Messenger

August 2019

Monthly Newsletter of St. Peter the Apostle Church. Fresno California

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LIVING FAITH OR MERE WORDS?

Fr. James Guirguis

The Reading from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans. (10:1-10) and The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew. (8:28-9:1)

The gospel of Jesus Christ is not complicated. It is a very simple way. St. Paul sums this way up quite well in today's epistle reading when he says "If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." So that is the heart of the good news that we have in Jesus Christ. We were all dead in sin, but through the grace of God, the Lord Jesus Christ became a man and taught us and He ultimately showed His deep for love for us by dying for us in order to share His life with us, His creation. We are saved through acknowledging the work of God in our lives, through our confession of faith and our belief of heart.

There are some groups and denominations who reduce this word "belief" to mean that our works have nothing to do with our salvation. That we simply need to believe in an intellectual or inner manner. But the teaching of the Church is quite clear. Belief is not an intellectual practice, it is a firm and life changing conviction. What we believe in the heart is believed so strongly and so intensely that it affects our every thought, movement, and our words.

If a wealthy man walks up to you on the street and writes you a check for one million dollars and hands it to you, does that make you a millionaire? No. In order to become a millionaire we must first believe that what we were given is genuine and true. If we are convicted in our heart that this check is good, then we still have to walk the check to the bank. Our firm conviction, our belief, is proved through our walk to deposit the check in the bank. So the gift was free, you can call it grace. But the faith that we demonstrate as a result of this grace is manifested as belief through our actions which bring faith to life.

That is the faith and belief in Christ that we are after. An intense and genuine belief in the Master of our lives who taught us and sacrificed Himself for us out of His intense love and His knowledge that we could become much more through Him. That we could be redeemed, healed and transformed through life in communion with the Trinity.

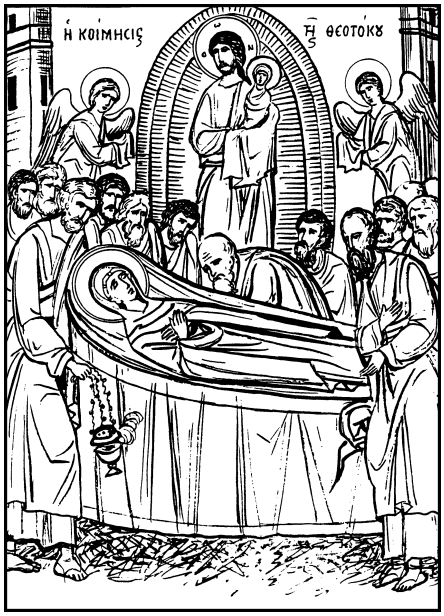
So powerful is this salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ that St. Paul who was raised as a Jew and a Pharisee of the Pharisees says "For Christ is the end of the law, that everyone who has faith may be justified." In this St. Paul is referring to the

law of Moses that was followed by all the Jewish people. The adherence to this law which was made up of hundreds of rules was understood to be the only way for the Jews to be saved. What then was the problem? The problem was that there was no one who could keep the law perfectly. As it is written in Romans 3:23 "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." And besides that, the law itself could not give eternal life. It could only guide and point out sins.

Christ is the end of the law. That is a liberating statement. It frees us from dry legalism in order to deepen our relationship with the living God without fear. This is our salvation. The Lord wants to know us, He wants to put His hand on our lives and bless us. Don't run away from Him in fear. Run to Him in faith and love. Run to prayer, which is His presence, every day, as often as you can think of it. Run to the Church, which is His body. Run to the sacraments which are His healing touch. Run also to serve others. For in serving them, we serve Him. In today's gospel we see the people running out to meet Christ but they do so for the wrong reasons, because they are wordly and attached to materialism. They run towards Christ only to run Him out of the city. They are more concerned for the pigs that they lost than for their own God given souls! We don't want to be like them but our focus on worldly things can become such a predominant focus of our hearts that we lose track of what is most important. It happens in subtle ways and creeps up in our life. We buy things that we can't really afford, we live outside of our means or just barely scraping by, and then we have to work harder and longer hours to try to prop up this life that we have purchased for ourselves. By doing this we often ignore family, friends, our physical health and most of all, the health of our souls. All of our focus and energy can easily be turned away or distracted from life in Christ. Our faith would then be mere words or theory, a dead faith. St. Bede writes "They alone know how to believe in God who love God, who are Christians not only in name but also in action and [way of] life, because without love faith is empty. With love, it is the faith of a Christian —without love, the faith of a demon." Let us not be like these poor impoverished people, chasing the Lord Jesus out of the city of our heart. But let us run to open the door of our hearts in dynamic faith. This is the faith that brings us to Christ and Christ to us and He alone is our salvation, together with His Father and the Holy Spirit. AMEN.

Commitment vs. Convenience: The Dormition Fast

On Wednesday, August 14, 2019, we begin the observance of the relatively brief Dormition Fast that prepares us for the celebration of the Great Feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God on August 28. And, as with every fast, we once again are presented with a challenge and a choice. In this instance, the Dormition Fast presents us with a choice between "convenience" and "commitment." We can choose convenience because of the simple fact that to fast is decidedly inconvenient. It takes planning, vigilance, discipline, self-denial, and an overall concerted effort. It is convenient to allow life to flow on at its usual summer rhythm, which includes searching for that comfort level of least resistance. To break our established patterns of living is always difficult—something we would only



contemplate with reluctance. So, one choice is to do nothing different during the Dormition Fast—or perhaps just doing something minimal, as a kind of token recognition of our life in the Church. Such a choice may not yield in terms of further growth in our life "in Christ." It may, rather, mean a missed opportunity.

Yet, the choice remains to embrace the Dormition Fast, a choice that is decidedly "counter-cultural" and one that manifests a conscious commitment to an Orthodox Christian "way of life." Such a commitment signifies that we are looking beyond what is convenient toward what is meaningful. It would be a choice in which we recognize our weaknesses, and our need precisely for the planning, vigilance, discipline, self denial and overall concerted effort that distinguishes the seeker of the "mind of Christ" which we have as a gift within the life of the Church. That is a difficult choice to make, and one that is perhaps particularly difficult within the life of a family with children who are often resistant to any changes. However, such a difficult choice has its "rewards," and such a commitment will bear fruit in our families and in

our parishes. (If embraced legalistically and judgmentally, however, we will lose our access to the potential fruitfulness of the fast and only succeed in creating a miserable atmosphere in our homes.) It is a choice that is determined to seize a good opportunity as at least a potential tool that leads to spiritual growth. Combining the "convenient" with our "commitment" within our contemporary social and cultural life is, to some degree, an option. We often don't allow the Church to "get in the way" of our plans and goals, and that may be hard to avoid in the circumstances and conditions of our present "way of life." It is hard to prevail in the never-ending "battle of the calendars." The surrounding social and cultural milieu no longer supports our commitment to Christ and the Church. In fact, it is usually quite indifferent and it may even be hostile toward such a commitment. Though we may hesitate to admit it, we find it very challenging not to conform to the world around us. But it is never impossible to choose our commitment to our Orthodox Christian way of life over what is merely convenient – or simply desired. That may just be one of those "daily crosses" that the Lord spoke of – though it may be a stretch to call that a "cross." This also entails choices, and we have to assess these choices with honesty as we look at all the factors that make up our lives. In short, it is very difficult – but profoundly rewarding – to practice our Orthodox Christian Faith today!

The heart of a sincere Orthodox Christian desires to choose the hard path of commitment over the easy (and rather boring?) path of convenience. During the Dormition Fast, we now have the God-given opportunity to escape the summer doldrums that drain our spiritual energy. With prayer, almsgiving and fasting, we can renew our tired bodies and souls. We can lift up our "drooping hands" in an attitude of prayer and thanksgiving. The Dormition of the Theotokos has often been called "Pascha in the summer." It celebrates the victory of life over death—or of death as a translation into the Kingdom of Heaven. The Dormition Fast is our spiritually vigilant preparation leading up to that glorious celebration honoring the Mother of God and contemplate our own entrance into the Kingdom of God. "Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold; now is the day of salvation!" [2 Corinthians 6:2].

Petrovdan

It was a very beautiful and seasonally hot morning on July 21, 2019 in the Great Central Valley when His Grace, Bishop Maxim, arrived at St. Peter the Apostle Church in Fresno, California. This year marked the 68 celebration of Petrovdan for the Fresno faithful as we gathered as the Eucharistic parish community which has been mystically identified with Ss. Peter & Paul—through Christ—to specifically ask them to intercede in our behalf, and to glorify God "who is wonderful in His saints." The day began with the celebration of Matins followed by the Hierarchical Liturgy. At the conclusion of Matins and prior to the start of the Liturgy, Bishop Maxim tonsured Joseph Alsobrook and Jonathan Hart to the clerical rank of Readers, the first of the Minor Orders in the Church. From the first to the concluding prayer, our beloved Bishop presided over a Liturgy full of the beauty, power, and grace of God apparent to all and made possible only by the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Concelebrating the Liturgy together with His Grace, were: Protopresbyter Stamatis Skliris, a renown iconographer and artist whose iconographic illustrations are used in the diocesan Divine Liturgy Book who was visiting Bishop Maxim from Athens, Greece; our parish priest, Protopresbyter Stavrofor George Gligich; Father John Mikitish, (OCA) visiting from New Haven, CT; and our parish Deacon Joseph Wesseler.

Following the reading of the Gospel, Father Stamatis Skliris delivered a wonderful sermon on the importance of humility in our lives. While we all recognize humility as a virtue, Fr. Stamatis pointed out that humility is often underestimated, and that a truly humble person suffers far less temptation than one who suffers from pride. Fr. Stamatis's sermon was especially applicable for the occasion for a church named after St. Peter, the leader of the apostles, and he said that humility was especially important for leaders like St. Peter: he who is first must be a servant to all.

At the conclusion of the Liturgy, there was a procession around the church with a stop in the east where our dear Bishop read the Gospel. Upon entering the church, the parish celebrated its Slava with the blessing of the kolac and wheat. Jonathan and Deborah Hart, together with their children Joseph and Emily were the Kumovi, being honored for their many years of giving their time and talents to the church. The children of the church delighted in singing the praises of the Holy Apostles, and the bread was broken to be shared by all.

Following the services, the faithful entered the hall and were treated to a delicious meal of grilled lamb, roasted vegetables, and rice lovingly prepared by the Circle of Sisters committee chaired by Cheryl and Ernie Duran. Thank you also to Theadora Clemenson for baking the beautiful Kolać and to Alisa Brooks

for preparing the Koljivo for the Slava. Joining us for the Luncheon were Father James and Presvytera Donna Pappas from our neighboring parish of St. George Greek Orthodox Church. There is a very warm and beautiful relationship between our parishes, which has existed since the founding of St. Peter Church in 1951.

During the program our St. Peter Youth Scholarship Committee awarded scholarships to our parish High School graduates: Amanda Pruse ($1000.00) and James Woolsey ($500). Father George had asked Amanda to share with everyone present a beautiful essay which she had written as a part of her scholarship application entitled: "My Life in Christ and what it means to be an Orthodox Christian". Our Kumovi Jonathan and Deborah Hart were then presented with an Icon of the Apostle Peter for their dedicated years of service by our Parish Council president Jim Ward. At the conclusion of the afternoon program, Bishop Maxim had all of the children come forward to receive a blessing as he gave each child a small wooden Cross. All in all, it was an exceptional day that will long be remembered by all present when His Grace, Bishop Maxim, our beloved Bishop shared his love, leadership, and wisdom with his parishioners at St. Peter the Apostle Church on this, its blessed Feast Day.

Visit our parish website: stpeterfresno.com to view pictures from this year's Slava. Our thanks to Tom and Lynn Oxford for taking pictures!

Parish activities...

Scholarship Fund Support:

Support our Scholarship Fund is through Amazon Smile. Remember, always start at smile.amazon.com and Amazon will donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases. Select "Serbian Orthodox Church of St Peter" as your charity. It is very simple and easy!

Also, remember that you can donate directly to the Scholarship Fund at any time. All donations are greatly appreciated!

Summer Pledges:
As many parishioners take their vacations, we ask everyone to maintain their pledge payments and weekly offerings as the summer months tend to be a little lean and our utility bills increase due to the extreme heat.

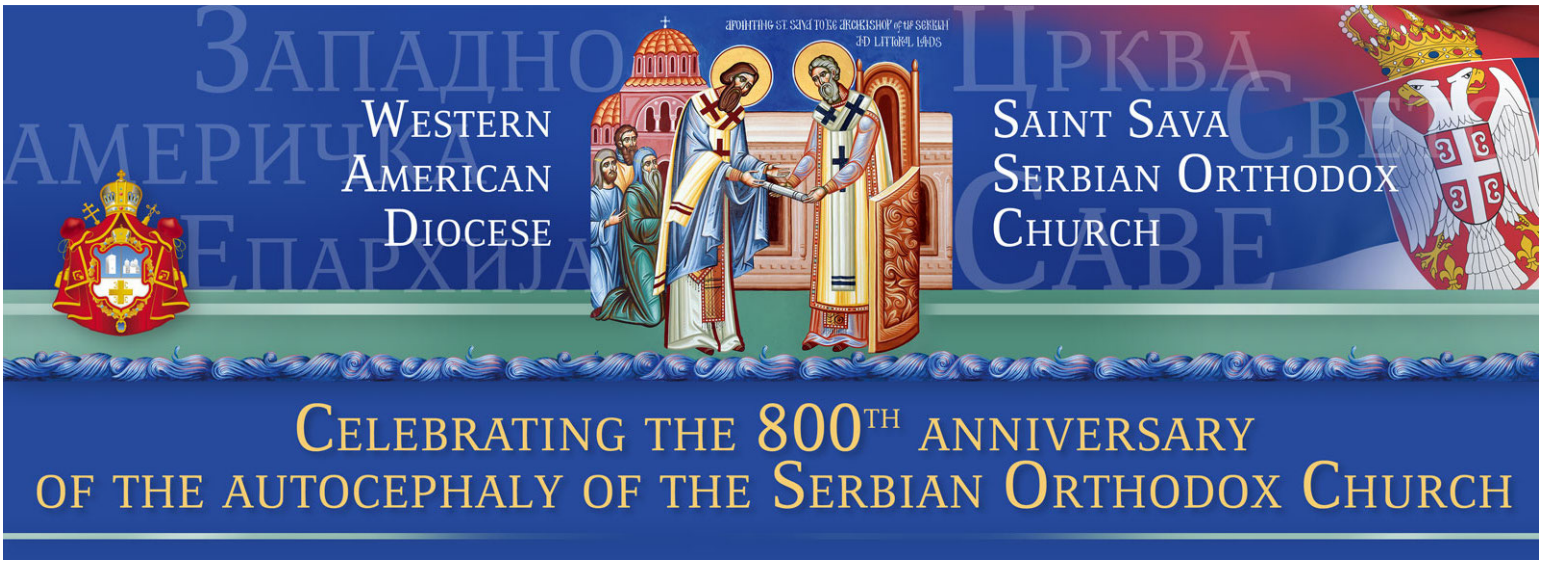
Dormition Fast:
From August 14th until August 28th, we enter into the annual Dormition Fast to help prepare us for the Dormition of our Blessed Mother. During this time, please try your best to refrain from eating meat or dairy, and endeavor to increase your spiritual reading, prepare yourselves for Confession and attend as many worship services as possible.

Paraklesis Services:
During the holy days of the Dormition Fast we will serve the Paraklesis (Small Supplicatory Canon to the Theotokos) on Wednesday, August 14 & 21 and Fridays, August 16 & 23 at 7:00 p.m. Please come with a list of names (living) for those who need prayers.

Serb Fest Volunteer and Donor Appreciation Dinner

Saturday, September 7

If you volunteered your time, talent and financial resources to our annual parish Serb Fest held on June 1st we would like to say thank you by inviting you to a special dinner following Vespers on September 7th! Vespers will begin at 5:00 PM and the dinner will immediately follow. We hope you can join us!
Contact Stacy Batrich-Smith by email at
stacybatrichsmith@att.net
to let us know if you will be attending.



DIOCESAN DAYS 2019

August 30 – September 1, 2019 / Saint Sava Church, San Gabriel, California

Honored Guests and Guest Speakers…

HIS HOLINESS IRINEJ
ARCHBISHOP OF PEC, METROPOLITAN OF BELGRADE-KARLOVCI AND SERBIAN PATRIARCH

Archbishop of Cetinje, Metropolitan Amfilohije of Montenegro and the Coastlands
A dozen Ruling Hierarchs of the Serbian Orthodox Church from throughout Europe, Canada & U.S.A.
Most Venerable Archimandrite Metodije of the Royal Lavra Hilandar Monastery
Ruling Hierarchs of the Orthodox Church in the U.S.A. and many Civil Dignitaries

Visit westsrbdio.org for schedule of Worship Services, Daily Events and Hotel Information

DIOCESAN DAYS 2019 SPONSORSHIP & DONATION FORM

BENEFACTOR $5,000.00
Includes Full Page Recognition in the Commemorative Book & Banquet Seating with Honored Guests at the Head Table
PLATINUM SPONSOR $3,000.00
Includes Full Page Recognition in the Commemorative Book and V.I.P. Table of 8 at the Sunday Banquet
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SILVER SPONSOR $1,000.00
Includes Full Page Recognition in the Commemorative Book
BRONZE SPONSOR $500.00
Includes Half Page Recognition in the Commemorative Book
Thank you and God Bless you for your generous contribution!

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Submission Deadline: JUNE 30, 2019 - All Contributions are Tax Deductible Phone: 626-289-9061 Ext 4 Email: secretary@westsrbdio.org Website: www.westsrbdio.org

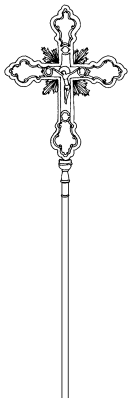
Stewardship 2019 ...

All households in the parish should have received our stewardship mailer along with a pledge card. If you did not receive this mailer please contact the church office at stpeter@me.com or pick one up a the candle counter in the narthex. We thank the following parishioners listed who have submitted their pledge commitment for 2019. Thank you and God bless you!

Alsobrook, Scott/Katherine
Angelich, Olga
Bahn, Marilyn
Baziuk, John/Suzanna
Brickey, Gabe/Mika
Brooks, Alisa Rakich/ Raymond
Briggs, Matthew/Maria
Bundros, Christopher/Shirley
Cantu, Bert/Patti
Castro, Mike/Annabelle
Chaplain, Maura
Chrisman, George/Diane
Christensen, Eleanor
Clemensen, Wayne/Lisa
Coffeen, Vera
Contreras, Alexander/Francine
Dakovich, Dan
Dobrinen, Elizabeth
Dublin, Antonina
Duran, Ernie / Cheryl
Duran, Jesus/Yvonne
Epperson, Jason/Lamia
Foley, John/Heidi
Forhan, Phil/Bryn
Gligich, Fr. George/Elena
Granado, Olga
Gregory, Seth
Hart, Jonathon/Deborah
Hatler, Charyce
Jarvie, Zachary
Keves, Lazslo/Valentina
Klingel, Friedhelm/Tatiana
Kojovich, Helen
Kornaros, Steven/Tara
Livanis, Peter
Lobkowski, Stephanie
Lobkowski, Vladimir/Darlene
Marinovich, Branko
Marinovich, John/Nancy
Matthews, Dn. Brad/Peggy
May, Lyudmyla/Edison
McAtee, Randy/Janice
McAtee, Timothy
Mikitish, Anne
Milinich, Barbara
Miller, Eric/Yoly
Milovich, Robert
Naden, Vera
Olivo, Anthony/Cicily
Owens, Greg
Owens, Jacob
Oxford, Tom/Lynn
Pavic, Dejan
Pavlovich, George
Penny, Tim/Nancy
Pestich Smith, Angela
Pestorich, John/Charlene
Pestorich, John/Staci
Pestorich, Mark/Kristen
Pestorich, Mike / Dona
Pestorich, Vera
Petrosian, John/Elizaveta
Poznanovich, Momirka
Poznanovich, Selma
Pruse, Jacob
Pruse, Kenneth/Tanya
Radoicich, Frances
Radovich, Savo/Milka
Ramirez, Christian/Brii
Romanenko, Andrej/Carolyn
Salata, Greg/Noël
Shultz, Norm
Sidel, Natalie
Sidel, Sandra
Skochko, Steve/Allison
Smith, Cassidy
Smith, Terrance/Stacy (Batrich)
Spadier, Dushan
Spolsdoff, Jim/Ala
Spolsdoff, Katherine
Stanovich-Creech, Vera
Stijovic, Mima
Tarailo, Ron/Radmila
Tarailo, Zorka
Thomas, Shirley
Vukajlovic, Larry
Vukajlovic, Mark/Cristina
Vukajlovic, Mike
Ward, Jim/Svetlana
Wesseler, Dn. Joseph/Stacia
Woolley, Marjorie
Woolsey, Kathryn
Zenovich, Vera

August Altar Servers, Epistle Readers & Tutors Schedule:

Team 1	Team 2
August 4, 18	**August 11 & 25**
Braeden Epperson	Luke Alsobrook
Mason Epperson	Caleb Alsobrook
Joseph Hart	Lance Vukajović
Brian Contreras	Nickolas Vukajlović
Caspian Wesseler	Jonah Pruse



Epistle:

August 4	Jacob Owens
August 11	Charyce Hatler
August 18	Jonathan Hart
August 25	Joseph Alsobrook

Tutors:

August 4	Jim Ward / Charyce Hatler
August 11	Andrej Romanenko/Tim Penny
August 18	Jonathan Hart/Timothy McAtee
August 25	Mike Castro/Jim Ward

August 2019

Coffee Hour Schedule

August 4	**Lyudmyla & Edison May**
August 11	Coffeen / Stijovic Family
August 18	Lawrinenko Family
August 25	Cicily Olivo, Francine Contreras

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3 Vespers 5:00 PM
4 Matins 8:30 AM Divine Liturgy 9:30 AM	5	6	7 6th Hour Prayers at Noon	8	9	10 Vespers 5:00 PM
11 Matins 8:30 AM Divine Liturgy 9:30 AM Parish Council 12:00 PM	12	13	14 6th Hour Prayers at Noon Paraklesis 7:00 PM	15 Men's Club 6:00 PM	16 Paraklesis 7:00 PM	17 Vespers 5:00 PM
18 Matins 8:30 AM Divine Liturgy 9:30 Vespers 7:00 PM	19 **Transfiguration** Liturgy 9:00 AM *Blessing of grapes & fruit.*	20	21 6th Hour Prayers at Noon Paraklesis 7:00 PM	22	23 Paraklesis 7:00 PM	24 Vespers 5:00 PM
25 Matins 8:30 AM Divine Liturgy 9:30 AM	26	27 Vespers 7:00 PM	28 **Dormition** Liturgy 9:00 AM *Blessing of flowers & herbs.*	29	30	31 No Vespers

Fr. George at St. Sava Camp, Jackson CA – July 28 to August 3

Dormition Fast: August 14 to 28

St. George's Greek Festival

Diocesen Days - San Gabrbriel, CA

Parish Directory

Contact Information:
Phone: (559) 227-5565
Email: stpeter@me.com
Website: www.stpeterfresno.com

Parish Clergy:
V. Rev. George Gligich (559) 696-7015
Protodeacon Brad Matthews (Retired)
Deacon Joseph Wesseler (559) 936-6838

Choir Director:
Peggy Matthews (559) 960-2151

Parish Council:
Jim Ward (559) 977-0793

Church School:
Lamia Epperson (559) 430-9186

Circle of Sisters:
Stacy Batrich Smith (559) 790-4073

Men's Club:
Dushan Spadier (559) 260-3700

Worship Services:

Saturday Vespers at 5:00 p.m.
Confessions on Saturdays after vespers or during the week by appointment.

Sunday Matins at 8:30 a.m.

Sunday Divine Liturgy at 9:30 a.m.
Church School on Sundays from September through May following Holy Communion.

Weeknight Vespers at 7:00 p.m.

Weekday Liturgy (Holy Days) at 9:00 a.m.

M E S S E N G E R

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St. Peter the Apostle Church Monthly Newsletter August 2019

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