

THE MESSENGER

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE ORTHODOX CHURCH
JUNE 2012



SS. PETER AND PAUL, JUNE 29 PARISH PATRONAL FEASTDAY

MARK THE DATES

June 3: HOLY PENTECOST • Descent of the Holy Spirit • Kneeling Vespers

June 9: SLAVONIC LITURGY CANCELLED

June 10: Last Church School Class for 2011-2012

June 11: Apostles Fast Begins

June 17: Prayers for the End of Church School

June 24: Nativity of St. John the Baptist • Fr. John 33rd Anniversary of Ordination

June 29: Ss. Peter and Paul • PARISH PATRONAL FEASTDAY

July 1: PARISH PICNIC

Send email addresses and corrections to: frjohn@lasvegasorthodox.com

June 2012

St. Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church • Las Vegas, Nevada

COFFEE HOUR SCHEDULE		CHURCH CLEANING SCHEDULE		1		2	
JUNE 3: MINKOFF JUNE 10: CATHY, CANDY, NADIA JUNE 17: ZARRET JUNE 24: SARA NEGASI		JUNE 3: MURPHY JUNE 10: WHEELER JUNE 17: BOKRE JUNE 24: TEKESTE/TOQUABO				MEMORIAL SATURDAY PANIKHIDA, 4:30 PM GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM CONFESSIONS	
3 DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM Hours: HOOD Epistle: NORVILLE Post-Comm: JARLSON KNEELING VESPERS HOLY PENTECOST	FAST FREE	4 FAST FREE	5 FAST FREE	6 FAST FREE DAILY VESPERS, 6:30 PM ADULT FAITH FORUM	7 FAST FREE ERITREAN SERVICE COFFEE CHAT, 10:00 AM	8 FAST FREE	9 FAST FREE SLAVONIC LITURGY CANCELLED GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM CONFESSIONS
10 DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM Hours: STRANSKY Epistle: HOOD Post-Comm: NORVILLE LAST CHURCH SCHOOL CLASS	APOSTLES FAST	11 FAST FREE	12 HALL USED FOR ELECTIONS	13 FAST FREE DAILY VESPERS, 6:30 PM ADULT FAITH FORUM	14 COFFEE CHAT, 10:00 AM	15 FAST FREE	16 FAST FREE GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM CONFESSIONS
17 DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM Hours: DRESKO Epistle: E. SAS Post-Comm: C. SAS CHURCH SCHOOL PRAYERS FATHER'S DAY	18 FAST FREE	19 FAST FREE	20 FAST FREE DAILY VESPERS, 6:30 PM ADULT FAITH FORUM	21 COFFEE CHAT, 10:00 AM	22 FAST FREE	23 FAST FREE VESPERS/LITIYA, 5:00 PM CONFESSIONS	
24 DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM Hours: STRANSKY Epistle: DRESKO Post-Comm: BROPHY NATIVITY OF ST. JOHN	25 FAST FREE	26 FAST FREE PARISH COUNCIL 6:00 PM	27 FAST FREE	28 COFFEE CHAT, 10:00 AM VESPERS/LITIYA, 6:30 PM CONFESSIONS	29 DIVINE LITURGY, 8:00 AM SS. PETER AND PAUL	30 FAST FREE GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM CONFESSIONS	



The Messenger

St. Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church
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JUNE 2012

A MEDITATION ON HOLY PENTECOST

by Father Andrew Morbey

Sanctity is the reality of communion with the Holy Spirit. For this reason, the whole question of the Church comes down to its sanctity, its being filled with the Holy Spirit, the individuals of whom the Church consists, being filled with the Holy Spirit. (Sergei Fudel, At the Walls of the Church)

The Feast of Pentecost draws together many of the most important themes of scripture and also of our own spiritual life. On the one hand, it shows the Mystery of the Church as the fulfillment of God's plan of salvation. On the other it grounds our life - the lives of believers - in the reception of - and the striving for - the acquisition of - the Holy Spirit and our conscious entry into the world of Divine Grace.

Old Testament prophecies strain towards their fulfillment in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The Lord promises to speak to his people (Isaiah 28:11) by means of strange men - disciples, now apostles - and in new, stam-

mering tongues. Stammering? Perhaps flickering, like flame? Stammering - such that observers thought the apostles drunk? In the rushing mighty wind we remember the movement of the Spirit of God upon the waters, the breath of God in the creation of Adam, the east wind that divided the Red Sea so that God's people could pass over 'dry-shod'. That the house into which the Pentecostal energy erupts is 'filled with the Spirit' - this reminds us of the Tabernacle and Solomon's Temple, filled with the Glory, the Divine Presence or Shekinah, of which the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel also speak. The flames of fire sitting on the heads of the apostles remind us of the fire maintained in the Tabernacle and Temple (Exodus 40:38; 2 Chronicles 7:3). The Pentecostal flames signify the fulfillment of the prophecies of the restoration of Solomon's Temple: here in the gathering of the disciples is to be found the new, true and spiritual Temple, the Presence of God. The new assembly of the People of God is the Church. Keeping with this temple theme, with the disciples turned apostles is the ful-

fillment of the Ark - the heart of the Temple - in the person of the Mother of God, the Mother of the new and living Covenant, before whom the Forerunner leaped and danced in his mother's womb, like David before Ark (Luke 1:41; cf. 2 Samuel 6:14,16).

Remember those 'dry bones' on Holy Friday evening? That reading anticipates the Resurrection, Pascha, but it also anticipates Pentecost. The Lord's promise to give a new heart and a new spirit to His people (Ezekiel 36, 37) is realized in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The Hebrew feast of the giving of the Law, the establishment of the old covenant, is fulfilled in the new Pentecost, for the Spirit poured out writes the law on the heart and makes the new, renewed, covenant an inner, personal reality, as Jeremiah foretold: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people (Jeremiah 31:33). Moses had sighed: Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, that the Lord would put his spirit upon

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James Brophy
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Robert Conductor
Stephen Osburn
Catherine Wilkalis

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Building & Grounds
Harold Anagnostopoulos
Nikolai Melnikov

Eritrean & Ethiopian Outreach
Genet Bokre

Russian Outreach
Natalia Minkoff

Church School
Nadine Wood

them (Numbers 11:29). We were as dry bones, abandoned in the grave, but in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, we are clothed in a new humanity, made alive by Grace, raised up, gathered, sanctified.

We sing at Pentecost: ... now harmony is restored... The gathering in Jerusalem at Pentecost of pilgrims arriving from many nations, speaking many different languages, is the reversal of the destruction of Babel (Genesis 11: 1 - 9). There, in that story, mutually unintelligible tongues and the fragmentation and dispersal of the people were the result and punishment for overweening arrogance. The coming of the Spirit undoes the confusion, enabling the word of God to be spread to the ends of the earth, creating a new unity, a harmony, among all peoples tuned into the Gospel.

Do we seek the grace of the Holy Spirit? Do we desire to learn, to be illumined, to be filled with the Spirit, to open ourselves to holiness? To have Christ formed in us? With the feast of Pentecost we begin to pray the great prayer for the Holy Spirit which we had laid aside for the Paschal season, while the Bridegroom was still with us. We pray: O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth; who art everywhere and fillest all things; Treasury of blessings, and giver of life: come and abide in us, and cleanse us from every impurity, and save our souls, O Good One. From the texts for the feast we can also pray, as Fudel notes: O Comforter, having washed away the defilement of my mind, in that Thou art good,

show me forth as full of Thy holiness (Canon to the Holy Spirit, Tone 1. Ode 1, Troparion 2); O Holy Spirit...grant holiness unto all who believe on Thee (Ode 8, Troparion 1); Come Thou unto us, O Holy Spirit, causing us to partake of Thy holiness, of never-waning light, divine life and most fragrant effusion; for Thou art a River of divinity proceeding from the Father through the Son (Ode 6, Troparion 2).

Come, O Holy Spirit!

Fr. Andrew is the Dean of Protection of the Virgin Mary Cathedral in Minneapolis, MN.

FEASTDAYS

Please join us for the following festal celebrations during June.

HOLY PENTECOST

June 3

Vespers/Litiya, 5:00 PM (SAT)

Divine Liturgy,

Kneeling Vespers, 9:00 AM (SUN)

Nativity of St. John

June 24

Vespers/Litiya, 5:00 PM (SAT)

Divine Liturgy, 9:00 AM (SUN)

Saints Peter and Paul

(PARISH FEASTDAY)

June 29

Vespers/Litiya, 6:30 PM (THUR)

Divine Liturgy, 8:00 AM (FRI)

COFFEE HOUR SCHEDULE

June 3: Minkoff

June 10: Cathy, Candy, Nadia

June 17: Zarret

June 24: Negasi

CHURCH CLEANING SCHEDULE

June 3: Murphy

June 10: Wheeler

June 17: Bokre

June 24: Tekeste/Toquabo

HOLY PENTECOST

The Great and Holy Feast of Pentecost will be celebrated on June 3rd. As is traditional in the Orthodox Church, we will be asked to kneel for the first time since Pascha. The Kneeling Vespers of Pentecost will be served immediately following the liturgy on June 3rd. The week following the feast of Pentecost is a *fast-free week* in the Orthodox Church.

SLAVONIC LITURGY

The monthly Slavonic Liturgy for June **has been cancelled**. Fr. Alexander will be hosting His Eminence, Archbishop Benjamin, at his own parish then and is unable to be here. He plans to be here for the usual service in July.

APOSTLES FAST

The annual Apostles Fast, preparing us for the Feast of Ss. Peter and Paul, always begins on the day after All Saints Sunday, and this year the fast begins on June 11th. It ends with our celebration of the feast on June 29th.

FEASTDAY/PICNIC

In celebration of our feastday, our church school children and Independence Day, we will have a parish picnic following liturgy on Sunday, July 1st. We will have a sign-up list for side dishes and desserts. The parish will provide hamburgers and hot dogs. Please join us in this celebration!

STROLLERS

We have a wonderful problem: many families with young children are attending the services and need their strollers. You are welcome at all times, but we ask

that you be considerate of those around you and bring the strollers, if needed in the church, up to the front of the north side of the church to allow free flow of the traffic. Please listen to the ushers if they ask you to move up with your stroller. Not only will this help with crowd movement, it is safer for you, your child and those around you. Thank you!

SUMMER CARE

Although summers can be very difficult with the heat here in the desert, and families are away at various times, the life of the Church and the parish go on. If you are travelling and need a parish recommendation at your location, please ask Father John or check out the OCA website: oca.org.

It is also vital and imperative that you remember the parish during these months with your financial gifts. The summer is traditionally a very lean time in all parishes, but expenses do not go down. In fact, some go up in the summer. Please remember to continue your support of our parish even if you are away at times!

EDUCATION CLASSES

The 2011-2012 church school year comes to an end with last classes being held on Sunday, June 10th. Prayers of Thanksgiving for the students and staff will be prayed the following Sunday, June 17th.

The adult faith forum discussions will meet through June 20th then take a summer break, resuming in September. We continue to discuss *The Screwtape Letters* by C.S. Lewis.

EVENTS/NOTES

Please be aware of the following activities in our church/hall.

- Saturday, June 2: Memorial Saturday. General Panikhida served before Vespers at 4:30 PM.
- Thursday, June 7: Eritrean Service in the church.
- Tuesday, June 12: Hall being used for the civil elections.

FEED THE HUNGRY

Our next scheduled date is Saturday, August 18th. Join us! If you can donate any of the items needed for the lunches, it would be appreciated. **We also have a need for basic toiletries: toothpaste, toothbrushes, soap, etc.** If you have any *travel* size items, leave them in the bin in the church vestibule. Thank you!

CHURCH CLEANING

Our schedule for the **weekly** clean-up of the church needs volunteers. The duty is easy, takes two hours at the most, and you can do it at your convenience as Father will provide a key and entry instructions. Please offer some time and talent to the Lord in the care of His Church. A sign-up list is available in the church.

COFFEE CHAT

We meet on Thursdays, at 10:00 AM at El Rancho on Pecos and Russell. Everyone is invited.

PRAYER FOR OUR PARISH

We ask everyone to remember our parish in daily prayer:

Lord, God and Savior of all, we thank You for the blessing of St. Paul parish in our lives. May Your word become alive in each and every one of us who strive to fol-

low You. Please bless and multiply all the gifts — time, talent and treasure — which are given in thanks to benefit our mission and glorify Your name. Bless and multiply the givers and help us all to make present Your Kingdom. For You are the Giver of all that is good, O Christ our God, and to You we give glory, together with Your Father who is without beginning and Your all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

CHARITY

Our normal collections of food for Friends of the Desert continue. *Special needs at this time: jelly, jam, peanut butter, canned fruit, canned tuna/chicken.* Thank you!

SACRAMENTS/SPECIAL SERVICES

Please follow these guidelines.

• **Baptisms.** A date and time must be requested at least three weeks in advance. In addition, a personal meeting scheduled with Fr. John will be necessary.

• **Matrimony.** A date and time for weddings must be requested at least six months (preferably twelve) in advance. There will be premarital sessions for both bride and groom to attend.

• **Memorials (Panikhida).** Requests for a memorial must be made at least one week in advance. If possible, the service should not be served on Sunday, the Day of the Resurrection, when all departed have already been remembered in the Liturgy.

PARISH COUNCIL SYNOPSIS MAY 21, 2012 MEETING

Rector's Report:

May 22: Father will be out of town for a week. Matushka Liz

will be having shoulder surgery. Father Aaron will conduct the services.

Father discussed a sensitive matter with the Parish Council in closed session.

Vice President: Laura Draskovic reported that a number of items, crosses and icons, were stolen from the bookstore. We are not sure exactly how this happened, as there was no damage, broken lock or glass. Discussion was had about protecting the inventory.

Laura spoke to Luis, the church gardener, who notified her that he has observed children skateboarding on the grass area and are damaging the sprinkler heads. Discussion followed.

Treasurer's Report: Karen Short distributed reports to council members earlier via e-mail. Everything is going very well with positive balances in our account.

Income for April was: \$28,944.50, and expenses of \$17,287.23 for income of \$11,657.27.

YTD 4/30/12

2012 YTD Inc	\$ 89,209.08
2012 YTD Exp	\$ 74,478.22
Inc over Exp	\$ 14,730.86

Buildings and Grounds:

- Harry will monitor the sprinkler system so the gardener does not have to make a special trip.
- It cost \$240.00 dollars for the church hall to be stripped, waxed and buffed. Harry was able to use two janitors from Diane's school to do the job.
- Short term projects: Cleaning of the bells and further stucco patching of the exterior of the church.
- Long term projects: Parking

lot is due for re-coating. Will start getting estimates now. The roof will need repair. Harry is aware of at least two to three leaks.

- Teresa Pechonis will clean the church hall and offices twice a month for \$80.00 dollars per cleaning.

Church School: School year is winding down. The last class will be on June 10, with Prayers of Thanksgiving on June 17.

Youth:

Stephen stated he would be meeting with Christina Sas regarding future endeavors of the youth. He suggested finding someone to help her since he will be leaving. Discussion followed.

Charity: Status quo on the food pantry.

Feeding the Homeless went well. Over 200 lunches were handed out. Future dates are slated for August 18th and the months of October and December. Donations for travel size toiletries are still needed for future homeless feedings.

Eritrean/Ethiopian: No report.

Outreach/Website: Stephen Osburn reported that the sermons are up to date.

Russian: No report.

Stewardship: No report.

OLD BUSINESS

Bell Tower: status quo.

Wine tasting/Cook-off Fundraiser: status quo.

Iconography Project: Status quo.

25th Anniversary: "Save the Date" magnets will go out in September

2012.

Anniversary Ad Book: Full page \$100.00, ½ page \$50.00 and ¼ page \$35.00.

A reception in the hall after Vespers on May 18, 2013.

Anniversary Lunch following liturgy at Sunset Gardens. Tickets will be \$50.00 per person. This will only cover the cost of the dinner. No funds will be raised with ticket sales.

Seminarian Funding: The parish will be funding Stephen and Lindsey Osburn for three years. At this time there has been a one-time pledge of \$100.00 and various other pledges totaling \$400.00 per month going towards the expenditures. The pledges are kept anonymous.

NEW BUSINESS

Strollers: Robert Conductor had a parishioner approach him regarding the strollers in the church. The council discussed having the left front side of the church designated for those with strollers. The ushers would be responsible for directing them towards this area. Father will place a blurb in the bulletin regarding the placement of the strollers.

Interior Painting: Harry Anagnostopoulos reported: painting needs to be completed on the interior of the church. He will get quotes. This is slated for the fall.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, June 26, 2012, 6:00 PM.

PARISH DIPTYCHS

This list of parish departed is to remind us all of those whom we love and miss and to spur us to remember them in our daily prayers. They will be remembered in the proskomedia before each liturgy.

MONTH OF JUNE

Alexandra Allred
June 12, 2002

Alexei Kaganovitch
June 12, 2007

Girmai Johannes
June 15, 1999

Amelia Vranesh
June 17, 1991

John Vishnevsky
June 19, 2007

Dorin Mihai Gutu
June 21, 1989

Rose Silecky
June 22, 2007

SAINTS PETER AND PAUL (COMMEMORATION JUNE 29)

*Sermon of Saint Augustine,
Bishop of Hippo*

Today the Holy Church piously remembers the sufferings of the Holy Glorious and All-Praised Apostles Peter and Paul.

St. Peter, the fervent follower of Jesus Christ, for the profound confession of His Divinity: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God," was deemed worthy by the Savior to hear in answer, "Blessed art thou, Simon ... I tell thee, that thou art Peter [Petrus], and on this stone [petra] I build My Church" (Mt.16:16-18). On "this stone" [petra], is on that which thou sayest: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God" it is on this thy confession I build My Church. Wherefore the "thou art Peter": it is from the "stone" [petra] that Peter [Petrus] is, and not from Peter [Petrus] that the "stone" [petra] is, just as the Christian is from Christ, and not Christ from the Christian. Do you want to know, from what sort of "rock" [petra] the Apostle Peter [Petrus] was named? Hear the Apostle Paul: "Brethren, I do not want ye to be ignorant," says the Apostle of Christ, "how all our fathers

were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ" (1 Cor.10: 1-4). Here is the from whence the "Rock" is Peter.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, in the final days of His earthly life, in the days of His mission to the race of man, chose from among the disciples His twelve Apostles to preach the Word of God. Among them, the Apostle Peter for his fiery ardor was vouchsafed to occupy the first place (Mt.10:2) and to be as it were the representative person for all the Church. Therefore it is said to him, preferentially, after the confession: "I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in the heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth: shall be loosed in heaven" (Mt.16: 19). Therefore it was not one man, but rather the One Universal Church, that received these "keys" and the right "to bind and loosen." And that it was actually the Church that received this right, and not exclusively a single person, turn your attention to another place of the Scriptures, where the same Lord says to all His Apostles, "Receive ye the Holy Spirit" and further after this, "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them: and whosesoever sins ye retain, are retained" (John 20: 22-23); or: "whatsoever ye bind upon the earth, shall be bound in Heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosened in heaven" (Mt.18:18). Thus, it is the Church that binds, the Church that loosens; the Church, built upon the foundational cornerstone, Jesus Christ Himself (Eph 2:20), doth bind and loosen. Let both the binding and the loosening be feared: the loosening, in order not to fall under this again; the binding, in order not to remain forever in this condition. Therefore "Iniquities ensnare a man, and everyone is bound in the chains of his own sins," says Wisdom (Prov 5:22); and except for Holy Church nowhere is it possible to receive the loosening.

After His Resurrection the Lord entrusted the Apostle Peter to shepherd His spiritual flock not because, that among the disciples only Peter alone was pre-deserved to shepherd the flock

of Christ, but Christ addresses Himself chiefly to Peter because, that Peter was first among the Apostles and as such the representative of the Church; besides which, having turned in this instance to Peter alone, as to the top Apostle, Christ by this confirms the unity of the Church. "Simon of John" -- says the Lord to Peter -- "lovest thou Me?" -- and the Apostle answered: "Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee"; and a second time it was thus asked, and a second time he thus answered; being asked a third time, seeing that as it were not believed, he was saddened. But how is it possible for him not to believe That One, Who knew his heart? And wherefore then Peter answered: "Lord, Thou knowest all; Thou knowest that I love Thee." "And sayeth Jesus to him" all three times "Feed My sheep" (John 20:15-17).

Besides this, the triple appealing of the Savior to Peter and the triple confession of Peter before the Lord had a particular beneficial purpose for the Apostle. That one, to whom was given "the keys of the kingdom" and the right "to bind and to loose," bound himself thrice by fear and cowardice (Mt.26:69-75), and the Lord thrice loosens him by His appeal and in turn by his confession of strong love. And to shepherd literally the flock of Christ was acquired by all the Apostles and their successors. "Take heed, therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock," the Apostle Paul urges church presbyters, "over which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of the God, which He hath purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28); and the Apostle Peter to the elders: "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof not by constraint, but willingly: not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind: neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock. And when is appeared the Prince of pastors, ye will receive unfading crowns of glory" (1 Pet. 5:2-4).

It is remarkable that Christ, having said to Peter: "Feed My sheep," did not say: "Feed thy sheep," but rather to feed, good servant, the sheep of the Lord. "Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" (1 Cor.1:13). "Feed My sheep". Wherefore "wolfish robbers, wolfish oppressors, deceitful teachers and mercenaries, not being concerned about the

flock" (Mt.7:15; Acts 20:29; 2 Pet 2:1; John 10:12), having plundered a strange flock and making of the spoils as though it be of their own particular gain, they think that they feed their flock. Such are not good pastors, as pastors of the Lord. "The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep" (John 10:11), entrusted to Him by the chief Shepherd Himself (1 Pet 5:4). And the Apostle Peter, true to his calling, gave his soul for the very flock of Christ, having sealed his apostleship by a martyr's death, is now glorified throughout all the world.

The Apostle Paul, formerly Saul, was changed from a robbing wolf into a meek lamb. Formerly he was an enemy of the Church, then is manifest as an Apostle. Formerly he stalked it, then preached it. Having received from the high priests the authority at large to throw all Christians in chains for execution, he was already on the way, he breathed out "threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord" (Acts 9:1), he thirsted for blood, but "He that dwells in the Heavens shall laugh him to scorn" (Ps 2:4). When he, "having persecuted and vexed" in such manner "the Church of God" (1Cor.15:9; Acts 8:5), he came near Damascus, and the Lord from Heaven called to him: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" and I am here, and I am there, I am everywhere: here is My head; there is My body. There becomes nothing of a surprise in this; we ourselves are members of the Body of Christ. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me; it is hard for thee to kick against the goad" (Acts 9:4-5). Saul, however, "trembling and frightened", cried out: "Who art Thou, Lord?" The Lord answered him, "I am Jesus Whom thou persecutest."

And Saul suddenly undergoes a change: "What wantest Thou me to do?" -- he cries out. And suddenly for him there is the Voice: "Arise, and go to the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do" (Acts 9:6). Here the Lord sends Ananias: "Arise and go into the street" to a man, "by the name of Saul," and baptize him, "for this one is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel" (Acts 9: 11, 15, 18). This vessel must be filled with My Grace. "Ananias, however, answered: Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he hath done to Thy saints in

Jerusalem: and here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Thy Name" (Acts 9:13-14). But the Lord urgently commands Ananias: "Search for and fetch him, for this vessel is chosen by Me: for I shall show him what great things he must suffer for My name's sake" (Acts 9:11, 15-16).

And actually the Lord did show the Apostle Paul what things he had to suffer for His Name. He instructed him the deeds; He did not stop at the chains, the fetters, the prisons and shipwrecks; He Himself felt for him in his sufferings, He Himself guided him towards this day. On a single day the memory of the sufferings of both these Apostles is celebrated, though they suffered on separate days, but by the spirit and the closeness of their suffering they constitute one. Peter went first, and Paul followed soon after him. Formerly called Saul, and then Paul, having transformed his pride into humility. His very name (Paulus), meaning "small, little, less," demonstrates this. What is the Apostle Paul after this? Ask him, and he himself gives answer to this: "I am," says he, "the least of the Apostles... but I have labored more abundantly than all of them: yet not I, but the grace of God, which was with me" (1 Cor.15:9-10).

And so, brethren, celebrating now the memory of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, remembering their venerable sufferings, we esteem their true faith and holy life, we esteem the innocence of their sufferings and pure confession. Loving in them the sublime quality and imitating them by great exploits, "in which to be likened to them" (2 Thess 3: 5-9), and we shall attain to that eternal bliss which is prepared for all the saints. The path of our life before was more grievous, thornier, harder, but "we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses" (Heb 12: 1), having passed by along it, made now for us easier, and lighter, and more readily passable. First there passed along it "the author and finisher of our faith," our Lord Jesus Christ Himself (Heb 12: 2); His daring Apostles followed after Him; then the martyrs, children, women, virgins and a great multitude of witnesses. Who acted in them and helped them on this path? He Who said, "Without Me ye can do nothing" (John 15: 5).