

# SS Peter & Paul Orthodox Church Newsletter

Volume 21 Issue 5

May 2021

## April Council Highlights

- ✘ Roof repair on the house on Church property is complete
- ✘ Refresh of the interior of the house on Church property is finished
- ✘ Church A/C units had their pre-summer checkouts
- ✘ Discussion held regarding the return of in-person Sunday School



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## Rest of Saint Alexis Toth, Confessor and Defender of Orthodoxy

Our holy Father Alexis, the defender of the Orthodox Faith and zealous worker in the Lord's vineyard, was born in Austro-Hungary on March 18, 1854 into a poor Carpatho-Russian family. Like many others in the Austro-



Hungarian empire, the Toths were Eastern Rite Catholics. Alexis' father and brother were priests and his uncle was a bishop in the Uniate church. He received an excellent education and knew several languages (Carpatho-Russian, Hungarian, Russian, German, Latin, and a reading knowledge of Greek). He married Rosalie Mihalich, a priest's daughter, and was ordained on April 18, 1878 to serve as second priest in a Uniate parish. His wife died soon afterwards, followed by their only child—losses which the saint endured with the patience of Job.

In May, 1879, Father Alexis was appointed secretary to the Bishop of Presov and also Administrator of the Diocesan Administration. He was also entrusted

with the directorship of an orphanage. At Presov Seminary, Father Toth taught Church History and Canon Law, which served him well in his later life in America. Saint Alexis did not serve long as a professor or an administrator, for the Lord had a different future planned for him. In October, 1889 he was appointed to serve as pastor of a Uniate parish in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Like another Abraham, he left his country and his relatives to fulfill the will of God (Gen 12:1).

Upon his arrival in America, Father Alexis presented himself to the local Roman Catholic diocesan authority, Archbishop John Ireland, since there was no Uniate bishop in America at that time. Archbishop Ireland belonged to the party of American Catholics who favored the "Americanization" of all Roman Catholics. His vision for the future was founded on a common faith, customs, and the use of the English language for everything except

liturgical celebrations. Naturally, ethnic parishes and non-Latin rite clergy did not fit into this vision. Thus, when Father Toth came to present his credentials, Archbishop Ireland greeted him with open hostility. He refused to recognize him as a legitimate Catholic priest or to grant permission for him to serve in his diocese.

As a historian and professor of Canon Law, Father Toth knew his rights under the terms of the Unia and would not accept Archbishop Ireland's unjust decisions. In October of 1890, there was a meeting of eight of the ten Uniate priests in America at Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania under the chairmanship of Father Toth. By this time the American bishops had written to Rome demanding the recall to Europe of all Uniate priests in America, fearing that Uniate priests and parishes would hinder the assimilation of immigrants into American culture. Uniate bishops in Europe refused to listen to the priests' pleas for help.

Archbishop Ireland sent a letter to his parishes ordering their members not to attend Father Toth's parish nor to accept any

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# Message From Our Rector

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,  
Christ is risen! Indeed He is risen!

I greet you in the joy of Christ's Resurrection.

Through days and weeks of the Great Fast we prepared for the commemoration of Christ's Paschal Mystery: His passion, death, and resurrection. Then, in Holy Week we participated in the annual commemoration of the Lord's life-giving passion and death. The various services of Holy Week, the proclamation of the Scriptures and the singing of the ancient hymnography of the Church, allowed us to bear witness to the great mystery of the Son of God entering into the fullness of human life, including physical death.

On the Feast of Feasts, Holy Pascha, we joyously proclaimed His victory over sin and death in His triumphant Resurrection from the dead. After last's year's noticeably quiet celebration, behind closed door, this year's celebration was particularly joyous as we were able to gather again with all our brothers and sisters in a full celebration of the Lord's Resurrection. The Church now continues to celebrate this bright victory throughout the forty days of the Paschal Season. Let us pray that in our parish and in our homes we will sustain the joyous spirit of Pascha and that the proclamation of Christ's victory—and ours—will continue to be proclaimed in our daily lives, each

and every day of the year. Though too many to name, I would like to thank each and every one of you who helped prepare for the beautiful Services of Holy Week and Pascha. From flowers to music to cleaning the temple, from baking breads and dyeing eggs, from setting up for the processions and seeing to our security, from the egg hunt for our children to serving in the Holy Altar, from setting up to taking down, from providing coffee and meals and snacks and our traditional bread, wine, and dried fruit, from baking prosfora to participating in and assisting with the Services and so much more: each and every one of you was an important part of our parish's Holy Week and Pascha. May the Risen Lord continue to bless us as we begin to return to a more normal experience of parish life.

Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death—and upon those in the tombs bestowing life!

With love in the Risen Lord,

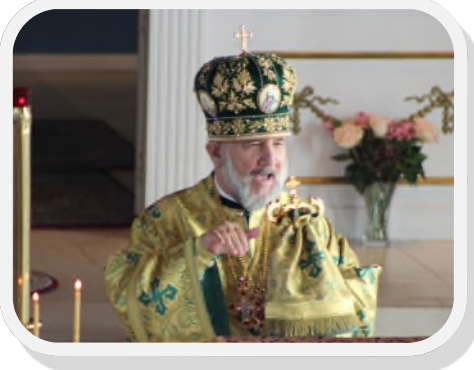
*+Bishop Daniel*





# Images of Our Journey to Pascha

*Lazarus Saturday*



*Holy Thursday*



*Holy Friday*



*Palm Sunday*

*Bridegroom Matins*





# Images of Our Journey to Pascha

## Holy Saturday



## Pascha



## Rest of Saint Alexis Toth, Confessor and Defender of Orthodoxy

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priestly ministrations from him. Expecting imminent deportation, Father Toth explained the situation to his parishioners and suggested it might be best for him to leave and return to Europe.

“No,” they said. “Let’s go to the Russian bishop. Why should we always submit ourselves to foreigners?” It was decided to write to the Russian consul in San Francisco in order to ask for the name and address of the Russian bishop. Ivan Mlinar went to San Francisco to make initial contact with Bishop Vladimir; then in February, 1891 Father Toth and his church warden, Paul Podany, also made the journey. Subsequently, Bishop Vladimir came to Minneapolis and on March 25, 1891 received Father Toth and 361 parishioners into the Orthodox Church of their ancestors. The parishioners regarded this event as a new Triumph of Orthodoxy, crying out with joy: “Glory to God for His great mercy!”

This initiative came from the people themselves, and was not the result of any coercion from outsiders. The Russian Orthodox Church was unaware of the existence of these Slavic Uniate immigrants to America, but responded positively to their petition to be reunited to the Orthodox Church.

The example of Saint Alexis and his parish in returning to Orthodoxy was an encouragement to hundreds of other Uniates. The ever-memorable one was like a candle upon a candlestick giving light to others (Mt.5:15), and his flock may be likened to the leaven mixed with meal which leavened the whole (Mt.13:33). Through his fearless preaching he uprooted the tares which had sprung up in the wheat of true doctrine, and exposed the false teachings which had led his people astray. Although he did not hesitate to point out errors in the doctrines of other denominations, he was careful to warn his flock against intolerance. His writings and sermons are filled with admonitions to respect other people

and to refrain from attacking their faith.

While it is true that he made some strong comments, especially in his private correspondence with the church administration, it must be remembered that this was done while defending the Orthodox Church and the American Mission from unfounded accusations by people who used much harsher language than Father Toth. His opponents may be characterized by intolerance, rude behaviour, unethical methods and threats against him and his parishioners. Yet, when Father Alexis was offended or deceived by other people he forgave them, and he would often ask his bishop to forgive his omissions and mistakes.

In the midst of great hardships, this herald of godly theology and sound doctrine poured forth an inexhaustible stream of Orthodox writings for new converts, and gave practical advice on how to live in an Orthodox manner. For example, his article “How We should Live in America” stresses the importance of education, cleanliness, sobriety, and the presence of children in church on Sundays and Holy Days.

Although the Minneapolis parish was received into the Orthodox Church in March, 1891, it was not until July, 1892 that the Holy Synod of Russia recognized and accepted the parish into the Diocese of Alaska and the Aleutians. This resolution reached America only in October, 1892. During that time there was a climate of religious and ethnic hostility against the new converts. Father Alexis was accused of selling out his own Carpatho-Russian people and his religion to the “Muscovites” for financial gain.

In reality he did not receive any financial support for a long time, for his parish was very poor. Until his priestly salary began to arrive from Russia, the righteous one was obliged to work in a bakery in order to support himself. Even though his funds were meager, he did not neglect to give alms to the poor and needy. He shared his

money with other clergy worse off than himself, and contributed to the building of churches and to the education of seminarians in Minneapolis. He was not anxious about his life (Mt.6:25), what he would eat or drink or wear. Trusting in God to take care of him, Saint Alexis followed the admonition of Our Savior to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Mt.6:33). So he bore the tribulation, slander, and physical attacks with patience and spiritual joy, reminding us that “godliness is stronger than all” (Wisdom of Solomon 10:12).

Bishops Vladimir, Nicholas, Saint Tikhon, and Platon recognized the special gifts of Father Toth, so they often sent him forth to preach and teach wherever there were people of Slavic background. Even though he was aware of his shortcomings and inadequacies, yet he was obedient to the instructions of the bishops. He did not hesitate or make excuses, but went immediately to fulfill his mission. Saint Alexis visited many Uniate parishes, explaining the differences between Orthodoxy, Protestantism, Roman Catholicism and Unitarianism, stressing that the true way to salvation is in Orthodoxy.

Like Josiah, “he behaved himself uprightly in the conversion of his people” (Sir 49:2). He was instrumental in the formation or return of seventeen parishes, planting a vineyard of Christ in America, and increasing its fruitful yield many times over. By 1909, the time of his blessed repose, many thousands of Carpatho-Russian and Galician Uniates had returned to Orthodoxy. This was a major event in the history of the North American Mission, which would continue to shape the future of Orthodoxy in this country for many generations to come. Any future growth or success may truly be regarded as the result of Father Toth’s apostolic labors.

Who can tell of the saint’s spiritual struggle

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## Rest of Saint Alexis Toth, Confessor and Defender of Orthodoxy

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gles? Who can speak of the prayers which his pious soul poured forth unto God? He did not make a public display of his piety, but prayed to God in secret with all modesty, with contrition and inward tears. God, Who sees everything done in secret, openly rewarded the saint (Mt.6:6). It is inconceivable that Saint Alexis could have accomplished his apostolic labors unless God had blessed and strengthened him for such work. Today the Church continues to reap the fruits of his teaching and preaching.

Father Toth's efforts did not go unrecognized in his own lifetime. He received a jeweled miter from the Holy Synod, as well as the Order of Saint Vladimir and the Order of Saint Anna from Czar Nicholas II for distinguished service and devotion to God and country. In 1907, he was considered as a candidate for the episcopal office. He declined this honor, however, humbly pointing out that this responsibility should be given to a younger, healthier man.

At the end of 1908, Saint Alexis' health began to decline due to a complication of illnesses. He went to the seashore in south-

ern New Jersey in an attempt to regain his health, but soon returned to Wilkes-Barre, where he was confined to bed for two months. The righteous one reposed on Friday, May 7, 1909 (April 24 on the Old Calendar), the feast of Saints Savva and Alexis the Hermit of the Kiev Caves. Saint Alexis' love and concern for his spiritual children did not cease with his death. Before closing the account of his life, it would be most appropriate to reveal but one example of his heavenly intercession:

In January, 1993 a certain man prayed to Saint Alexis to help him obtain information about his son from whom he had been separated for twenty-eight years. Placing his confidence in the saint's boldness before God, he awaited an answer to his prayer. The very next day the man's son telephoned him. It seems the young man was in church when he was suddenly filled with an overwhelming desire to contact his father. He had been taken to another state by his mother, and she changed his name when he was a child. This is why his father was unable to locate him. Having learned from his mother that

his father was an Orthodox Christian, he was able with the help of an Orthodox priest to obtain his father's phone number in a distant city. As a result of that telephone call, the young man later visited his father, who rejoiced to see what sort of man his son had become. The father gave thanks to God and to Saint Alexis for reuniting him with his son.

Saint Alexis was a true man of God who guided many Carpatho-Russian and Galician immigrants through the dark confusion of religious challenges in the New World and back to the unity of the Orthodox Church through his grace-filled words and by his holy example. In his last will and testament Saint Alexis commended his soul to God's mercy, asking forgiveness from everyone and forgiving everybody. His holy relics now rest at Saint Tikhon Monastery in South Canaan, Pennsylvania where the faithful may come to venerate them and to entreat Saint Alexis' intercessions on their behalf.

Reprinted from the Orthodox Church in America web site, <https://www.oca.org/saints/lives/2016/05/07/101300-repose-of-saint-alexis-toth-confessor-and-defender-of-orthodoxy>\*

## Around SS Peter & Paul

### MAY BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

- May 1 Anna Hudson
- 3 Deacon John & Mastushka Julianna
- 8 Marina Harrelson
- 16 David Bieber
- 17 Vi Wasilenko
- 18 Darya Dolenko
- 19 Timofei Kadyrov
- Hailee Behnen
- 23 Anastasia Melendrez
- 24 Amy Blischak
- 27 Marty Gala
- 27 Elijah Ferbrache
- Katrina and Joseph Delsante
- 30 Carol Yavornitzky
- 31 Katie Enoch

**Many Years! Многая лета!**

### Congratulations and Many Blessings

To John and Yulia Keck on the baptism of their son, Alexander.

Alexander was Baptized, Chrismated, and welcomed to the Holy Mysteries on May 8th. May the Lord bless him abundantly! Congratulations to his parents, John and Yulia, to his Godparents, Deacon John and Marina, and to his big sister, Sophia.

### PRAYER LIST

*"I was sick and you visited me."*

*Matt 25:36*

We offer prayers to all of our parishioners who are ill or unable to attend services:

*+Metropolitan Herman*

*Stephen Bock*

*Jamie Arango*

*Antonia Adams-Clement*

*Rose Kurowski*

*Tammy Horton*

*Frank (Kirill) Bolton*

If you know of anyone else in need of our prayers, please contact Bishop Daniel.

# Bits and Pieces

**THANK YOU** to all who made our observance of Great Lent, Holy Week, and Pascha to be so spiritually rewarding, growth-giving, and joyous. May the Risen Lord grant His light and joy to all who work with such dedication to glorify the Most Holy Trinity through our worship and our community life.

**THE MYRRHBEARERS ALTAR SOCIETY (MBAS)** would like to thank everyone who helped with preparations for Palm Sunday and Pascha. Activities included baking rolls, preparing palms and pussy willows, and decorating the church and hall.

Last year, a number of bowls, casserole dishes, plastic containers, and more were orphaned by the shutdown after the Lenten Vespers dinner. For more than a year, these items have been patiently waiting to be picked up. If you think one of your dishes may still be in the church hall, please see Heather Pfeiffer or one of the MBAS ladies about rescuing it.



**A PRAYER TABLE** is a great way to encourage spiritual growth in your children. It allows them to pursue a relationship with



Christ on their own terms and in their own way.



**THE VOLUNTEER COMMITTEE** was very active in April. On Monday, April 12th, Svetlana and five other women from our Russian community cleaned inside the church. They vacuumed and washed the floors, polished the pews and the woodwork within arm's reach, cleaned wax off the candle stands, and dusted the wall icons. They did an excellent job.

Then, on Lazarus Saturday April 24<sup>th</sup>, two events took place. First, Nick Bock supervised ten parishioners in again cleaning the inside of the church, this time including the choir loft, the narthex, and the back wall woodwork above arm's reach. Additionally, wax was removed from the Ambo, altar steps, and floors. They also removed any recent wax from the candle stands, vacuumed the carpeting, polished the pews (this time including a thorough cleaning of the pews which had not been done in recent memory).

At the same time, Heather led nine other parishioners in assembling the palms and pussy willow for Palm Sunday. Over 150 branches were assembled, including a special set for Bishop Daniel and the other clergy.

An excellent job was done on both of these events. A soup and salad lunch was provided for the volunteers. We expect that our next project will be a deep cleaning of the kitchen, probably in June, so stay tuned for requests for volunteers.



**PARISH UPDATE** The presence of so many from our community at our Holy Week and Pascha Services, along with extra guests, was a long-awaited sign that we are well on our way to returning to our usual way of living together as a parish.

Masks are still required indoors. However, you have already been notified that we are no longer requiring sign-ups for the Divine Liturgy. It seems that everyone is able to adjust and exercise a comfortable level of social distancing. Many thanks to Deacon John for overseeing the sign-up process, beginning last May.

You will note that there is no Divine Liturgy scheduled for this Saturday. Given our recent positive experience with Holy Week and Pascha, it is likely that we will suspend the Saturday Liturgies for the foreseeable future, enabling our parish to gather together and manifest itself as the one Eucharistic Community that it is.

Also, sometime in the not-too-distant future we will be returning to the ancient practice of receiving the Holy Mysteries from the one communion spoon. Most churches have already done so; I will be notifying you before we return to this traditional practice.

*Bishop Daniel*

**THE CHURCH BOOKSTORE** is back open to the parish! Stop by and start filling your summer reading list!

**WELCOME** all visitors to SS Peter and



Paul. We hope your visit was enriching and enlightening. Please join us in the Cultural Center for our Fellowship Hour. It's a chance to meet some of our members, other visitors, and enjoy some coffee and fellowship.

# May 2021

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	<b>MBAS Meeting</b> Sunday, May 16 Following Divine Liturgy					<b>1 Holy Saturday</b> 9:00am Vesperal Divine Liturgy <i>Blessing of Bread, Wine &amp; Dried Fruit</i> 11:15pm Nocturnes 12:00am Pascal Matins & Divine Liturgy
<b>2 GREAT AND HOLY PASCHA</b> 12:00am Paschal Matins & Divine Liturgy 12:00pm Vespers Easter Egg Hunt <b>CHRIST IS RISEN!</b>	<b>3 Bright Monday</b>	<b>4 Bright Tuesday</b> Iveron Icon	<b>5 Bright Wednesday</b>	<b>6 Bright Thursday</b>	<b>7 Bright Friday</b> St. Alexis Toth Confessor of Orthodoxy in N America	<b>8 Bright Saturday</b> Holy Apostle John the Theologian 5:00pm Vespers
<b>9 ANTIPASCHA</b> St. Thomas Sunday 9:00am Divine Liturgy 	<b>10 Apostle Simeon the Zealot</b>	<b>11 Day of Rejoicing</b> SS Cyril & Methodius Apostles to the Slavs 6:00pm Council Mtg Meeting	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b> 5:00pm Vespers
<b>16 Holy Myrrh-bearing Women</b> 9:00am Divine Liturgy <b>MBAS Meeting</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21 Vladimir Icon</b> Equals-to-the-Apostles Sts. Constantine and Helen	<b>22</b> 5:00pm Vespers
<b>23 Paralytic</b> 9:00am Divine Liturgy	<b>24</b>	<b>25 3rd Finding of the Head of St. John the Baptist</b>	<b>26 Midfeast of Pentecost</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b> 5:00pm Vespers
<b>30 Samaritan Woman</b> 9:00am Divine Liturgy	<b>31 MEMORIAL DAY</b> 	<b>1</b>	<b>2 Leavetaking Midfeast</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b> <b>FOCA Meeting</b> Sunday, June 6, 2021 Following Divine Liturgy 5:00pm Vespers