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Today the Holy Church piously remembers the sufferings of the Holy Glorious and All-Praised Apostles **Peter and Paul**.

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 Savior to hear in answer, "Blessed art thou, Simon ... I tell thee, that thou art Peter, and on this stone I build My Church". "On this stone", 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" that Peter is, and not from Peter that the "stone" is, just as the Christian is from Christ, and not Christ from the Christian. Do you want to know, from what sort of "rock" the Apostle Peter was named? Hear the Apostle Paul: "Brethren, I do not want ye to be ignorant," says the Apostle of Christ, "how all our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ" (1 Cor.10: 1-4)...

The **Apostle Paul**, 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 out "threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord", he thirsted for blood, but "He that dwells in the Heavens shall laugh him to scorn". When he, "having persecuted and vexed" in such manner "the Church of God", he came near Damascus, and the Lord from Heaven called to him: "Saul, Saul, why 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, why persecutest thou Me; it is hard for thee to kick against the goad". Saul, however, "trembling and frightened", cried out: "Who art Thou, Lord?" The Lord answered him, "I am Jesus Whom thou persecutest." And Saul suddenly undergoes a change: "What wantest Thou me to do?" -- he cries out. And suddenly for him there is the Voice: "Arise, and go to the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do". Here the Lord sends Ananias: "Arise and go into the street" to a man, "by the name of Saul," and baptize him, "for this one is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel". This vessel must 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 here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Thy Name". But the Lord urgently commands Ananias: "Search for and fetch him, for this vessel is chosen by Me: for I shall show him what great things he must suffer for My name's sake". And actually the Lord did show 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 the memory of the sufferings of both these Apostles is celebrated, though they suffered on separate days, but by the spirit and the closeness of their suffering they constitute one. Peter went first, and Paul followed soon after him. Formerly called Saul, and then Paul, having transformed his pride into humility. His very name (Paulus), 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 I have labored more abundantly than all of them: yet not I, but the grace of God, which was 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", 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 "we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses", having passed by along it, made now for us easier, and lighter, and more readily passable. First there passed along it "the author and finisher of our faith," our Lord Jesus Christ Himself; 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 Who said, "**Without Me ye can do nothing**".

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Save the date: St. Elijah Summer Day Camp will take place **August: 12th, 13th and 14th**. Mark your calendars and stay tuned for a registration link in your email arriving soon!

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Dear brothers and sisters,

Our parish organizations—the **Circle of Serbian Sisters (KSS)**, **St. Elijah Choir**, **Mothers' Club**, **Men's Club**, and **St. Elijah Fellowship and Ministry**—need your energy, talents, and ideas. The Church is strongest when every generation takes an active role in serving Christ and supporting our parish family.

"Let each of you use whatever gift you have received to serve others." (1 Peter 4:10)

I warmly invite our younger parishioners and families to become involved. Together, let us build a strong and vibrant future for our Church and pass on our faith to the next generation.

Fr. George