The Holy Church celebrates the memory of the Apostles Sts. Peter and Paul on July 12 (June 29, Old Calendar). They were contemporaries, were well acquainted with one another, and both ended their respective lives on earth with martyrdom in Rome, the capital city of the Empire, approximately 60 years after the Nativity of Christ.

The Church celebrates the Apostles Sts. Peter and Paul both on the same day, first because they are living symbols of two different ways of apprehending God and had two different visions of the Apostolate.

Peter demonstrates the full power of faith of which the sincere and guileless heart of a simple Galilean fisherman may be capable. His Epistles have been preserved in the New Testament, and there is every reason to believe that the Gospel according to Mark, the second of the four Gospels, is a record of the Apostle Peter’s preaching. That Gospel, comprised of fewer chapters than the other three, is the digest of an eyewitness account. In the Epistles of St. Peter, we sense the Apostle’s mature religious experience and
wisdom, but his Epistles are not marked by the subtle ideation or the crafted argument that characterize the Epistles of St. Paul.

While Peter was a simple fisherman, Saul – as the Apostle Paul was known before his conversion – stood at the pinnacle of the culture of his time, and was schooled not only in Jewish religious tradition, but also in the areas of Greek philosophy and literature.

In jointly honoring these two Apostles and in calling them “Pre-eminent,” the Church shows its reverence both for the simplicity of a believing heart, and for an intellect grounded in God.

Typically, faithful who since childhood have been accustomed to reading the Gospels almost never turn to the Epistles – including those of St. Paul – contained in the New Testament. On the other hand, those who come to the Faith consciously, who come as adults and who have rejected their former indifference to or lack of belief in Christ, constantly refer to the Apostle Paul’s Epistles, reading them throughout their entire lives, each time finding something new in them.

Sometimes it is difficult to follow the stream of the Apostle Paul’s thought, but whoever takes on the task of reading all of the Epistles in his native language, and supplements that reading with the commentaries of the Holy Fathers on the Epistles, will learn many new things that will be of use in his spiritual life and in his coming to know God. A serious reader who reflects upon what he has read will come to see that in a mystical manner, the writings of the Apostle Paul are contemporary: it would be more accurate to state that their wisdom and lofty inspiration have not been subject to the times and have not become dated. Everything that the Apostle Paul says to us about sin and holiness, about the Law and grace, about the spiritual struggle of prayer, and about many other things, is truly relevant today and unto the ages.

Archpriest Victor Potapov
THE MOTHER OF GOD

The Meeting of the Vladimir Icon of the Mother of God
23 June / 6 July

More than once, the Vladimir Icon of the Mother of God has miraculously saved Russian forces from seemingly certain and inescapable defeat. In 1395 Tamerlane and his Tatar forces entered the Russian land and moved against Moscow, with forces possessing incomparable power and experience and outnumbering the Russian armies by several times. Moscow’s only remaining hope rested in God’s help. Thus, Great Prince Vasily Dimitrievitch of Moscow sent to Vladimir for the Miraculous Icon. Over the course of the Vladimir Icon’s ten-day journey from Vladimir to Moscow, people stood on their knees along the road and implored “O Mother of God, save the Russian land.”

The Icon was welcomed into Moscow on August 26, “and the entire city came before the Icon to greet it....” At the time of the meeting, Tamerlane was asleep in his tent. It is said that in a dream at that moment, he saw a high hill, from which there descended toward him holy hierarchs with golden staffs. Above them was a “radiant Woman,” standing in the air, radiating bright rays of light, and surrounded by a host of angels, countless in number, armed with swords. In the morning Tamerlane summoned his wise men. “You won’t be able to handle them, O Tamerlane, for it is the Mother of God who intercedes for the Russians,” said a seer to the undefeated Khan. “And Tamerlane ran, pursued by the power of the Most-holy Virgin....”

In thanks for their preservation, the Russians erected the Sretensky [Meeting] Monastery on the site of the meeting of the Icon.
After 235 years in Vladimir, the Vladimir Icon of the Mother of God was transferred to Moscow and was installed in the Cathedral of the Dormition of the Most-holy Theotokos.

Less than a century later, in 1480, Khan Akhmet of the Golden Horde set out to attack Moscow. He had already reached the Ugra River. Great Prince John III of Moscow was waiting for the Khan on the opposite bank. Chroniclers relate that suddenly, unexpectedly, and for no reason, the Tatars were struck with an unexplainable primal terror, paralyzing both their physical strength and their strength of will. Khan Akhmet found himself incapable of calming the demoralized troops and was forced to retreat.... In commemoration of the event, on June 23rd each year until 1917, a Procession of the Cross with the Vladimir Icon of the Mother of God would go from the Dormition Cathedral to the Sretensky Monastery.

Russian princes and tsars would pray before this Icon before setting forth on military campaigns. In the selection of metropolitans – and later, patriarchs – of Moscow, the lots would be put within the Icon’s veil. It was before this Icon that the most eminent people of Moscow would vow loyalty to their sovereign rulers.

In 1547, there was a great fire in the Moscow Kremlin. People intended to remove the Miraculous Icon, and several of the strongest and bravest men were dispatched to remove it and take it to safety beyond the Kremlin walls. However, nothing they did could move it from its spot. According to eyewitnesses, at that very moment a vision of a “radiant Woman, illumining the Church” could be seen over the Dormition Cathedral.... Soon the flames abated. Amid the ashes stood the Dormition Cathedral, unharmed by the fire.

From that time on, the Vladimir Icon of the Mother of God remained in the Dormition Cathedral in the Kremlin. Before that Icon, tsars were anointed to the throne, and first-hierarchs were elected. In Soviet times, the Icon was installed in the Tretyakov Gallery, and fortunately, unlike so many Orthodox holy things during the years of persecution of the Church, it was not lost.

In September 1999, one of the principal Orthodox holy treasures of Russia, the Vladimir Icon of the Mother of God, was given to the Church of St. Nicholas at the Tretyakov Gallery. There
it has remained to this day, resting behind bullet-proof glass, in a special temperature and humidity-controlled case.

There are three feast days celebrating the Vladimir Icon of the Most-holy Theotokos, in thanks for three times that she saved our homeland from the foe: June 3 NS/May 21 OS, July 6 NS/June 23 OS, and September 8 NS/26 August OS. However, there are a great many more miracles, worthy of celebration, connected with this Icon.

**LIVES OF THE SAINTS**

*Schema-abbot Savva (Ostapenko)*

Nikolai Mikhailovitch, the future Schema-abbot Savva, was born on the day of commemoration of St. John the Merciful, November 11 (O.S.), 1898, into an ordinary Christian family in Kuban. Nikolai finished school at the age of 13, and, at the age of 16 was drafted into the army at the start of World War I. He spent almost one-half his life in the world – attending grade school and a vocational/construction institute, serving in the army, and working.

When World War II ended, Nikolai Mikhailovitch was 48 years old, an age at which it would seem too late to set out on a new path in life, especially as, by secular standards, the better part of his life was over. However, nothing could stop the future Elder from his pursuits: after passing the Moscow Theological Seminary entrance examinations, he set out to study the Word of God.

Nikolai Mikhailovitch completed the seminary course of study in three years rather than the usual four, and after being tonsured a monk, was assigned the obedience of being *ekonom* [steward] of Holy Trinity–St. Sergius Lavra.
Recognizing Fr. Savva’s maturity and wealth of life experience, the monastery prior gave him a new obedience – to be spiritual director to the faithful. The Elder’s spiritual children recollect that he never scolded them over their transgressions, but rather strove to fully uncover the sin, to reveal to the penitent just how loathsome was the sin that he had committed. Only rarely did he harshly criticize, and whenever he did so, he would immediately apologize for having been harsh.

Fr. Savva would receive an enormous number of people; he had over 7,000 spiritual children. In 1955, when, at the direction of the Most-holy Patriarch Alexei I, Elder Savva was transferred to the Pskov Caves Monastery, spiritual children and others who knew him from Holy Trinity–St. Sergius Lavra made pilgrimages from all over in order to see the Elder at the Pskov Caves. What did they find at the Caves? Love and consolation, repentance and forgiveness. They responded to their spiritual father’s fervent and dedicated love in kind.

With Elder Savva’s arrival, the Pskov-Caves Monastery began to revive. At the time, the Monastery was not well-known, and its faithful were few in number. The number of people coming to pray increased significantly from the time Elder Savva arrived, and in a short time, the Monastery’s welfare markedly improved.

On July 26, 1980, Elder Savva peacefully departed to the Lord.

LESSONS FROM THE FATHERS

Elder Savva’s Daily Rule

First – even in the most trivial matters, be fair and unbiased. Second – never deceive anyone, even in jest. Third – remain disinterested [in the outcome of any dispute], even in the most trivial matters. Seek out any possible opportunity to be of help to others. In any trouble and annoyance, judge yourself the more severely, while showing condescension toward others. Never make fun of or ridicule anyone. Never say anything good about yourself, and for the sake of others, do not think of yourself. Be more quiet than talkative, listen to others, and to the extent possible, avoid quarrels. Always try to avoid being idle. Don’t become impassioned; should you ever feel
that anger has so possessed you that it is difficult to control yourself, immediately fall silent, and if possible, go away. There is no person in whom there is not some kind of good. With your love, cover the evil in him, and pray to God on his behalf.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

End-Times Technology

QUESTION: How should we appraise the arrival of technologies that seem to be tracking us in our every movement and every transaction of our daily lives? The Old Believers, as we know, would refuse to cooperate with registration and passport requirements altogether, because they believed that appearance of the Antichrist was imminent, and that the secular government, being a tool of Satan, would use every means sooner or later to seduce the world into accepting the so-called “Mark of the Beast” as spoken of in the Apocalypse. Today, however, we have the census and more: Our passports, our social security numbers, our REAL IDs, and our smartphones bearing all kinds of personal data regarding our whereabouts, our business conduct, and leisure activities, while even unguardedly sharing unbeknownst amounts of data here and there with various secular agencies. With the arrival of the coronavirus pandemic, there is even talk now about introducing universal contact tracing systematically in this country—something that has already been done by the internal security services in Israel, though not without controversy. At what point do faithful Christians refuse to accept these technologies in order to be numbered, not among those who will be made to drink “the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out” upon those who have received the Mark of the Beast (according to the Book of the Apocalypse [Rev. 14:9-10]), but instead, among the those who resisted, who Scripture reveals to be “the redeemed”, “without fault before God”, the “144,000” [Rev. 14:4-5]

Here is protodeacon Patrick Mitchell’s answer to this question:

ANSWER: This is a very timely and well-put question, which more and more Christians may be forced to face in coming years. The
question raises many issues about which much could be said, both
certainly and speculatively. This answer will concentrate on what can
be said certainly, acknowledging the speculations of others without
adding to them, while also providing a broader basis for a proper
Orthodox understanding of our subjection to secular authorities.

First, it must be said that the Church has no settled
interpretation of the Apocalypse of St. John the Theologian, better
known in English as the Book of Revelation. Very few early Church
Fathers speculated on how the book’s vision might come to pass in
human history. More recently, many Russian Fathers including
Archbishop Theophan of Poltava and Archbishop Averky of
Jordanville have seen a partial fulfillment of prophecy in the wars and
revolutions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Yet even
during the Soviet era, other Fathers such as St. Nikolai Velimirovich
and Metropolitan Anthony Krapovitsky understood Revelation to
speak less of historical events than of the ongoing struggle between
good and evil in the world. These two views are not necessarily
mutually exclusive (they could both be true), but opinions differ
widely as to which view is to be preferred, which is a reason for
caution.

The specific prophecy concerning the “mark of the beast”
(Rev. 13:16-18, 14:9-10) also has no settled interpretation. In the
twentieth century, it was sometimes said to be the red star or
hammer-and-sickle of the Soviet regime, and later (as you say)
passports, bar codes, social security numbers, and the like. But to
early Christians who knew the Scriptures, the marking of hands and
foreheads in Rev. 13:16-18 would have recalled several passages in
the Old Testament in which God commands His people to keep His
words ever before them, saying, for example, in Deuteronomy 6:4-8:

4 Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: 5 And
thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart,
and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. 6 And
these words, which I command thee this day, shall be
in thine heart: 7 And thou shalt teach them diligently
unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou
sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the
way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest
up. 8 And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes.

The last verse is repeated nearly verbatim in Deut. 11:18 and in Exodus 13:9 and 13:16. The ancient Pharisees ritualized this commandment to require the wearing of phylacteries or _tefillin_—little boxes containing words of Scripture that they strapped to their foreheads and right forearms, which Our Lord mentions in Matt. 23:5 and which is still the custom of some Jews. But Christians have always understood the commandment metaphorically to mean that the first Great Commandment—“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (Deut. 6:5)—should guide our thoughts and our actions.

Thus the “mark of the beast” has often been understood to mean the Antichrist’s domination of the thoughts and actions of those who submit to him. In the third century, St. Hippolytus of Rome took the mark on the hand to mean that the Antichrist would force people to offer sacrifices to him, as the Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes tried to force the Jews to do (1 Maccabees 1:50-51) and as the Roman emperors tried to force Christians to do before the triumph of St. Constantine the Great. The New Hieromartyr Damascene of Glukhov (+1935) also understood the “mark of the beast” in this way, noting that the mark is to be placed not on both the hand and the forehead but on one or the other, and taking the mark on the hand to signify those who submit to the Antichrist out of fear of punishment and the mark on the forehead to signify those who are completely deceived by the Antichrist and follow him without compulsion.

Now we are faced with the eerie possibility of a much more literal interpretation, one in which the hand or the head may in fact be marked, physically and electronically, as a means of controlling our thoughts and actions to a degree never before possible. The technology, called “biochipping,” already exists and is being marketed as a personal convenience—no need to carry around credit cards, house keys, or health records—but it could conceivably be put to less innocuous purposes similar to China’s “social credit” system, which uses facial recognition to track people’s movements and award credits and debits for different behaviors.
Given the growing hostility of many earthly powers to Our Lord and His Church, it is only reasonable that Christians would view such systems of social control as potential threats and strive to avoid and oppose them. But identifying the point at which faithful Christians must “refuse to accept” a new measure of control and its enabling technology is extremely difficult. Government itself is a system of social control, and yet we are obliged to obey even bad governments so long as we ourselves do not sin in doing so. Our Lord tells us to “render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s” (Matt. 22:21). Likewise, the Holy Apostle Paul tells us, “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God,” (Rom. 13:1). For Orthodox Christians, there is therefore no question of a government’s “legitimacy,” whereby we are relieved of all obedience to an earthly power on account of the “illegitimacy” of its constitution or its policies. Since all governments are ordained by God for His own purposes, all governments deserve a measure of our respect, be they monarchies, democracies, or even tyrannies (as under some Roman emperors). Our practice has therefore always been to assist the State in the doing of good, to resist the State in the doing of evil, and to patiently and prayerfully suffer the State in many things beyond our power to avoid or address or even understand.

As our situation worsens, knowing what to assist, what to resist, and what to suffer could become paradoxically easier and harder—easier for the faithful because of the increasing contrast between good and evil, but harder for the faithless because the prince of this world has already set the “mark of the beast” on their foreheads, so to speak, by distorting their perception of reality and inclining them toward evil. Our challenge is to avoid being deceived by their perverse passions and panics by which they justify wars abroad and tyranny at home. To keep our own foreheads free of the mark, we will need to pay more attention to who says what about our world, seek other sources of information from among those who believe in Christ, and stop trusting people who do not believe in truth to tell us the truth. We will need to think more skeptically and critically about many issues and to teach our children to do so also, lest the world capture their imaginations with fantasies and lies to turn them into
festal Christians but political Bolsheviks. And we will need to live up to our ordination as democratic citizens with civic rights and moral responsibilities not just to vote but to contribute to the policymaking process by speaking out publicly and privately against wickedness and tyranny. We have heard the prophecy and know what is coming. We need not wait for the signs to become clearer to make a stand against the Antichrist. The time to make our stand is now.

Protodeacon Brian Patrick Mitchell, Ph.D., is a former Washington bureau chief of Investor’s Business Daily and the author of Eight Ways to Run the Country.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCHEDULE OF SERVICES FOR JULY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fri 3</strong> Vigil – 6:30 PM. <strong>Gospel:</strong> John 10:1-9.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sat 4</strong> Commemoration of Holy Hierarch St. John of Shanghai and San Francisco. Hours and Liturgy – 8:40 AM. <strong>Scripture:</strong> Hebrews 7:26-8:2; John 10:9-16.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sat 4</strong> Vigil – 5:00 PM. <strong>4th Resurrection Gospel:</strong> Luke 24: 1-12.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sun 5</strong> 4th Sunday after Pentecost. English Hours and Liturgy – 7:40 AM; Slavonic Hours and Liturgy – 10:10 AM. <strong>Scripture:</strong> Romans 6:18-23; Matthew 8: 5-13.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mon 6</strong> Vigil – 6:30 PM. <strong>Gospel:</strong> Luke 1:24-25, 57-68, 76, 80.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tue 7</strong> Nativity of St. John the Forerunner and Baptist of Our Lord. Hours and Liturgy – 6:40 AM. <strong>Scripture:</strong> Romans 13:12-14:4; Luke 1:1-25, 57-68, 76, 80.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sat 11</strong> Vigil – 6:30 PM. <strong>5th Resurrection Gospel:</strong> Luke 24:12-35.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sun 12</strong> 5th Sunday after Pentecost. The Holy Pre-eminent Apostles Sts. Peter and Paul. English Hours and Liturgy – 7:40 AM; Slavonic Hours and Liturgy – 10:10 AM. <strong>Scripture:</strong> Romans 10: 1-10; Matthew 8: 28 – 9:1; II Corinthians 11:21-12:9; Matthew 16:13-19.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thu 16</strong> Vigil – 6:30 PM. <strong>Gospel:</strong> Matthew 10:16-22.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Sun 19  **6th Sunday after Pentecost.** English Hours and Liturgy – 7:40 AM; Slavonic Hours and Liturgy – 10:10 AM. Scripture: Romans 10:1-10; Matthew 8:28-9:1.

Tue 21  Appearance of the Kazan Icon of the Mother of God. Moleben and Akathist – 6:30 PM.

C6 25  *The Holy Icon of the Mother of God of the Three Hands.* – Hours & Liturgy for families with small children 8:40 yrpa. Scripture: Rom. 12: 1-3; Matt: 10: 37 – 11:1


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BEGINNING OF AUGUST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>


---

**SCHEDULE OF EVENTS FOR JULY**

**Thur  9**  Online meeting of the parish clergy – 7:00 PM.

**Wed 15**  Online meeting of the Parish Council – 7:00 PM.

**ALL OTHER NON-LITURGICAL JULY ACTIVITIES ARE CANCELLED**

---

**JOIN THE PARISH**

Many good people regularly attend services at our church, but for some reason hesitate to become members. Isn't it about time? It is a simple and easy process. Ask for an application at the candle stand, fill it out and give it back or write to Subdeacon Nikolai Lukianoff (nlukianoff@aol.com) for an online application. At the next meeting of the Parish Council it will be looked over for approval. Soon after the meeting you will receive a welcome letter from the Rector and your name will be published in the next issue of *Parish Life*. It is important that you become full-fledged members of our church community and show your support.

**FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION**

The Covid-19 pandemic is taking a toll on literally everyone in the world. It is also severely testing our parish.

Great Lent and the days prior to Pascha are traditionally the busiest periods of our church calendar. At this time of the year multitudes of worshippers would gather in our magnificent temple to
renew their spiritual lives, to receive the Holy Sacraments and rejoice in the Lord.

Local governments in the greater Washington, DC area have strongly recommended that we gather in manageable groups. We at St. John’s have been and will continue to adhere to these requirements. We have the means to livestream our services and thus bring comfort to so many not only in the greater Washington, DC region, but also to the faithful in different states and countries. During these live streamed services, our clergy continues to pray for all the parishioners and friends of St. John’s, commemoration books are read at every morning Liturgy.

However, the inability to have worshippers in church for the services means that the economic welfare of the parish is being severely hurt. We still need to pay for utilities of all three parish buildings, make needed repairs, tend to the grounds, etc. Collection of parish dues, sale of candles and other donations make it possible to pay our bills and keep our property in good order.

We are fervently reaching out to our faithful at this critical time to do their part and help the parish – our common treasure - to fulfill its God-appointed mission. Please continue to support our parish with your donations. Every monetary offering – big or small – is vital.

Here is how:

**PAYPAL.** General donations can easily be made through our PayPal account by simply going to our website – **www.stjohndc.org.** At the top of the site under the American and Russian flags you will find a bright yellow donate button. Clicking on it will send you to PayPal. You can also scroll down and click the black & white icon of St. John the Baptist. This will also direct you to PayPal. Make your donation. After you have submitted a gift, an electronic receipt will be sent to your inbox for tax purposes.

**BY CHECK.** Use this method to pay for parish dues, make prosphora payments and to assist our Benevolent fund.

Checks should be made out to St. John ROC and sent to the following address:
Thank you for your continued support. May God bless and keep you as we grapple to overcome this present crisis!

**ST JOHN’S VIRTUAL CANDLESTAND**

This year the coronavirus drastically changed our lives, including the inability to attend divine services in person. Per the request of many, in addition to “being in church” via live streaming, we offer you the possibility of offering your prayers before specific icons by asking that candles be placed on your behalf and commemoration slips be sent to the altar to be read at the next liturgy. This service will be provided by our sisterhood.

Please order candles (at $1, $2, $4, $8) via PayPal:

1. Visit our website — stjohndc.org/donate
2. Click bright yellow Donate button
3. Set the donation amount
4. Click “Use this donation for” and pick “Order Candles” from the list
5. Write a note indicating:
   - the number of candles
   - before which icons you would like them placed
   - provide a list of names to be prayed for
   - for which service to lit candles

Please send in your orders as soon as possible, so we would have time to fulfill them, otherwise candles will be lit at the next scheduled service.

**LIVE BROADCAST OF OUR DIVINE SERVICES**

A system for streaming live broadcasts of our Divine Services over the Internet has been operating in our church for the past few years. To watch the services, go to: https://www.youtube.com/StJohnDC, and on the menu, click “video.” To receive news of upcoming programs you will need to register on our site by clicking on “YouTube” and then “subscribe.”