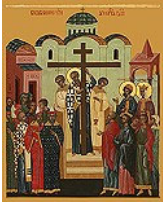


✠Bulletin✠

Week of June 29th to July 5th



Holy Cross Orthodox Church

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Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom

3rd SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST — Tone 2

**The Holy Glorious and All-Praised Leaders of the Apostles,
Peter and Paul (1st c.)**

Weekly Liturgical Service Schedule

Sunday June 29, 2025

9:10 am - Hours

9:30 am - Divine Liturgy

Weekly Schedule

Sunday June 29, 2025

- Inquirers & Catechism classes following Divine Liturgy
- Choir Practice

Apostolic Lessons

The Glorious and All-Praised Preeminent Apostles Peter and Paul

Metropolitan Nicholai (Yarushevich)

Today we glorify the great, Spirit-bearing, God-enlightened Apostles of Christ Peter and Paul—preeminent among the holy Apostles. And when we look at them with our spiritual eyes, we reverently bow before the greatness of their apostolic labors. They are the executors of the will of God: *Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations...* (Matt. 28:19). They are fiery, unshakable preachers of the word of God, courageous fighters for the truth of Christ, fearing neither beatings, nor the martyr's death that both of them endured—according to ancient tradition—**on this day**.

The Apostle Peter was crucified; the Apostle Paul was beheaded with a sword. It would seem to us small and weak sinners that we have nothing to learn from the holy Apostles—it remains only to glorify their exceptional feat in the name of Christ, for we all live in a peaceful state, and we all fulfill our small obedience in the world that the Lord has entrusted to us.

But, my dears, we can and must learn a lot from these great Apostles, not only from their Epistles, portions of which are read at every Divine Liturgy, but directly from their labors, their virtues; we must learn how to protect our immortal souls from sinful temptations, adorn them with spiritual beauty, and stand before the face of God as a faithful child of our Heavenly Father.

And the Apostle Peter was a man. When the Lord our Savior bid farewell to His Disciples at the Mystical Supper on the eve of His suffering, when He told His Disciples that temptations, sorrows, and offenses awaited them, the Apostle Peter exclaimed: *Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble*. But the Lord answered him—and you all know these words of Christ: *Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times*. (Matt. 26:33-34).

And so on Friday morning, when the beaten, exhausted Savior was in need of encouragement and consolation according to His humanity, and when the devotion of the Apostle Peter and his fidelity in love could have given this consolation, at these moments the Apostle Peter was responding to the maid who said: *You also were with Jesus of Nazareth*, by denying Him thrice out of fear: *I know not this man of Whom you speak* (Mark. 14:66-72). He renounced Him with an oath, three times! Such was the depth of the Apostle Peter, not yet renewed by the grace of the Holy Spirit! He was still an ordinary man with his infirmities, with his weaknesses, and he fell.

His rebellion was short-lived. As soon as the Lord our Savior looked at the Apostle Peter in these moments, *Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him* and felt the full weight of the sin he had committed and *wept bitterly*, as the holy Evangelist says (Matt. 26:75). This weeping over his sins, always salvific for every sinner, drew the mercy of the Savior. The Lord forgave His repentant Apostle and restored him to apostolic dignity, which he had fallen away from by renouncing the Lord.

You have heard the Gospel words about how the Savior, appearing after the Resurrection, thrice asked the Apostle Peter: *Lovest thou Me?* And receiving his passionate answers: *Thou knowest that I love Thee*, the Lord told him

three times: *Feed My lambs ... Feed My sheep* (Jn. 21:15-17). The Lord entrusted him to feed His rational flock, to carry out His Divine will and to organize the holy Church of Christ on Earth.

And as the oldest tradition says, the already forgiven Apostle Peter continued to remember his grave fall and every night, as soon as heard the rooster's call, would rouse himself, arise in prayer, and tears would flow from his eyes. Two grooves formed under his eyes from these tears.

My dears, don't we also renounce the Lord? Is not failing to fulfill the commandments of God also a renunciation of our Savior?

And if we continue to live in a filthy manner, if we continue to bear malice, to condemn, to slander, to get angry, to curse, to defile ourselves with lust, not fulfilling the will of God to protect our mouths and hearts from all filth, are we not thereby betraying our Lord?

And let the example of the Apostle Peter, of his quick realization of his fall and his tearful repentance, inspire us, the weak and infirm, who fall every minute into sin, to see our transgressions and be able to weep for them before the face of Him Whom we offend with our self-will.

We also have before us the holy Apostle Paul, known as Saul before his conversion. You know that he was a persecutor of Christians. But when he came to see with his spiritual eyes, after the miracle of the appearance of the Lord that happened to him, and when he became the Apostle Paul, he surpassed the other Apostles with his zeal for fulfilling the apostolic labor.

How many times he was beaten with sticks, stoned, imprisoned, and suffered shipwrecks! But nothing could stop him in his fiery preaching about the Lord, to Whom he gave himself with all his heart. Wherever he went in his travels, he opened his mouth and preached the name of God. When he was persecuted, he would move to another city, not resting a single day, devoting himself entirely to glorifying the name of God. And he became great, and preeminent, and a glorious Apostle of Christ, whom the entire Orthodox world reveres; whose name, like that of the Apostle Peter, will be exalted and glorified in the holy Church of Christ unto the end of the age.

And listen, dear ones, to the words of this great Apostle, Paul: *O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death* (Rom. 7:24); *I ... am not meet to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the Church of*

God (1 Cor. 15:9). He always retained the memory that in his younger days he had committed the serious sin of persecuting Christians; this memory inflamed his soul even later when thanks to his many labors in the name of Christ he was already famous throughout the whole known world.

Learn humility from the holy Apostle Paul! He regards all his labors in the name of Christ and all his glory as nothing, remembering his sinful fall.

We all need to see our many defilements and be humble before the face of the Lord, aware of ourselves as sinners, disobedient to the will of God. We also need to be humble before each other, not exalting ourselves above others—though there may be external, earthly reasons for it—because every one of us is sinful.

And in the name of what did the holy Apostles Peter and Paul carry out their heavy apostolic labors? In the name of love for their Lord and Savior and in the name of love for men; for they preached the word of God that men might be saved, that immortal souls might not perish for all eternity; but aroused by the words of their preaching, they might prepare themselves for the eternal blessed Kingdom. Such was the power of their love for men!

St. John Chrysostom says about the Apostle Paul: "I cannot find the words to describe how the heart of this great Apostle burned with love for men. His love was deeper than the ocean; it was brighter and hotter than any fire." He loved men as though he were their own father or mother who gave birth to them. Moreover, he was even ready to be excommunicated from the Lord if only those to whom he preached might be saved. Let his own soul perish, but let those people whom he called to salvation be saved—that's what he said himself!

What love! How it burst forth like a flame from his burning heart—a heart that, as he himself says, had room for everyone, that embraced all people, that loved all people with extraordinary love (cf. 2 Cor. 6:11-12)! And this love of the Apostle, such a loving heart lifted him to an unattainable height of greatness and holiness.

Oh, my dears, if only the heart of every one of us had but a grain of such love for others! Oh, if only our love for each other, willed by the Lord, would keep our mouths, our hearts, our steps, our hands and feet from all kinds of filth! After all, such love saves an immortal soul for eternity, for the Lord said that the commandment of love is the greatest; whoever fulfills it, whoever

nurtures his heart in such love for others, fulfills the entire law of Christ (cf. Mk. 12:29-31).

Look what else: The Lord Jesus Christ called the Apostle Peter to follow Him when he and his brother were fishing in the Sea of Tiberias. The Lord called the Apostle Paul in a miraculous manner: first by blinding him, so his spiritual eyes could see, and then by giving him the spiritual vision with which the Apostle Paul saw his sin and came to know all the sweetness of being a servant of his Lord and Savior.

And the Lord calls us to Himself in various ways: by His quiet voice with which He speaks in the conscience of every one of us, and with miraculous phenomena and special events in our lives.

Often, quite unexpectedly, we feel the quiet voice of God: “Wake up; come to your senses; you are standing on the edge of a sinful abyss, and death is not far from you.”

Sometimes the Lord shocks us with some special event to turn us to Himself, to remind our sinful hearts that the Lord is over us and that we are all headed towards the threshold of death, which we will cross over into eternal life.

Don’t we know how wars have roused many who were weak in faith or had no faith at all?!

Others the Lord will strike with sorrow, so that in this sorrow they might remember that they are sinful before the Lord, that they have departed from the Lord, and that the Lord wants to thereby wake them from this spiritual slumber they were in before their grief.

The Lord calls us to Himself in different ways, but the purpose of the call—both the one with which He called the Apostles Peter and Paul and the one with which He calls every one of us—is the same: to entice us to follow Him unto the end of our days on Earth.

Take another look at the holy Apostles. The Apostle Peter was a family man—he had children; his mother-in-law lived with him. The holy Apostle Paul was a virgin. The Apostle Peter was a commoner; the Apostle Paul was an educated man. All are equal before the Lord. The Lord draws both the learned and the simpleton to Himself; both the married and the unmarried.

And all of us, different in appearance, in age, are all the same children of our Heavenly Father. We all have an immortal soul, which the Savior calls us to save; and the holy Apostles call us.

I am a bishop and you are laymen. We all have our own earthly labor, whether in a family or at work. Some of us are old, some are young; but as it says in one of the sacred funeral hymns, we all stand in equal rank before the face of our Heavenly Father. Our Heavenly Judge and Father will ask every one of us only about how we spent our time on Earth, how we saved our immortal soul, whether we listened to the voice with which the Lord calls us from the abyss of sin to eternal salvation, and whether we responded to this voice.

The holy Apostles Peter and Paul dedicated themselves to this work of saving men. And let us, my dears, on their bright feast, on the day of their martyrdom, hear in our hearts their calls to eternal salvation, to strong faith, to true love, not hypocritical, to which they called the rational flock in the days of their earthly labors and to which they continue to call all of us through their epistles.

And let us, weak and sinful, relying on their prayers, traverse our earthly path with the constant memory of the sacred duty placed upon each of us—to be worthy children and disciples of our Savior.

Inquirers & Catechism Class

Classes will be on Sundays following Divine Liturgy. For those new to understanding orthodoxy or for those who want to expand your foundation, please join us for our classes. Please check the schedule for changes.

tithe.ly.com

Another way to “donate”. This app can be downloaded to your phone and Holy Cross can be accessed via this app. Also, tithe.ly can be accessed through the church website www.HolyCrossFtMyers.org

Prayer Requests

Carolyn – Robert & Debra’s Forster’s daughter

Anne and Scott Peatross

Annette Bartos – David Bartos’ sister

Robert (John) Forster

Robert Kozera

Megan – David & Phyllis Bartos’ daughter

Rosemary – Friend of David & Phyllis Bartos

Please pray for our families in Ukraine

Leonid, Nadiia, Andrii, Halyna,
Volodymyr, Maryna, Dmytro, Bohdan,
Nadiia, Oleksandr, Tetiana,
Roman, Mykola
Anatoly, Olga, Maria, Andrei

Please let us know if there is anyone you would like to add to the Prayer Lists.

God Grant You Many Years!

Birthdays

Simone (Anna) Flemmer - 7/01
Millie (Mildred) - 7/03
Robert Kozera - 7/03
Luke Willis – 7/10
Fr. Photios - 7/11
Juliana Pound - 7/12
Andrew (Paisios) Garcia – 7/17
Craig (Thomas) Madson – 7/20
Chad Willis - 7/21
Noah Barahana – 7/27

2025 Monthly Donations for Church Votive Candles

The church uses 12 hour - 51% Beeswax votives, which are a cleaner burning candle and protect the church walls from soot. The approximate monthly cost of these votives for weekend Vespers & Divine Liturgy is \$100.00 per month. If you would like to donate (as a memorial, thanksgiving, or just to donate), please see David Bartos. Thank you!

July – Open
August – Open
August Feast Days - Open
September - Open
October - Open
November – Open
December – Open
December Feast Days – Open

The Divine Liturgy

Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom

Variable Hymns and Readings

Tone 2 Troparion (Resurrection)

When Thou didst descend to death, O Life immortal,
Thou didst slay hell with the splendor of Thy Godhead.
And when from the depths Thou didst raise the dead,
all the powers of heaven cried out://
“O Giver of life, Christ our God, glory to Thee!”

Tone 4 Troparion (Apostles)

O first-enthroned of the Apostles,
and teachers of the universe:
entreat the Master of all
to grant peace to the world,//
and to our souls great mercy!

Tone 2 Kontakion (Resurrection)

Hell became afraid, O almighty Savior,
seeing the miracle of Thy Resurrection from the tomb!
The dead arose! Creation, with Adam, beheld this and rejoiced with Thee,//
and the world, my Savior, praises Thee forever.

Tone 2 Kontakion (Apostles)

O Lord, Thou hast taken up to eternal rest
and to the enjoyment of Thy blessings
the two divinely inspired preachers, the leaders of the Apostles,
for Thou hast accepted their labors and deaths as a sweet-smelling
sacrifice,//
for Thou alone knowest what lies in the hearts of men.

Tone 6 (Steadfast Protectress....)

Steadfast Protectress of Christians,
constant Advocate before the Creator:
do not despise the cry of us sinners,
but in your goodness come speedily to help us
who call on you in faith. Hasten to hear our petition and to intercede for us,
O Theotokos, for you always protect those who honor you.

Tone 2 Prokeimenon (Resurrection)

The Lord is my strength and my song; / He has become my salvation.

(Ps. 117:14)

V. The Lord has chastened me sorely, but He has not given me over to death. (Ps. 117:18)

Tone 8 Prokeimenon (Apostles)

Their proclamation has gone out into all the earth, / and their words to the ends of the universe. *(Ps. 18:4)*

Romans 5:1-10 (Epistle)

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

2 Corinthians 11:21-12:9 (Epistle, Apostles)

To our shame I say that we were too weak for that! But in whatever anyone is bold – I speak foolishly – I am bold also. Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I. Are they ministers of Christ? – I speak as a fool – I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness – besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. Who is

weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation? If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me; but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands. It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord: I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago – whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows – such a one was caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man – whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows – how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Of such a one I will boast; yet of myself I will not boast, except in my infirmities. For though I might desire to boast, I will not be a fool; for I will speak the truth. But I refrain, lest anyone should think of me above what he sees me to be or hears from me. And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Tone 2

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

V. May the Lord hear thee in the day of trouble! May the name of the God of Jacob protect thee! (Ps. 19:1)

V. Save the King, O Lord, and hear us on the day we call! (Ps. 19:9)

Tone 1

V. The heavens will praise Thy wonders, O Lord; and Thy truth in the congregation of the saints. (Ps. 88:5)

Matthew 6:22-33 (Gospel)

The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness! No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say to you, do not worry about

your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

Matthew 16:13-19 (Gospel, Apostles)

When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

Explanation of Today's Gospel Reading

By Blessed Theophylact
Archbishop of Ochrid and Bulgaria

22-23. The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness! This means, if you fill your mind with worries over money, you have extinguished the lamp and darkened your soul. For just as the eye that is "sound" or "healthy" brings light to the body, and the eye that is "evil" or "diseased" brings darkness, so also does the state of the mind affect the soul. If the mind is blinded by these worries, it is cast into darkness; then the

soul becomes dark, and how much more so the body as well?

24. No one can serve two masters; What He means is this: no man can serve two lords who command things that are opposed to each other. Such lords are God and mammon. We make the devil our lord when we make the belly our god. But by nature and in truth God is the Lord, and mammon is unrighteousness. **for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.** Do you see that it is not possible for a rich and unrighteous man to serve God? His love of money drives him away from God.

25. Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. "For this reason" - for what reason? Because concern over money drives a man away from God. The soul does not eat, for it is bodiless, but Jesus said this according to the common use of the word.¹ For it is obvious that the soul does not consent to remain in a body if the flesh is not fed. Jesus does not forbid us to work, but rather He forbids us to give ourselves over entirely to our cares and to neglect God. Hence, we must work for our livelihood² while not neglecting the soul. **Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?** This means, will not He Who gave what is greater, life itself, and fashioned the body, will He not also give food and clothing?

¹ In the text of St. Matthew, "Take no thought for your life," the Greek word translated as "life" is *psyche*. It also means "soul". Theophylact has both meanings in mind in his commentary.

² Literally, "work the soil", the primary occupation in a non-industrial society.

26. Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Although He could have given the example of Elijah and John the Baptist, instead He mentions the birds in order to shame us, for we are even more witless than these creatures. God feeds them by having given them the instinctive knowledge for finding food.

27. Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? This means, even if you take the utmost care, you can do nothing if God does not will it. Why then do you drive yourself to exhaustion with futile worries?

28-29. So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. He shames us not

only by the birds, which lack reason, but also by the lilies, that wither. For if God adorned the lilies in such a manner, without any necessity to do so, how much more will He fulfill our own need for clothing? He shows that though you go to great lengths, you are not able to be adorned as beautifully as the lilies. Even Solomon, the most wise and splendid, with all his kingdom at his disposal, could not array himself in such a manner.

30. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? We learn from this that we ought not to be concerned with beautifying ourselves, for our adornments wither like the fading flowers. Therefore, one who beautifies himself is like grass. But you, He says, are creatures endowed with reason, whom God fashioned with both soul and body. Those “of little faith” are all those who concern themselves with such thoughts. For if they had perfect faith in God, they would not give such anxious thoughts to these things.

31-32. Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. He does not forbid us to eat, but to say, “What shall we eat?” The rich say in the evening, “What shall we eat tomorrow?” See that it is luxury and excess that He forbids.

32-33. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. The kingdom of God is the enjoyment of all that is good. This comes through righteousness. To him who seeks after spiritual things, God in His generosity adds that which is needed for physical life.

Communion Hymn

Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him in the highest! *(Ps. 148:1)*
Their proclamation has gone out into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the universe. *(Ps. 18:4)*
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!