

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On the twenty-fifth of this month, our parish community will mark the sixtieth anniversary of its founding. Archimandrite Peter (Zaychenko), with several local Orthodox Christians who had first come together two years before, petitioned Bishop John (Shahavskoy), bishop of San Francisco and the Western United States, part of the Russia Orthodox Metropolia (the predecessor body of the Orthodox Church in America), and requested a blessing to establish a parish community here in the Valley of the Sun. With its small church building built on property which Father Peter had purchased for his retirement, the small fledgling Orthodox community was officially designated as a parish on November 25, 1951, and was placed under the heavenly protection and intercession of the first-enthroned Apostles, Peter and Paul. The first parishioners, mostly of Russian and Carpatho-Russian descent, represented about twelve households at that time.

Since the date of its founding sixty years ago, our parish has continued to fulfill the mission with which Archbishop John entrusted it when he gave official recognition and formally established our parish—the very same mission given by Our Lord Jesus Christ to His holy Apostles and Disciples: “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to fulfill everything I have commanded you. Behold I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Mathew 28:19-20). For sixty years, the clergy and faithful of our parish have responded to the Lord’s invitation and commission to call others to discipleship through their own living and teaching of the Gospel message. For sixty years, the clergy and faithful of Saints Peter and Paul Church have been faithful to the life and teachings of the Orthodox Faith; they have sought to grow in personal holiness and thus transform the world; they have gathered weekly to proclaim the Word of God, to give thanks to God, and to celebrate the Holy Mysteries; they have rejoiced in the Lord in moments of joy and success and turned to the Lord in times of loss and sorrow. And the Lord has received these sixty years of fidelity by continuing to bless us with and through one another—and by sending others to join us and share in our common life of faith.

As we reflect upon these past six decades of parish life, we give praise and thanks to the Most Holy Trinity for those who have worked and sacrificed – and continue to do so—so that we may benefit from their faith and their generous service. We pray to the Lord, asking Him to grant rest with the saints and memory eternal to Archimandrite Peter, our parish founder, to all the “founders of this holy house,” and to all the clergy and faithful of our parish who have departed this life before us. We ask the Lord to continue to bless those who throughout these many years have been faithful to the life and mission of our parish as well as all those who are a part of our community at this time. May all of us, by God’s Grace, through the prayerful intercession of the Holy

Apostles Peter and Paul, strive to continue the work of the Gospel begun here so many years ago. We pray that God who began this good work will bring it to fulfillment on the day of Christ Jesus (Philippians 1:6).

In reflecting upon our sixtieth anniversary this month, I also invite all of you to “mark your calendars now” for the official observance of this memorable occasion. His Grace, Bishop BENJAMIN, will join us for special services of thanksgiving on the weekend of February 11-12, 2012. More information about this celebration will be forthcoming as the day draws nearer.

Also, be assured of my prayerful best wishes for a happy and healthy celebration of the Thanksgiving Day holiday. As we begin our preparation for the celebration of the Lord’s Nativity (Nativity Fast begins November 15) may we do so with joyful and thankful hearts for all the Lord has done for us.

With love in the Lord, Father David