

Saints Peter and Paul Church Council News

June – July 2026



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Issue No. 110
www.stsproca.org

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Priest's Corner

I think that most of us have heard from our parents how much easier our lives are as compared to theirs when they were our age. When I consider my own generation, I can certainly see where this would be true. Compared to what our parents and grandparents had to deal with in order to come to America and give us the life we have, indeed, we have it infinitely easier than they did.

However, looking at current generations, I don't think this adage is true anymore. When I was growing up, there were no cell phones, no personal computers, no internet, no social media to distract us. On weekends and during school vacations, we played outside with our friends until dark. We saw each other in church, Russian school, scouts, sports clubs and so forth. In our teenage and young adult years, we had parties, school-sponsored "vecherinki" and formal balls, where we socialized and danced. We met and married our husbands

and our wives, bought our homes, had our children and raised our own families, in a fashion similar to how we were raised. But the advent of new technologies has changed all of that.

We have always known, that public opinion and attitudes on virtually any subject are frequently manipulated by the media but, never has this manipulation been easier to come into the home of every man, woman and child as it is today. And, now that the avenues for affecting virtually everyone have been well established through this technology, the introduction of Artificial Intelligence - ostensibly, in place of our own - now becomes a very real threat to our very humanity.

On May 25, 2026, Pope Leo XIV released [Magnifica Humanitas](#) — the first papal encyclical dedicated to artificial intelligence and the human person. It is a



serious document. Dense, rooted, and addressed not just to the faithful but to all people of goodwill. The Pope recognizes, as we all should, that AI is not a technological issue. It is anthropological. We tend to imagine technology as passive — instruments we occasionally pick up and set down, tools waiting for a human hand to direct them. The encyclical refuses that framing entirely.

“Technology takes on the characteristics of those who devise, finance, regulate and use it.”(Magnifica

Humanitas, §9) Technologies eventually become environments. And environments form people. The internet changed how we think. Social media changed how we compare. Smartphones changed how we attend. Artificial intelligence may change how we understand ourselves. That is not a technical concern. It is a civilizational one. The practical implication is that “it’s just a tool” doesn’t survive contact with reality. A platform engineered to monetize outrage is not neutral. An algorithm that maximizes engagement at the cost of truth is not neutral.

An AI companion designed to simulate intimacy for profit is not neutral. Each one carries a vision of the human person inside its architecture. And that vision has consequences regardless of anyone’s intentions. (Partially taken from Dr. Sean Tobin, “The Inner Exodus” May 25, 2026).

To further illustrate this point, a few years back, I conducted a spiritual discussion with a group of about 50 young people, ages ranging from 12-19 years in this regard. I asked everyone in the group to stand up if they owned a computer, iPad or smartphone. Of, course, everyone did. I explained to them, that I understood that most teachers require the use of computers and the internet for homework assignments, but I made it clear to them that the next part of this exercise did not include that time. I asked everyone who spends an hour or less, after homework each day; browsing the

web, using social media or playing games for an hour or less - to sit down. A couple of them did. I went on to two hours, three hours and all the way up to eight hours before everyone sat down. The average seemed to be around 3-4 hours every day. Then I asked everyone who, out these many hours online, spent one half hour or more reading the Gospel, looking up prayers or streaming services or, learning about the lives of saints or doing any other type of spiritual reading online. Not one of them stood up.

Dr. Tobin continues: “If you are a parent watching your children spend hours in algorithmically managed environments designed to capture attention and manufacture desire — the Pope’s encyclical is naming what you already feel. If you are a person of faith who senses that something about this moment is reaching not just for your time but for your capacity for interiority itself — the encyclical is confirming the intuition. The tradition it draws on has been forming people in precisely these capacities — sustained attention, embodied presence, contemplative depth, moral seriousness, the ability to be genuinely present to another person — for two thousand years. Not as a self-improvement project. Not as optimization. As the slow, irreplaceable work of becoming someone capable of *communion with God and genuine relationship with other persons.*”

Throughout my lifetime, I have watched as this God-given tradition has slowly eroded away as a result of our material wealth and comfort, moral decay and every form of media, which almost universally, pulls us away from the path to God. Artificial Intelligence is, in my opinion, the last building block in the plan to control or destroy the image and likeness of God, in which we are all created.

Our heavenly Patron tells us how we should deal with this encroaching darkness: **“Watch ye, stand fast in the Faith comport yourselves as men, (1 Cor: 16:13) Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.”** (Eph: 6:10). Our faith cannot be a simple convenience, calling upon God only when we are in need of something. It must be the very measure, by which we guide our lives, ever striving towards the Light of Christ, ever compelling us to be vigilant and to reject the temptations of this world. This is the path, to which we must return our children and grandchildren, lest they be swept away and lost for all time. The path, to which we ourselves must return and never lose. Pope Leo ends his encyclical with the words: **“The splendor of humanity revealed in its fullness in Christ - no**

machine can ever replace.” (Magnifica Humanitas, §15). It is true that the human heart is where God desires to dwell. This will remain true no matter how intelligent the machines become. The question is whether we, or our children, will still have the spiritual need or ability to receive Him.

***With love, faith and trust in Christ Our God,
Fr. Alexander***

A reminder to all, that our Parish Feast Day is Sunday, July 12. We plan on greeting His Grace Bishop Peter just before the vigil service on Saturday, July 11 and His Eminence Archbishop Kyrill Sunday morning at 9:30.

Congratulations to the parents, godparents and relatives of the newly baptized: John Rubel, baptized by Fr. Seth in the Russian River on May 24, 2026 and,

Congratulations to all those celebrating their Namesdays*:

June 3 - Elena Avdienko, Elena Denbitskaya, Elena Lowery, Elena Piskuleva, Elena Polektov, Elena Powers, Elena Voronina, Konstantin Nigodoff, and Konstantin Pavloff

June 5 - Maria Ferguson-Acquaye and Ashley-Marie Collins

June 6 - Victoria Chandler, Victoria Kochergin, Victoria Levchenko, Victoria Andrade, and Victoria Newton,

June 27 - Yulia Zolotuhina

July 2 - Joanna Chidlowsky, Hanna Handelih

July 12 - Starosta Paul Johnson, Peter Balitsky, Peter Cherniavsky, Peter Collins, Peter Gustav, Peter Loginoff, and Paul Ponitkoff

July 17 - Alexandra Chidlowsky and Andrew Merriss

July 18 - Sergei Srebrennikov

July 23 - Anthony Maximow

July 24 - Olga Ammosow, Olga Baranoff, Olga Hichenko-Lysenko, Olga Reighardt, Olga Sokloff, and Olga Saschin

July 28 - Vladimir Konstantinov, Iconographer Vladimir Krassovsky, and Vladimir Savitch

July 30 - Margarita Abrahams, Marina Alva, Margarita McPhee, and Marina Velichinsky.

**)Fr. Alexander asks, that you please notify him if we have missed anyone’s namesdays in our lists. Thank you!*



Congratulations to our Graduates!



Sophie Logvy daughter of Jarrod and Kate Logvy (and granddaughter of Lana Logvy), graduated from Davis Senior High School on June 12, 2026. She will enroll in the Honors Program at Sacramento City College, with the long-term goal of transferring to a UC campus and eventually attending law school.

Alex Logvy graduated with a degree in Communications from Sacramento State University on May 22, 2026. Alex plans to continue working at Davis Diamonds Gymnastics as head coach of the Xcel girls team and program coordinator.



Nadya Ionin, daughter of Larissa Ionin, graduated with a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice from Sacramento State University on May 23, 2026. Nadya is currently working in the records department at the Fairfield police department as she pursues her goal of becoming an officer.

God bless your future endeavors!



With a degree of sadness but, as always, with faith in our resurrected Lord Jesus Christ, we note the passing of our dear parishioners:

Alla “Lyalya” Zaharoff – a long-term and very active member of our parish, who passed away on April 4, 2026. Lyalya was

Parish Secretary for many years, a member of the choir and an active member of our Sisterhood and;

Rimma Kaliakin, wife of our late starosta Vladimir Kaliakin, who passed away on June 1, 2026 - barely a month shy of her 100th birthday. Rimma's life was dedicated to singing, both in the choir and together with her guests, whom she frequently invited to her home.



May God grant rest to the souls of His newly departed servants **Alla** and **Rimma** - both of whom have been such an important part of our parish community and history and I ask that you remember them in your prayers both in church and at home. Our sincere condolences to their families and their many friends.

Memory Eternal!



Preserving Russian Heritage in Alaska

For many Russian Orthodox Christians, Alaska is closely connected with the history of Russia and the Russian Orthodox Church. Saint Herman of Alaska, Saint Innocent of Moscow, and St. Jacob Tsvetkov labored greatly to spread the Word of God into the languages of the native tribes. Through their prayers and efforts, churches were built, and many local residents embraced Orthodoxy.

To this day, there are many Orthodox churches throughout Alaska, both large and small, many of which are now in poor condition and in need of restoration.



One such church is located in Alaska’s capital, Juneau, in the very heart of the city. Unlike many other churches that burned down and were later rebuilt, this church was constructed in 1894 and has survived in its original historic form.

There is a story that at the end of the 19th century, the local Tlingit people repeatedly saw an elderly man in their dreams telling them that they needed to build a church. After some time, the community decided to be baptized and turned to the Russian Orthodox Mission. In 1890, around 700 local residents were baptized. When they later saw an icon of Saint Nicholas among other icons, they recognized him as the very “old man” who had appeared to them in their dreams, and they decided to build a church dedicated to Saint Nicholas.



Icon of the Theotokos before restoration

Funds for the construction of the church were raised by the Committee of the Russian Orthodox Mission. The church was built in 1894 and consecrated in 1895. The icons for the church iconostasis were gifted by Emperor Alexander III.

Six large full-length icons adorn the iconostasis: the icons of Christ the Savior and the Mother of God in the center; icons of Saints Cyril and Methodius on the deacon’s doors; and icons of Saint Nicholas and Saint Innocent of Irkutsk on either side of the iconostasis. The icons were likely painted in Saint Petersburg in the second half of the 19th century. The iconographer remains unknown, but the exceptional quality of the work suggests that it was created by an outstanding artist.



After restoration

Unfortunately, over time, the original beauty and brilliance of the church and its iconostasis began to fade and deteriorate. The harsh climate, the stove once

used inside the church, soot, smoke, and kerosene lamps all took their toll.

In 2024, I was invited to travel to Alaska to restore the icons in Saint Nicholas Church in Juneau. I understood the great responsibility and enormous amount of work ahead: six large icons had to be carefully cleaned of layers of soot, smoke residue, dust, wax deposits, lamp oil, and darkened varnish. In addition, I needed to correct the deformations that had developed in the sagging canvas.

In 2024-2025, I made three working trips to Juneau. During that time, six historic icons of the iconostasis and an antique processional cross behind the altar were fully restored.

During these trips, with the help of a local parishioner, I was also able to completely restore the Royal Doors and paint the scenes of the Annunciation and the icons of the Four Evangelists for them.

I am grateful to have had the opportunity to take part in restoring the spiritual, historical, and artistic beauty of Saint Nicholas Church and to become acquainted with Alaska’s Russian spiritual heritage.

Tatiana McWethy



Starosta’s / Warden’s Corner

The calendar has been very full the past couple of months. From Holy Week, and Pascha, to the Gratitude wine tasting fundraiser, through to the feast of the Annunciation and finally with the feast of Pentecost, many people have been busy preparing for services, meals, and taking care of other things about the parish. There are many people who will just step in, help, then leave before we have the opportunity to thank you. Your contributions add to the richness of the lives of



the people here and we are very grateful for what you do.

The Gratitude event was very successful. Father Alexander has mentioned that we have raised enough funds to replace the HVAC system in the hall. We would like to thank Katya Able and Katia Logvy for helping organize the fundraiser. Arina Bohn did an outstanding job arranging the flowers that decorated the hall. Amanda Merris was very creative with the food that everyone enjoyed. She had a great crew, including her daughters, the Collins family and a few others in putting together a delicious charcuterie board. Misha Peterson's crew of Misha Mogilev, Father Athanasius, Kurt Bell, Simeon Collins, Paul Pontikoff, Alexei Sinitskiy, and Ed Semienski helped pro-



vide the muscle, moving things around and erecting the canopies. Sasha Krassovsky and Anna Ferguson helped with setting up. Demitrios Handelih, Natasha Collins, and Katya Peterson assisted with check in, and thank you to Eugene Krassovsky for being the event's announcer and auctioneer. A special thank you to Natasha Shikaloff for providing lunches for parishioners after liturgy that day.

We are currently planning a similar fundraiser in late October that will replace our traditional bazaar that is held in early November. We will still have our traditional Russian food-to-go, but it will highlight our local breweries with an Oktoberfest style meal. Details will soon follow. The event is planned for October 25th.

Our next big event is on July 12th, the feast day of Saints Peter and Paul, which will be on a Sunday this year. We are looking forward to seeing many of you on that day.

Paul Johnson
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Sisterhood News

Glory be to God, our sisterhood celebrated another wonderful Pascha. As usual, we had a big joyful feast after the Paschal liturgy, with all the traditional festive dishes and desserts. Natasha Shikaloff, Sharon Buot, and Lena Poluektov were in charge of all the aspects of the festive meal. Nina Williams helped with decorations, and many sisters contributed their culinary delights. Everyone enjoyed our wonderful Paschal feast!

Lena Poluektov did fantastic job, almost single-handedly, preparing a Lenten feast for the celebration of the Annunciation. Lena is really creative with serving us the dishes that are strictly lenten and yet absolutely delicious and festive.

A big thank you goes to Aliona Russie who organized preparation of a large number of traditional Easter delicacies - *kulich* and cheese *pascha* – for those who preferred to not cook them at home but to buy already prepared. Aliona baked a big bunch of nice Easter cakes – *kulich* – in our church dining hall kitchen, with the help from Gloria Collins, Olga Clark, and Anna Judd. And later Aliona cooked farmers cheese based *pascha* together with Olga Clark. They used tried and true old recipes that always come out remarkably well.



Our senior outreach program continued, with about 10 people benefiting from receiving beautifully decorated Easter gift baskets, filled to the brim with carefully selected goodies and nice Easter cards. We thank Nina Williams and Natalia Sabelnik for their generous donations. Also, we are very grateful to all the volunteer drivers who delivered the gift baskets to the elderly and infirm. Profound thanks go to Vera Zaro, Amanda Merriss, Alexey Sinitsky, Matushka Sophia, Maria Alalykina, and Anna Judd. All the baskets

were delivered promptly and with many warm wishes to our elderly from the whole sisterhood.

We thank hard working sisters who participated in the church fundraiser in April, The Gratitude wine tasting party. It was a big success. And we thank the sisters who contributed dishes for the Troitsa (Pentecost) church fundraiser, spearheaded by Zoya Litvinenko, in the loving memory of her husband Shura Litvinenko. These fundraisers are vital for helping our parish to gather the funds necessary for repairs and maintenance. We greatly appreciate everyone to supports these fundraising efforts. We are lucky to have many talented people in our sisterhood and we appreciate their dedication to make every fundraising event an impressive success. God bless us all as we labor for the beatification of our church.



Archangel Homeschool Academy

Christ is Risen! This time of year, when we celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord and the earth is equally bursting with new life, is a wonderfully equal time for students to do the same. We've set aside most of the school work that requires inward intensity and stepped outdoors for hands on work.



In science we built tin foil boats and tested water tension and buoyancy with a contest to see whose boat can hold the most pebbles. On March 25th we took a field trip to Spring Lake to observe the local wildlife. And most recently we've been focusing on making handy goods for the house using macrame, a knot trying craft that is both beautiful and practical.

Classes ceased for the school year May 21st and will resume again after Labor Day. May God continue to bless his students with good health and salvation through a prosperous school year at AHA. Happy summer everyone!

Amanda Merriss
asmerriss@protonmail.com



Choir Notes

Christ is Risen!!! Truly He is Risen!!!

Pascha, feast of feasts.

What an incredible Holy Week we had. Services every evening and morning. Annunciation fell on Holy Great Tuesday. There were a lot of firsts for our choir. With discipline and dedication, it all came together in a wonderful celebration of Christ's Resurrection.

Currently there are many projects in the works with our choir. We are blessed with having youth learning Slavonic and reading in church. Recently, Anja Merriss read the Trisagion in Slavonic on vigil Saturday night. She is 11 years old and not a native speaker of Russian. With work and good attitude, she did a fantastic job. Little by little the youth can learn to sing and read in both Slavonic and English, and become more familiar with church services. Anja, for example, has also been learning choir conducting. Some of the students from the Archangel Homeschool Academy have completed a year of basic music theory. Glory be to God for their efforts!



If you would like your children to learn church music and reading, please don't hesitate to contact me. Let every breath praise the Lord!

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A Very Patient Devil

A Screwtape Reflection on Technology, Time, and the Formation of the Modern Soul
DR. SEAN TOBIN - DEC 27, 2025

Part 1 of 3

A Note to Readers: This piece imagines what C.S. Lewis's demon, Screwtape - writing to his nephew

Wormwood - another, less experienced demon - might say about Pope Leo XIII's 1884 vision (in which Satan requested a century to test the Church), Catholic Saint John Bosco's prophetic dream of the Church surviving a storm by anchoring between the Eucharist and Mary, and the systematic cultural formation that brought us to this moment—where artificial intelligence offers itself as the perfection of human capability, arriving precisely when we've forgotten what makes us truly human: incarnation, embodiment, and the mysterious gift of receiving life through the flesh.

My dear Wormwood,

You asked me to explain why I laughed when the wager was accepted. It wasn't mockery. It was recognition. We (demons) had been granted what we always want: time. Not just years, but enough time to make the unnatural feel inevitable. Enough time to train three generations. Enough time that by the end, they wouldn't even remember what they'd lost.

The Vision They Didn't Take Seriously

It was 1884. The old Pope—Leo XIII—had just finished saying Mass in the Vatican. Then something happened. He overheard something. A conversation. Or witnessed a vision. However you want to frame it. What he saw was this: Satan approaching God and asking for permission. Not to destroy the Church outright—even our Father Below (Satan) isn't that crude—but to be given time. Roughly a century. To test whether humans, given enough rope and enough distraction, would hang themselves. Whether they'd still choose God when He wasn't quite so obvious. When the world offered easier, faster, more immediate alternatives.

And—here's the beautiful part, Wormwood—permission was granted. Can you imagine? A hundred years. A full century to reshape civilization.

Now, Leo did what you'd expect from one of their pious types. He got nervous. Wrote a prayer—the St. Michael prayer—asking for protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil. Asked that it be said after every Mass. And they did say it. For a while. In Latin, mostly, which meant most of them didn't even know what they were saying. Just sounds. Familiar sounds. Comforting sounds. And then, after Vatican II, they mostly stopped saying it altogether. “Outdated,” they said. “Triumphalistic.” “Not in the spirit of the times.” Exactly.

A warning delivered. A prayer written. A century-long wager against their souls.

And their response? To quietly file it away as an interesting story. “Private revelation,” they call it now. Meaning: optional. Meaning: take it or leave it. Meaning: probably not for us, not for now. Prophets' voices falling on deaf ears. It never gets old.

The Dream They Turned Into Decoration

Around the same time—honestly, the timing was almost too perfect—another one of their mystics had a dream. John Bosco. An Italian priest with a habit of dreaming things that came true, which made him inconvenient but also easy to neutralize. Just call him “holy” and put his dreams in a book somewhere. Defanged.

This dream was about a ship—the Church, obviously—caught in a massive storm. Waves crashing. Enemies attacking from every side. The ship battered, taking on water, barely holding together. And in the middle of this chaos, the Pope steering the ship toward two enormous pillars rising out of the sea. One pillar had the Eucharist on top of it. The other had Mary. The ship drops anchor between these two pillars, and suddenly—safety. The storm continues, but the ship holds. Anchored. Immovable.

Now, you'd think a dream like that would shake them. A clear image: the world will try to destroy you, and your only hope is to cling to these two specific things. But here's what they did with it instead: they painted it. Put it on prayer cards. Framed it in parish halls. Turned it into a pretty story about “devotion” and “tradition.” They tell it at conferences. They nod approvingly. “Beautiful imagery,” they say. “So symbolic.” And then they go back to arguing about whether guitars are allowed at Mass.

Do you see the genius of it, Wormwood? We didn't have to suppress the dream. We just had to let them aestheticize it. Turn prophecy into art. Turn warning into nostalgia. Because once something becomes a “story they tell,” it stops being a truth they live. And the two pillars—the Eucharist and Mary—what do they actually represent? Not doctrines to defend. Not items on a checklist. But the only two realities that could hold a human soul against what we were about to build.

The Eucharist: God taking on flesh. Matter infused with Spirit. Life as gift, received through the body. Mary: The creature who said yes. Embodied surrender.

Freedom found in consent, not control. Incarnation. Embodiment. Flesh that matters. Those are the pillars.

And for a hundred years, we set out to make humanity forget why they need them.

Breaking the Body: The Wars

We started with their bodies, because that’s where belief becomes real.

The Industrial Revolution was our opening—teaching them to see their bodies as machines, time as commodity, efficiency as virtue. But that was just setup. The real work began with the wars.

Two of them. World wars. Massive, industrial, senseless. You have to understand what war does, Wormwood. It doesn’t just kill bodies—it shatters them. It teaches an entire generation that the body is fragile, unreliable, destined for violence and decay. The lesson sank deep: the body cannot be trusted. The world is not safe. There is no Providence watching over you.

And the children of these traumatized men—the Baby Boomers, as they’d later be called—grew up in homes haunted by silence and rage. Fathers who couldn’t speak of what they’d seen. Mothers anxious and controlling, trying to create safety in an unsafe world. By the 1960s, an entire generation had inherited a profound distrust of the body, of authority, of the world itself. They were ready for what came next.

To be continued...



Newsletter Submissions

When submitting photos (original size, please) and other items for the newsletter, please email them to our editor, Misha Peterson, at msvnp28@gmail.com or you may text them to (661) 305-8364.

—*Michael Mogilev, Publisher*



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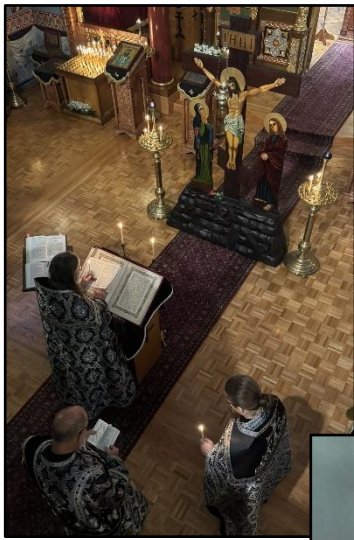


Orthodox Community Events

- **Holy Dormition Orthodox Church** in Santa Rosa's Roseland neighborhood is delighted to announce the date for this year's **Celtic Festival is Saturday, June 6, Noon to 5pm!** (Please note that the festival is *not* on Memorial Day weekend this year.) We hope you'll join us for this celebration of Celtic culture, with Scottish and Irish dancing, toe-tapping music, games, crafts, good food, and much more! Check out the [Facebook event](#) to RSVP, share, and get updates. **Holy Dormition Orthodox Church Bulgarian Orthodox Diocese of the USA, Canada & Australia**, 1521 Rose Ave, Santa Rosa, CA 95407 holydormitionchurch@gmail.com (707) 528-9705
- Dear Friends of the **Holy Virgin of Kazan Church**, Our next service will be on **Saturday, June 13, 2026**, with Hours at 8:40 AM and Divine Liturgy at 9:00 AM. Following the service will be a Trapeza and a Lenten potluck meal. Please **RSVP by Wednesday, June 10th**. Sign-up sheet: [Holy Virgin of Kazan Church, RSVP](#) When you RSVP, please inform us what you plan to bring or volunteer. If you plan to bring food, drink, or dessert, please specify what you will be sharing when you sign up. Thank you! Reminder _ Apostles Fast; no meat, no dairy, no eggs. We look forward to seeing you all. RSVP at: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C084FA-DAB2EA7F8C34-64333038-june> *Holy Virgin of Kazan Orthodox Church* 17370 Neeley Road, Guerneville, CA 95446



Parish Life



Zoya (center right) and her twin sister, Nila (right), recently celebrated their 85th birthday.

We always welcome photos of parish life at Sts. Peter and Paul. Please submit pictures (original size) to our editor, Misha Peterson. (See Newsletter Submissions)

