

Russian Orthodox Church of the Resurrection of Christ

1201 Hathaway Lane NE
Minneapolis, MN 55432-5720
Phone: 763-574-1001 / Fax 763-574-7560
web site: www.skete.info email: rusmncn@att.net

Schedule for the Week of July 12 - 18, 2009

Sunday Jul 12	Sts. Peter and Paul Свв. Петра и Павла
Saturday Jul 18	5:30 PM Vigil
Sunday Jul 19	St. Sisoës of Egypt 8:30 AM Confessions, Nocturns 9:00 AM Divine Liturgy / Литургия

осязали руки наши, о Слове жизни...» Для апостолов было очевидностью, что Иисус есть Бог, ставший Человеком; только созерцая Христа, они узнали, что Бог есть свет и Любовь и что нет в Нем никакой тьмы (1 Ин. 1,5;4,8) (Епископ Александр)

**On this present day June 29/July 12, the Holy Church
piously remembers the suffering of the Holy Glorious and
All-Praiseworthy Apostles Peter and Paul**

From a Sermon of Blessed Augustine, Bishop of Hippo

Слово на Праздник Свв. Апп. Петра и Павла

Итак, братья, празднуя ныне память святых апостолов Петра и Павла, вспоминая честные их страдания, возлюбим их истинную веру, святую жизнь, возлюбим неповинность, страдания их и чистоту исповедания. Любя в них эти высокие качества и подражая их великим подвигам, «чтобы уподобиться им», и мы достигнем того вечного блаженства, которое уготовано всем святым. Стезя жизни нашей прежде была тяжелее, тернистее, труднее, но «имея вокруг себя такое облако свидетелей» (Евр. 12,1), прошедших по ней, соделалась ныне для нас она и легче, глаже, и удобопродимее. Сперва прошел по ней Сам «Начальник веры и Совершитель» Господь наш Иисус Христос (Ер. 12,2), за Ним последовали Его неустрашимые апостолы, потом мученики, отроки, жены, девы и многий сонм свидетелей. Кто же действовал в них и помогал им за этом пути? – Тот, Кто сказал: «Без Меня не можете делать ничего» (Ин. 15,5). (Блаженный Августин)..

Апостолы – свидетели Божественности Христа

Святые апостолы сперва узнали в своем Учителе обещанного Спасителя, Мессию, а потом и Самого воплотившегося Бога. Эту веру от лица апостолов исповедал апостол Петр, и Господь ответил ему, что «не плоть и кровь открыли тебе это, но Отец Мой, сущий на небесах» (Мф. 16,17). С тех пор апостолы жили этим совершенно новым, небывалым, страшным и бесконечно радостным сознанием, что пред ними и с ними живет Сам Бог, ставший Человеком. Трепетом этого сознания полны все апостольские писания: «О том... что мы слышали, что видели своими очами, что рассматривали и что

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: Saint 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 Saviour to hear in answer: "Blessed art thou, Simon ... I tell thee, that thou art Peter [Petros], 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 [Petros] is, and not from Peter [Petros] that the "stone" [petra] is -- just as how 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 [Petros] was named? -- Hear ye the Apostle Paul: "I do not want ye not to know, brethren -- says the Apostle of Christ -- how our fathers were all under a cloud, and all passed through the sea: and all in Moses were baptized in the cloud and in the sea. And all thus eating spiritual food, and all thus drinking spiritual drink: for they did drink from the spiritual accompanying rock: for the rock indeed was Christ" (1Cor 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 for preaching 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. And therefore it is said to him, preferentially, after the confession: "And I give thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven: and if thou bindest upon the earth, it will be bound in the Heavens: and if thou loosenest upon the earth, it will be loosened in the Heavens (Mt 16; 19). Wherefore it was not one man, but rather the One Universal Church, that received these "keys" and the right "to bind and loosen." And that actually it was 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 also all His Apostles: "Receive ye the Holy Spirit" -- and further after this: "Whosoever sins ye remit, are remitted them: and whosoever

sins ye retain, are retained" (Jn 20:22-23); or: "with what ye bind upon the earth, will be bound in Heaven: and with what ye loosen upon the earth, will be loosened in the Heavens" (Mt 18:18). Thus, it is the Church that binds, the Church that loosens; the Church, built upon the foundational corner-stone -- 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. Wherefore "by the passions of his own sins -- says Wisdom -- is each ensnared" (Prov 5:22); and except for in the Holy Church nowhere is it possible to receive the loosening.

And after His Resurrection the Lord entrusted the Apostle Peter to shepherd His spiritual flock. ... Christ addresses Himself chiefly to Peter because, that Peter was first among the Apostles and as such the representative of the Church; ... 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" (Jn 20:15-17). Besides this, the thrice appealing of the Saviour to Peter and the thrice 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 loosen," himself thrice bound himself 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.

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. "For was Christ divided, or is Paul crucified according to you, or are ye baptized in the name of Peter or 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; 2Pet 2:1; Jn 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 pastor lays down his life for the sheep" (Jn 10:11), entrusted to Him by the Prince of pastors 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, now glorified throughout all the world.

And the Apostle Paul, being 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 with rage and murder against the disciples of the Lord" (Acts 9:1), he thirsted for blood, but -- "the Living One in the Heavens mocked him" (Ps 2:4). When he, "having persecuted and vexed" in such manner "the

Church of God" (1Cor 15:9; Acts 8:5), he came nigh to Damascus, and the Lord from Heaven called to him: "Saul, Saul, wherefore 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, wherefore persecutest thou Me; it is terrible to thee to kick against the goad" (Acts 9:4-5). Saul, however, "trembling and frightened", cried out: "Who art Thou, Lord?" "I am Jesus" -- answered the Lord to him -- "Whom thou persecutest". And Saul suddenly undergoes a change: "What warest Thou me to do?" -- he cries out. And suddenly for him there is the Voice: "Rise up and go to the city, and it will be told thee, what thou ought to do" (Acts 9:6). Here the Lord sends Ananias: "Rise up go upon the street" to a man, "by the name of Saul," and baptize him, "for this one is a vessel chosen by Me, to bear My Name before pagans and rulers and the sons of Israel" (Acts 9:11, 15, 18). This vessel must needs 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 to be here to have the authority from the high-priests to seize all calling upon 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 tell him, how much must needs be for him to suffer about My Name" (Acts 9:11, 15-16).

And actually the Lord did direct 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 is done the memory of the sufferings of both these Apostles, though they suffered on separate days, but by the spirit and the closeness of their suffering they constitute one. Peter went first, Paul followed soon after him -- formerly called Saul, and then Paul, having transformed in himself his pride into humility, as means also his very name (Pavlos), 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 more so than all I have labored, yet not I, but the grace of God, which is 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 "how great the cloud of witnesses enveloping us" (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 Founder and Fulfiller of 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 that said: "Without Me ye are able to do nothing" (Jn 15:5). Amen.