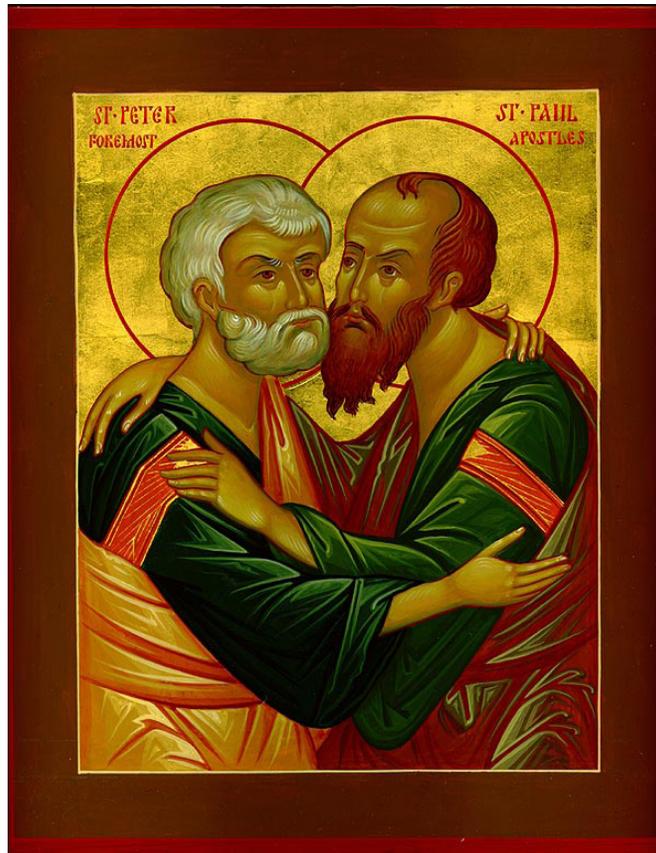


# THE MESSENGER

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF  
ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE ORTHODOX CHURCH  
JUNE 2015



## Ss. Peter and Paul, June 29 (Parish Feastday)

### MARK THE DATES

June 1-June 7: FAST FREE WEEK

June 2-3: Diocesan Council, San Francisco (Father out of town)

June 7: PARISH PICNIC

June 13: Russian Confessions, 9:00 AM; Slavonic Liturgy, 10:00 AM

June 16: Parish Council Meeting, 6:00 PM

June 20: **WINE TASTING SOCIAL**

June 21: Father's Day

June 24: **NATIVITY OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST**; Divine Liturgy, 8:00 AM

June 27: **FEEDING THE HOMELESS**, 10:30 AM

June 29: **SS. PETER AND PAUL**; Divine Liturgy, 8:00 AM

Send email addresses and corrections to: [fatherjohn@lasvegasorthodox.com](mailto:fatherjohn@lasvegasorthodox.com)

# JUNE 2015

## ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE ORTHODOX CHURCH • LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

|   |  |                                   |  |   |             |   |
|---|--|-----------------------------------|--|---|-------------|---|
|   | FAST FREE 1  | FAST FREE 2                       | FAST FREE 3  | FAST FREE 4<br>ERITREAN SERVICE, 8:00 AM<br>COFFEE CHAT, 10:00 AM | FAST FREE 5 | FAST FREE 6<br><br>GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM<br>CONFESSIONS  |
| 7<br>DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM<br>HOURS: STRANSKY<br>EPISTLE: E. HUFFMAN<br>POST-COMM: DEMKO<br>PARISH PICNIC                     | APOSTLES FAST 8  | 9                                 | 10<br><br>DAILY VESPERS, 6:30 PM<br>ADULT FAITH FORUM  | 11<br>ERITREAN SERVICE, 8:00 AM<br>COFFEE CHAT, 10:00 AM          | 12          | 13<br>RUSSIAN CONFESSIONS, 9:00 AM<br>SLAVONIC LITURGY<br>10:00 AM<br><br>GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM<br>CONFESSIONS |
| 14<br>DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM<br>HOURS: HOOD<br>EPISTLE: PARKER<br>POST-COMM: GRACE BROOKS                                      | 15   | 16<br><br>PARISH COUNCIL, 6:00 PM | 17<br><br>DAILY VESPERS, 6:30 PM<br>ADULT FAITH FORUM  | 18<br>ERITREAN SERVICE, 8:00 AM<br>COFFEE CHAT, 10:00 AM          | 19          | 20<br><br>GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM<br>CONFESSIONS<br>WINE TASTING SOCIAL  |
| 21<br>DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM<br>HOURS: DEMKO<br>EPISTLE: J. HUFFMAN<br>POST-COMM: PARKER<br><br>FATHERS DAY                    | 22   | 23                                | 24<br>DIVINE LITURGY, 8:00 AM<br>NATIVITY OF ST. JOHN  | 25<br>ERITREAN SERVICE, 8:00 AM<br>COFFEE CHAT, 10:00 AM          | 26          | 27<br>FEEDING THE HOMELESS<br>10:30 AM<br><br>GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM<br>CONFESSIONS                             |
| 28<br>DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM<br>HOURS: E. HUFFMAN<br>EPISTLE: GREG BROOKS<br>POST-COMM: WHEELER<br><br>VESPERS/LITIYA, 5:00 PM | 29<br>DIVINE LITURGY, 8:00 AM<br>SS. PETER AND PAUL<br>PARISH FEASTDAY | 30                                | GREETERS<br><br>JUNE 7: MASON/CAMPBELL<br>JUNE 14: CONDUCTOR/WHEELER<br>JUNE 21: MCAULEY/OSBURN<br>JUNE 28: MURPHY/CHONG |   |             |   |



# The Messenger

St. Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

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## JUNE 2015

### “YOU SHALL BE MY PEOPLE...”

**T**he Great and Holy Feast of Pentecost is celebrated fifty days after Pascha. It was on that fiftieth day after the resurrection when Jesus poured out His Spirit on the apostles and the Church, His Body, began to flower and grow.

The gift of the Holy Spirit is something that each and every Orthodox Christian receives through the Sacrament of Chrismation. This gift, the Holy Spirit, is our personal charism that enables us to say “Abba! Father!” and to live out the Christian life.

On this Feast, we hear two of the most poetic and beautiful passages in Scripture, each related to the coming of the Spirit. The first passage is from the prophecy of Joel:

*“And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions.” (Joel 2:28)*

The Lord, through the prophet, tells His people that He will

pour out His Spirit on **all** flesh. He reminds Israel, His chosen ones, that despite their apostasy and infidelity, He will continue to breath life into them.

And what is that life? Listen to the poetry: your sons and daughters shall prophesy. Old men will dream dreams and young men will see visions. Prophecy is not the foretelling of the future; it is the discernment of God’s Word. The children of God (us!) will discern His Word. The “old man” cannot dream because his days are done and he has little future. But the “new man” which replaces the old in baptism **must** dream in the renewed life given through Christ and the Spirit. Young men have little vision because of their youth and lack of experience, but the Spirit surpasses all understanding and that Breath of God enlivens and matures those who have died in baptism and been chrismated beyond their youth.

Then we hear from the prophecy of Ezekiel:

*“For I will take you from among*

*the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God. (Ezekiel 36:24-28)*

We hear in this passage about the “choseness” of God’s people Israel. Pentecost is the revelation of the Church as the New Israel — God’s people redeemed in the resurrection of the Son of God. The sprinkling of clean water is what we receive in the waters of baptism, cleansing us and taking away our filth. But we must then put aside our idols, and we all have them. The most

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CHOIR DIRECTOR  
Matushka Elizabeth Dresko

PARISH COUNCIL  
Virginia Hood, Vice-President

Karen Short, Treasurer

Catherine Wilkalis, Secretary

James Brophy  
Alan Buttell  
Kevin McAuley  
Karen Murphy  
Litsa Osburn  
Joseph Wheeler

## SUB-COMMITTEES

Building & Grounds  
Kevin McAuley

Eritrean & Ethiopian Outreach  
Genet Bokre

Russian Outreach  
Natalia Minkoff

Church School/Youth  
Amy McAuley  
Stephan Tanksley

Fellowship Committee

insidious is the idol of the self. But we have others — money, possessions, power, sex, alcohol, drugs, and even seemingly good things like family and home. Anything that stands between us and the Lord is an idol.

But then those beautiful words: He will take away our hearts of stone and give us hearts of flesh. What an image! All the hardness that has built up in our hearts, minds and souls, taken away in the waters of baptism and then the Spirit makes us alive again in flesh, able to walk in His ways. What a gift! And when we turn again to stone, we are allowed to come, confess our hardness of heart and our sins, and be given a new baptismal robe and hearts of flesh renewed in the Spirit and forgiveness of God's love.

Finally, the prophet gives us God's ultimate and best promise: He will be our God, and we will be His people. His family! We will inherit the land promised to us: the Kingdom of Heaven. All of this is given to us in the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost and lived out in the life of the Church.

May we all rejoice in the Gift of the Holy Spirit, and be enlivened by this Breath of God. May we discern the Word of God, may we dream dreams and see visions. May we be renewed again and again in the new baptism of repentance. May we have hearts of flesh and not hearts of stone. May we truly be the People of God, and may we know Him all our days as our God!

*Father John*

## FEASTDAYS

During June, we celebrate the following feasts:

NATIVITY OF ST. JOHN  
(36<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF FR. JOHN'S  
ORDINATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD)  
June 24

DIVINE LITURGY, 8:00 AM (WED)

SS. PETER AND PAUL  
(**Parish Feastday**)

June 29

VESPERS/LITIYA, 5:00 PM (SUN)

DIVINE LITURGY, 8:00 AM (MON)

(**Please note the special time for Vespers as it falls on a Sunday evening.**)

## FAST FREE/APOSTLES FAST

The week following the celebration of the Feast of Pentecost (June 1-June 7) is a *fast-free* week in the Orthodox Church.

The Apostles Fast begins on Monday, June 8 and continues until the Feast of Ss. Peter and Paul on June 29.

## CHURCH TRAVEL

Father John will be in San Francisco on June 2-3 for the meetings of the Bishop's Advisory Council and Diocesan Council. If you have an emergency, please contact Matushka Liz (860-983-1083).

## PARISH PICNIC

We will have a parish picnic/potluck on Sunday, June 7, after liturgy. We will celebrate the end of the church school year and honor our students and teachers. The parish provides hamburgers, hot dogs and fixins, but a sign-up list is available to bring other dishes, desserts, etc. Please join us and volunteer to bring something!

### SLAVONIC SERVICE

Father Alexander will be here for the normal Slavonic service on June 13. Russian confessions begin at 9:00 AM, followed by Slavonic Liturgy at 10:00 AM.

### WINE TASTING SOCIAL

Our second annual Wine Tasting Social will be held following Vespers on June 20. Various wines will be sampled with foods to highlight their pairings in taste. **Tickets are \$25 and must be purchased before the event so we can plan for the menu.** See Tim Johnson for tickets.

### YOUTH SOCIAL/POOL PARTY

Father John and Matushka Liz will be hosting a pool party for the youth of our parish on Sunday, July 5, after services and coffee hour. Food, fun and fellowship are the order of the day. *Please inform Matushka Liz if you plan to attend.* Parents are welcome to join us (and give some more eyes!).

### BOND PROGRAM

A special parish meeting was held on Sunday, May 17, following the Divine Liturgy. At this meeting, it was approved to move forward with a bond investment program to refinance our mortgage and fund capital projects. As the summer moves on, more publicity will be announced and distributed before the bonds go on sale in September. The issue will be for \$500,000 over a 20-year amortization schedule. You may invest in \$250 increments at various interest rates (to be scheduled), and *retirement accounts are eligible.* Stay tuned!

### FEEDING THE HOMELESS

Our next Feeding the Homeless project date has been changed to June 27<sup>th</sup>. We gather at 10:30 AM to prepare bag lunches then go down to distribute them to the needy. Join us! If you can donate any of the items needed for the lunches (or funds to provide such), it would be appreciated.

### ADULT FAITH FORUM

The Adult Faith Forum continues with discussion/bible study about the Orthodox teachings on contemporary issues. We are focusing right now on the Sermon on the Mount. Once again, we will have Wednesday evening Daily Vespers at 6:30 PM, followed by class. Our class will recess for the summer following the June 17<sup>th</sup> class.

### CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

We have established a goal of \$60,000 to fund needed projects to maintain and repair our aging infrastructure. We ask everyone to consider a special donation to this fund, above and beyond your normal contributions for the support of the parish.

### 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!

### ORTHODOX VENDORS

We have established a list of businesses that our parish uses or are owned and operated by Orthodox Christians (some parishioners). We provide this information for you to consider if

you need services.

CB Air Conditioning  
Cedomir Blagojevic  
(702) 493-0295

Dolphin Court Salon & Day Spa  
7581 W. Lake Mead Blvd.  
(702) 946-6000

Nina Grozav, Realtor  
bnv7777@gmail.com  
(702) 521-0208  
speaks Russian and Romanian

Kyklos Café (Greek food)  
Galleria Mall  
Sophocles Frangakis  
(702) 450-1515

Westfield Eye Center  
C. Edward Yee, MD  
2575 Lindell Road  
(702) 362-3937

### 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 follow 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.**

## SACRAMENTS/SPECIAL SERVICES

Please follow these guidelines.

- *Baptisms.* A personal meeting scheduled with Fr. John will be necessary to schedule any baptism requested.

- *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 be served on Saturday. Other requests will be met as pastorally possible.

## PARISH COUNCIL SYNOPSIS MAY 19, 2015 MEETING

*Rector's Report:* Father John reminded Council he will be attending Diocesan Financial Committee Meeting on Friday, May 22 in Seattle.

Reported the Special Parish Meeting on Sunday, May 17 had a quorum present, attended by 27 voting members. Motion was passed to refinance our mortgage and fund capital projects through a \$500,000 bonding program managed by Share Financial Services.

Commented on a provision of the Financing Agreement, Paragraph 4, from Share Financial requiring that any possible legal arbitration involving the Agreement be conducted in a Texas court. (The company is based in Texas). It was discussed by the council and no action was deemed necessary.

Reviewed the Share Consulting and Financing Agree-

ment. Discussion ensued; questions answered. Virginia Hood, Kevin McAuley and Joe Wheeler will sign documents after the adjournment of this meeting.

*Vice President's Report:* Ginny reported the Special Parish Meeting went well with good questions asked. Overall tone of the meeting was positive. She expressed confidence that this is the best option for refinancing. The parish is allowed to set its own interest rates.

The last church school class of the year went well; some students actually disappointed class was ending. The teens want to see a viable youth group started and helped to grow. Ginny and Father expressed hopes that they would take an active role in the establishment of an "official" group.

*Treasurer's Report:* Karen Short distributed our financials before the meeting:

Capital Fund: \$11,669.33  
Rainy Day: \$10,008.92  
Icon Fund: \$15,080.89

Income for April was \$23,579.00, with expenses of \$16,880.38 for a surplus of \$6,698.62.

YTD 2015 (Jan-Apr)

|              |              |
|--------------|--------------|
| 2015 Inc     | \$ 94,254.13 |
| 2015 Exp     | \$ 76,646.88 |
| Inc over Exp | \$ 17,607.25 |

All parish finances including accounts payable are totally current. Funds for Deacon Stephen's moving expenses are \$1300.00 short of goal.

## COMMITTEES

*Building and Grounds:* No new updates. Will get quotes on prices for new doors for church

first week in June.

Bell tower status quo

Rehabilitation of courtyard landscape: Landscaper to measure courtyard for child-safe woodchip ground cover that will cover tree roots and bare dirt and can be completed in one day. Landscaper could take out sprinkler system and put in deep drip watering for trees.

Father reported the 4 fire extinguishers in church and hall are too old (circa 1995) to be inspected. They can be replaced with new at \$50 each above the cost of trying to inspect and recharge, and will be serviced by Ace Fire Extinguisher Company annually. Total cost approximately \$225.00.

*Charity:* Reported the next Feeding the Homeless is changed to Saturday, June 27, at 10:30 AM.

*IOCC:* no report.

*Church School/Youth:* Deacon Stephen Osburn, Amy McAuley, and Stephan Tanksley will be coordinating the program for church school for the coming year.

*Eritrean/Ethiopian:* no report.

*Fellowship:* The Annual Parish Picnic will be held on June 7th instead of Pentecost Sunday May 31.

The Wine Tasting Social is being planned for June 20 after Vespers. Sophocles Frangakis will prepare and host. Details to be publicized soon.

*Outreach/website:* no report.

*Russian:* The oven in the kitchen was left on after the Slavonic Liturgy on Saturday May 9. This

is the second time it has happened. Father will speak with coordinators to correct future use.

*Stewardship:* no report.

### OLD BUSINESS

*Iconography:* status quo.

### NEW BUSINESS

*Council replacement:* Father reported that Alan Buttell has missed the last four parish council meetings and all efforts to contact him have been unsuccessful. Consequently he may be replaced according to the parish bylaws. Father will speak to a potential candidate this week.

*Next Council Meeting:*  
*Tuesday, May 19, 2015.*

## 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

### A SERMON ON SS. PETER AND PAUL ST. AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO (OCA.ORG)

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, "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them: and whose soever 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).

**JOIN US FOR CELEBRATION OF  
OUR PARISH FEASTDAY!**