



The Lives of Saints Peter and Paul



THE HOLY APOSTLE PETER

The son of Jonah and brother of Andrew the First-Called, of the tribe of Simeon and the town of Bethsaida, he was a fisherman and was at first called Simon, but the Lord was pleased to call him Cephas, or Peter (Jn 1:42). He was the first of the disciples to give clear expression to his faith in the Lord Jesus, saying: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God" (Mt 16:16). His love for the Lord was very strong, and his faith in Him went from strength to strength.

When the Lord was put on trial, Peter denied him three times, but it needed only one look into the face of the Lord, and Peter's soul was filled with shame and repentance. After the descent of the Holy Spirit,



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Peter became a fearless and powerful preacher of the Gospel. After his first sermon in Jerusalem, about 3,000 souls were converted to the Faith. He preached the Gospel throughout Palestine and Asia Minor, in Italy and Illyria. He performed many wonders, healing the sick and raising the dead, and even his shadow had the power of healing the sick. He had a major struggle with Simon the Magician, who declared himself to be from God but was actually a servant of the devil. He finally put him to shame and overcame him.

Peter was condemned to death on the order of the wicked Emperor Nero, a friend of Simon's. After installing Linus as Bishop of Rome and exhorting and encouraging the flock of Christ there, Peter went to his death with joy. When he saw the cross before him, he asked the executioner to crucify him upside-down, because he felt himself unworthy to die in the same way as his Lord. And so this great servant of the greatest Master went to his rest and received a crown of eternal glory.

THE HOLY APOSTLE PAUL

Born in Tarsus and of the tribe of Benjamin, he was formerly called Saul and studied under Gamaliel. He was a Pharisee and a persecutor of Christians. He was wondrously converted to the Christian faith by the Lord Himself, who appeared to him on the road to Damascus. He was baptized by the Apostle Ananias, named Paul and enrolled in the work of the Great Apostles.

He preached the Gospel everywhere with burning zeal, from the borders of Arabia to the land of Spain, among both the Jews and the heathen, and receiving the title of "The Apostle to the Gentiles." His fearful sufferings were matched only by his superhuman endurance. Through all the years of his preaching, he hung from day to day like a thread between life and death.

Filling his days and nights with toil and sufferings for Christ, organizing the Church in many places and receiving a high level of perfection, he was able to say: "I live, yet not I but Christ lives in me" (Gal 2:20). He was beheaded in Rome in the reign of Nero, at the same time as St. Peter.

-From the Prologue from Ochrid by St. Nikolai Velimirovic.

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