not what *we* can do – but what *God* can do.

The baptismal call to salvation is at the same time a call to be on mission with God. These are not separate callings, but are all part of the self-same experience.

You cannot be drawn into a relationship with our heavenly Father without also having the heart of God laid over your heart, without wanting to put your life alongside his and join him in doing his will.

So often we are self-centered. Our love response to God requires that we constantly shift our hearts away from what *we* want in order to hear and desire what *God wants*.

When our heavenly Father speaks, He requires two things of us: faith and responsive positive action. But because we tend to want to think for ourselves and go at our own pace, God's invitation sets up a conflict in our lives.

In situations like these, we face a crisis of belief, when God challenges us to see if we will evidence our heart is at his control. For the way we respond to an assignment from God will reveal how much we really love him, regardless of what we say.

When our God speaks, that *is* the experience of him. When God calls, *that moment* is the time to act.

Many people get an assignment from God and say, "That could not possibly be from God because it is not in the area of my expertise or gifts." But often our natural abilities stand in the way of what God desires to accomplish through us.

We forget when God speaks, He reveals what He has already determined to do, not what He wants us to do for him.

Only God can tell you what He wants to do through your life. You will not be able to figure that out on your own. *He* knows that you cannot do it! He wants to do it himself, *through* you!

*Jesus said, "With men it is impossible,  
but not with God,  
because all things are possible with God."  
—Mark 10:27*

If you know that God is calling you, step out in faith, respond with joyous conviction, even if the money is not in hand, even if the people are not in place, even if the end is not in sight. God never calls you accidentally, or incidentally, but always with a clear purpose in mind for your life.

LET FAITH  
lead you where logic cannot go.

One sure way to grow in your relationship with God is to promise you will accept the next assignment He gives you, because it will almost always be greater than the previous one. Each assignment is a moment of truth, an opportunity to increase your capacity of faith.

To get some idea of the kind of assignments you can expect from God, make note of those moments in your life when God did something unique, when you had a significant experience with him, when you could have turned one way, but He took you another.

Our heavenly Father usually builds on what He has already done and established. So if you can determine the consistent pattern God has used to direct and redirect you throughout your life, you can be pretty sure that He will continue to lead you down the path that has been begun for you. These experiences are not ends in themselves, but simply opportunities for you to trust in him further.

## MAKE IT YOUR REALITY

Do you love God enough – are you grateful enough for His gift of salvation – to join him in reaching out to a hurting world, to be willing for him to take you beyond the limits of your abilities?

Then be ready for God to reveal your assignment. Be ready when He says to start and go.

*May the God of peace...equip you with all that is good  
to do His will, working in us what is pleasing in His sight.*

*—Hebrews 13:20-21*

GOD  
SPEAKS TO  
HIS PEOPLE



My sheep hear my voice,  
I know them,  
and they follow me  
John 10: 27.

If there is one noticeable truth you discern on every page of God's revelation to us in Scripture, it is this: He speaks to his people. From Adam in the Garden of Eden to the beloved disciple, St. John on the island of Patmos, from Genesis to Revelation, our God speaks clearly enough so his people can hear him.

Why is it so hard to believe? If you were going somewhere with a friend, would you expect him to walk silently beside you, never saying a word? So if you are walking with God, should you not expect him to want to share with you what is on his heart?

Don't good fathers speak with their children?

The key to knowing God's voice is not a formula or a method you can follow. Knowing God's voice comes from an intimate love relationship with him. You come to know his voice as you experience his presence in your soul.

As you relate to God on a daily basis, the Spirit of God takes the Word of God, couples it with the Will of God and helps you understand the Way of God.

God's main reason for speaking to you is to reveal and clarify who He is, because the more you know about him, the more you know how to follow him.


*We also speak these things,  
not in words taught by human wisdom,  
but in those taught by the Spirit,  
explaining spiritual things to spiritual people.*

*—1 Corinthians 2:13*


Throughout your life, you will experience times when you want to respond to a situation based on your own experiences or insights and wisdom. This should be your guideline: Always travel back into salvation history, see the example set before you, and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal truth to you.

LISTEN,  
and God will speak where you can hear.

When you pray, never let it cross your mind that God is not going to answer. Sometimes He is silent as He prepares to bring you into a deeper understanding of himself. But whenever a silence comes, continue obeying all you know to do, and watch and wait for a fresh encounter with him.



To hear God speak, we must first determine to listen for the voice of God. We reveal that determination by our willingness to obey his voice – no matter what He might say. And we illustrate our willingness to obey God's voice by our present obedience to what He has already declared so clearly in the life of his Body, the Church. This "obedience factor" prepares us to hear God's voice in our present day experience. Scripture teaches us to look at everyday events and ask the questions: "What is God doing through these events?" and "What is He saying to me, here and now?" We must walk in the firm assurance that our heavenly Father speaks clearly to his children.





Our heavenly Father speaks through His Body, the Church, through revelation to us in Scripture, through the liturgical life and prayer of His Body, through personal prayer, through circumstances He permits us to encounter in our lives and through His people. Look for God to speak in all these ways, because walking with him involves relating to him in every aspect of your life.

When what you hear in all these areas continues lining up to say the same essential thing, to deliver the same message, then you know that you need to start moving in that direction

Circumstances can be confusing at times, but our God can help you interpret them from his perspective, letting you see how He is working through them in order to accomplish his will.



# MAKE IT YOUR REALITY



God reveals his plans so that He can accomplish his work through you in such a way that He gets all the glory.

So ask God to help you know when He is speaking, to know what He is saying, and to know how to respond in obedience. Listen for him, learn of him and be eager to follow him.



*"When the Spirit of truth comes,  
He will guide you into all the truth....  
He will speak whatever He hears."*

*—John 16:13*

**GOD'S  
INVITATION  
LEADS TO A CRISIS OF  
BELIEF**



**Without faith it is  
impossible to please God  
Hebrews 11: 6.**

*"Well done, good and faithful slave!  
You were faithful over a few things;  
I will put you in charge of many things."*


*—Matthew 25:21*

When our heavenly Father is ready, He will show you where He is working so you can join him. But He usually starts small and builds character to match each assignment. Don't get discouraged if God's call does not come immediately, or perhaps because you do not discern it right away. Wait on him and keep watching. He knows what He is doing.


Have open ears,  
a willing heart, and a ready

**"YES."**

God wants to touch people in your community. Suppose he wants to do it through you. But you give him a whole list of reasons why you cannot respond. Any assignment that comes from God will be more than you can handle. It will always have God-sized dimension to it.



Whenever I enter a contract with anyone, they usually ask me to sign on the bottom line. What that usually means is that I have agreed to the terms and conditions of the contract. Like the contractor, we too often give God a full page of activities we are going to do for Him and ask Him to sign off on it. Instead, God gives us a blank sheet of paper for us to sign on the bottom line, demonstrating our trust in Him and His will for our lives. The question is not "Will God sign off on what we want to do?" but rather "Will we trust God to do what He wants done?"





One of the greatest difficulties of hearing God is the fact that often what He says is what we do not want to hear. "Forgive that person you hate," He whispers. Or "Give up what is most precious to you." And so while we are doing the impossible (listening to the silence of prayer) He often asks the impossible of us. But Jesus has said that all things are possible for God, even speaking to ears that are deaf to Him and commanding those of us who are dead in our sin to live, move, and have our being.



Mature believers never outgrow the experience of being scared half to death by the challenges God gives them. But that is his loving way of leading you closer to him, always putting your next assignment just out of reach, requiring a dimension of faith that lies just beyond the last point of your trusting faith response.

The kind of challenging assignments our God gives are always beyond what people can do because He wants to demonstrate his nature, his strength, his provision and his generous kindness, through you to those He is drawing to himself.

## MAKE IT YOUR REALITY

Two words you should never use in the same sentence are these: "No, Lord."

God's assignments are not good ideas for you to think about or questions for you to meditate on for six weeks or six days or six months. They are directives from the Maker of all things. They are instructions, rather explicit, for you to obey.

*"When you have done all that you were commanded, you should say, 'We are good-for-nothing slaves; we're only done our duty.'"*

*—Luke 17:10*

**JOINING GOD  
REQUIRES  
MAJOR ADJUSTMENTS**



No one can serve two masters  
Matthew 6: 24.



The first few realities of experiencing God are truths that most any believer finds warm, comforting and compelling. But here is where the way becomes narrower and narrower, more exclusive in our concentration on our destined life with our heavenly Father, as He is speaks to our heart and soul and where so many times faith response becomes inconvenient.

You cannot continue life as usual and expect God to use you for his purposes. You cannot stay where you are and go with God at the same time.

When God invites you to join him, the first action will involve the adjustment of your life to God and his way. The second action will be obedience. But you cannot advance to obedience without first making the necessary adjustments.



The reality of adjusting to God holds true throughout his salutary revelation to us in Scripture. David could not continue herding sheep on the hillsides and become king of Israel. Jonah had to overcome a major prejudice in order to preach to the pagan people of Ninevah. St. Peter and others had to leave their fishing businesses in order to follow Jesus. Judas Iscariot was called to noble virtue, but was persistent in remaining a man with self-contained and self-affirmed limited vision. He could not fathom God saying "yes" to him in forgiveness after he so desperately sinned in betraying the Saviour, because he was in the habit of saying "no" to God when salutary grace was offered him. The result was that he ended up on the abject end of a donkey's halter, hanging in the wind, extinguishing existence from his bodily frame. He had never learned to live! He wanted to be a leader, but refused to learn how to successfully follow.

Obeying our heavenly Father will always come at a dear cost because we were ourselves purchased by Christ at dear cost. But few people take into account the cost of *not* submitting to God. It is always far much higher.

God can do in a few months through a life adjusted to him what He can never do in sixty years through those who choose to follow their own way.



*"Whoever does not bear his own cross  
and come after Me cannot be My disciple."*

*—Luke 14:27*

We tend to orchestrate ourselves into a comfort zone. We want gifts that agree with us, a ministry of service we can handle, a job that is secure, a way that is familiar and easy. But when our God speaks, He constantly upsets our plans and our expectations for comfortable living. He graciously provides us the tension we need to step out in faith and do everything *his* way.



It's time to  
FOLLOW GOD  
for a change.

The main adjustment you must make in becoming a disciple is to stop doing work *for* God according to *your* abilities, *your* likes, *your* goals, *your* judgment and interpretations, *your* timetable, and begin living in total dependence on our heavenly Father and *his* working resources, and *his* timing and *his* grace. Unquestionably, this is a major adjustment and it is never easy to make because we have adjusted to worldliness, and seem to enjoy it.



Men seem to know everything about their automobiles and latest sports trivia and women likewise know all about housekeeping, fashion, cooking and sewing, but if only some time were allotted to reading and studying what Christ teaches us in the life of his Body, the Church, we would be enriched and empowered beyond comprehension. What is first in our life becomes most important.

The seemingly insignificant Simon of Cyrene jumps off the pages of Holy Writ for our benefit. "They seized Simon, a Cyrenian, who was coming in from the country, and laid the cross on him, to carry behind Jesus" Luke 23: 26. He did not grumble, He did not complain about the inconvenience of the interruption in his life, he did not curse the Lord for provoking the situation in which the Romans conscripted him; he did not bear a grudge that he had to make up what was lacking in Christ's ability to carry the cross. He was grateful because he was called out of the ordinariness of his own life and introduced into the drama of our salvation. He recognized the privileged position he was placed in for the reconciliation of earth with heaven, of man with God. Because he was a man of faith, he carried his cross faithfully, not only on his shoulder, but in his heart to the day of his death.





Adjusting to God is a daily living experience, but we must be careful not to think He always wants you to immediately do something rash or drastic, even dramatic. It is in the ordinariness of our lives that He desires we be his. Our God is alerting you to what He is *about* to do, inviting you to begin the process of getting your life in order for him to use you, for you to be able to respond to his challenges.

He will require you to make adjustments in your circumstances, in your job, in your relationships, in your way of thinking, your commitments, your actions, your worship, your sacramental life, to rebuild and rethink your faith response to His proffered challenges.

He will help you know what you should do at each point along the way, but you must choose consciously to make all the adjustments necessary to be a faithful disciple.



# MAKE IT YOUR REALITY

What is holding you back from giving your all, your everything to God? Is it a certain favorite sin you enjoy indulging, a lazy habit? Is it your friends' treasured opinions and insights? Your current career path?

Who knows what waits just over the next sunrise if you are willing to surrender your whole life - all of it - to the Lordship of Christ?





*I have been crucified with Christ;  
and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me...  
who loved me and gave Himself for me.*

*—Galatians 2:19-20*

**YOU EXPERIENCE  
GOD  
AS YOU OBEY HIM**



He who calls you is faithful,  
who will also do it  
1 Thessalonians 5: 24.





You can know about God as Provider when you read of the time He provided a ram for Abraham to sacrifice in place of his son, Isaac. But you *really* know God as Provider when you experience him providing sustenance and nourishment in your life. You can know about God being a Banner when you read of Moses holding up his hands, giving continuing glory to God as he overlooked the battle with the Amalekites. But you really know God as your Banner when He delivers you from a battle in your own life and sustains you in victory on His Body and Blood.

To know God is to experience him!

Deep experiences with God immediately follow your first step of obedience. Unless you do what God has clearly instructed you to do, you will wonder why others continue to grow and advance while you continue to struggle and backslide.

The children of Israel discovered this when God told them He would part the waters of the Jordan before them when the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant put their feet into the water. They did, and God led them safely across. We however, would prefer him to part the water *before* we take a step into the unknown, but obedience to God is what unlocks the experience of his power.



*Whoever keeps His word,  
truly in him the love of God is perfected.  
This is how we know we are in Him.*

*—1 John 2:5*

The pattern of experiencing God is to surrender your life to his life, and your will to his will, letting God be God, unconditionally, on his own terms, without mitigating his almighty power with your limited understanding and diluted expectations. Just as Jesus “learned obedience through what he suffered” Hebrew 5: 8, we must learn obedience by yielding ourselves to him each day, especially on Sundays and feast days when we are invited, called, challenged, even commanded, to appear before His presence to be sustained and nourished and fed on him.

## OBEDIENCE

will point you in the ways of God.

As you do the next thing God tells you, you are allowing him to place you into partnership with his creative mighty, sweeping movement. You are cooperating with his grace and opening yourself to possibilities far beyond anything your mind could conceive or even comprehend. You are joining him in what He is doing and discovering your place in the living and vibrant Body of Christ!

Authentic faith—the kind that evokes extreme reactions from those it touches—is a faith characterized by faithfulness in both word and deed. It's not blind faith. Real faith is illuminating. It creates courage in the coward to stand fast on the promises of God, even in the presence of the threats of men. It's not always in the cloak of outwardly religious words and worship. It's based on our relationship to Jesus Christ, and it results in obedience to His commands. Experiencing God is the result of authentic faith.

Jesus never failed to know and do the will of our heavenly Father. Every solitary thing the Father wanted to do through him, Jesus did it immediately.

We are all a long way off from Jesus' perfect example. But the Christ who lived his earthly life in complete obedience is fully present in us. And He will never fail to pull our lives into the middle of his very purpose: the salvation of our souls and bodies.

God's self revelation of himself in Christ Jesus is the center of the salvation good news. The Epistle to the Hebrews begins, "In times past, God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets; in these last days, that is, the time in which we live, from Christ until now, he spoke to us through a son, whom he made heir of all things and through whom he created the universe, who is the refulgence of his glory, the very imprint of his being, and who sustains all things by his mighty word" Hebrews 1: 3.

The importance of revelation, of God manifesting himself to us is also made known in the beginning of the Gospel of St. John, where Jesus, the Word of God, is proclaimed to be the fulfillment of all revelation, particularly the law of Moses. "This life was the light of the world, the light shines in the darkness and darkness has not overcome it....and the Word became flesh and made its dwelling among

us and we saw his glory, the glory of the only-begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth...from his fullness we have all received, grace for grace, because while the law was given through Moses, grace and truth come only through Jesus Christ” John 1: 4, 5, 14, 16, 17.

While we do know God’s revelation to us is not just mere empty words, but full of action on our behalf, we still do not respond in the way of faith to be made alive and holy. The *Anaphora* prayers of the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, summarize everything Christ does for us and the drama of salvation, is not recounted in detail. Instead, the prayers recount, “He came and fulfilled the whole divine plan on our behalf,” and then goes to the climax moment at the Mystical Supper, where Jesus “...took bread into his holy, all pure, and immaculate hands, gave thanks, and blessed, sanctified, gave it to his holy disciples and apostles...”

The giving and sharing of this bread and this cup becomes for believers the actual presence of God in our midst as Redeemer and Sanctifier, “until the end of the ages” Matthew 28: 20. In this holy activity of our Lord, we see the basic structure of the Divine Liturgy that we celebrate today: “Jesus took bread”; He “gave thanks and blessed and sanctified....” He “broke it,” in the fracturing and breaking of the Lamb for Holy Communion; and “gave it to his disciples” in Communion with them and us

because "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten son that everyone who believes in him might not perish but have eternal life" John 3: 16.

If you walk in a consistent relationship with God, you should never experience a time when you do not know the will of God and so are enabled by him to carry it out.

## MAKE IT YOUR REALITY

Would you like to go with God into the deepest experience you have ever known? Agree with God in prayer that anything He asks of you is reasonable. And begin watching for him to prove the sincerity of your commitment. Heavenly nourishment is provided so that we become by divine grace what we are fed on, thus are transformed into the divine nature which is our created destiny.

Christ longs for you to experience him. Do you?





*I am sure of this,  
that He who started a good work in you  
will carry it on to completion  
until the day of Christ Jesus.*

*—Philippians 1:6*



## "AND HE ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN . . ."

One of the teachings about Jesus Christ that is defined in the Nicene Creed is that " . . . *He ascended into heaven.*" The Gospels tell how the Lord took His Apostles to the top of the Mount of Olives 40 days after His Resurrection, and after giving them some final instructions, He rose into the sky and vanished from their sight. Christ ascended into heaven because His work here on earth was completed. He came to show us the way to live a life that is pleasing to God. He came to take upon Himself the sins of all mankind and to give up His Life on the Cross for us. He came to conquer death. He came to give us the great gift of salvation and make eternal life in God's Kingdom a real possibility for all of us. Indeed, Christ had accomplished exactly what He was sent to do.

While it is thought that the early Church combined the Feast of the Ascension with Pentecost, by the time of St. John Chrysostom, a separate celebration of our Lord's return to heaven was already observed. In one of his homilies, Chrysostom writes eloquently about the Ascension: "*Today the human race is completely reconciled with God. We, who were unworthy to even live on earth are now lifted up to heaven. Today, we become heirs to the kingdom, and we ascend to heaven and inherit the throne of the King and Lord. Human nature, against which the cherubim guarded paradise, is now raised up above all the cherubim.*"

Yes, our Lord returned "home" to prepare a place for us. Through the grace of the Holy Spirit, may we all strive to find our way to that heavenly mansion one day!