

Greek Orthodox Metropolis of San Francisco - Reflection for the Feasts of Sts. Peter and Paul and the Holy Apostles



Beloved Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

On June 29 the Church will celebrate the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul, and on June 30 we will celebrate the Synaxis of the Holy Apostles. A hymn from the Orthros for June 30 says about the Apostles: ***“You preached throughout the entire world that the eternal all-holy Trinity is in nature God.”***

The ministry of the Apostles, those who were sent forth by the Lord and strengthened by the Holy Spirit, took the Gospel to the corners of the then-known world. For example, Saint Paul, although not one of the original twelve, took the Gospel to the Gentile world of Asia Minor, Greece, and Rome. Saint Peter also traveled to Rome. Saint Thomas, tradition holds, traveled to India. Saint Andrew traveled to Greece and, as tradition holds, established the Church in the city of Byzantium, which would later be renamed Constantinople, the See of our Ecumenical Patriarchate. In those places and others, the Apostles preached the

Gospel and taught and guided the Christians.

In the Creed, we say we are the “**One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.**” When we call ourselves “**apostolic**” we mean that we continue the work of the Apostles. Each of us has been sent forth into the world to proclaim the Gospel to all, and as Archbishop Anastasios of Albania writes, echoing the hymn I quoted earlier, to “**witness to the living Trinitarian God.**” We have received the teachings of the Apostles, which the Lord first gave them. We are their successors and continue the mission that they began of sharing the Good News throughout the world.

The Orthodox teaching of “apostolic succession” is more than a linear or genealogical history, “this Apostle ordained that bishop, who ordained that bishop,” all the way down to our bishops today. Apostolic succession means that our entire Church, with Christ at its head, its hierarchs, surrounded by the Priests and Deacons, and with the faithful, continues to preach that which the Apostles themselves preached.

These two feasts, that of Saints Peter and Paul and the Holy Apostles, should inspire us to reclaim our missionary zeal with the aim of bringing people to Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church, those outside the Church, and those who have drifted away. We should be concerned about the growing indifference that many people show toward their Faith and their Church. We should be concerned that after three months of comfortably watching services online that people may take their time to return to their parishes. This then becomes our challenge: to bear witness to the love of God, to show our care for all people in all dimensions of their lives, by being active in the world and sharing our many gifts with as many as we can.

May the Lord’s blessings be upon you, and especially all those who celebrate their Feast Day.

Hronia Polla!

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