The History of Saints Peter and Paul Russian Orthodox Church

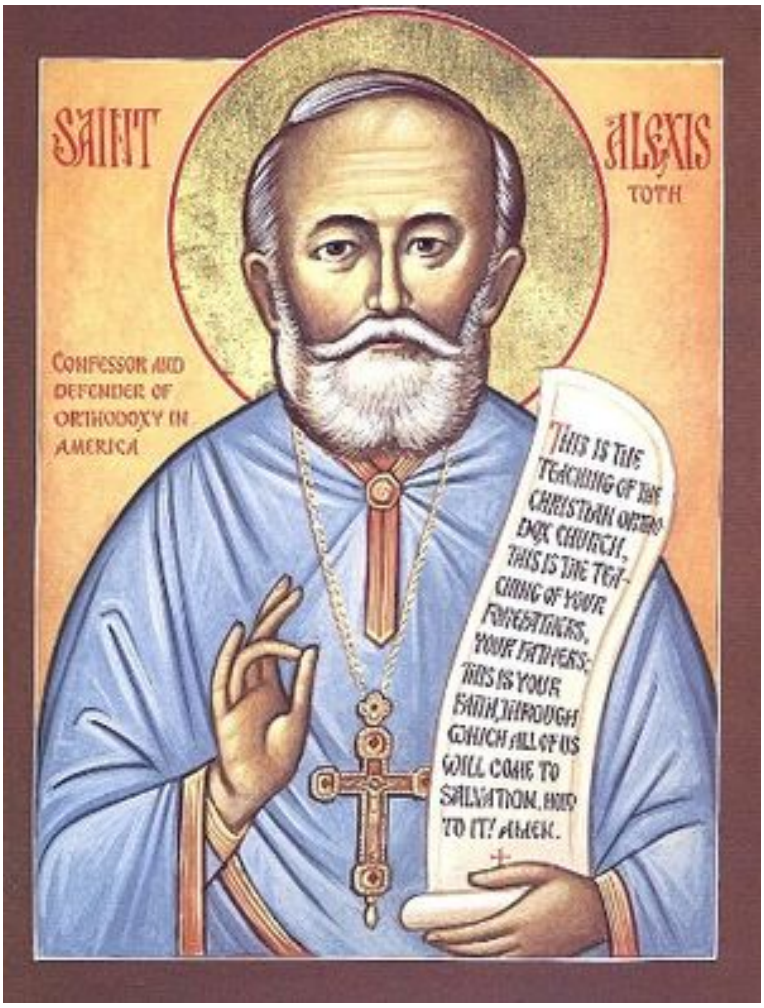
Scranton, Pennsylvania

Established 1896 | First Church Consecrated 1897



A heritage of Orthodox faith, perseverance, and prayer

SAINT ALEXIS OF WILKES-BARRE



Saint Alexis Toth (1854?1909)
Founding spiritual guide of the parish

Icon provided by the parish. Reproduced here for its historical and spiritual significance.

I. The Founding of the Parish (1896-1897)

The history of Saints Peter and Paul Russian Orthodox Church in Scranton, Pennsylvania, represents more than a century of Orthodox Christian faith, perseverance, sacrifice, and devotion to Almighty God. Established toward the end of the nineteenth century, the parish emerged from the spiritual needs of Eastern European immigrants who settled in northeastern Pennsylvania in search of employment, stability, and a better future for their families.

Amid the industrial development of the region, these faithful Orthodox Christians sought not only to preserve their cultural heritage but, above all, to maintain their ancestral Orthodox Christian Faith, liturgical traditions, and ecclesiastical identity.

In 1896, under the spiritual guidance and missionary influence of Archpriest Alexis Toth of Wilkes-Barre, the faithful organized the Saints Peter and Paul Russian Orthodox Brotherhood. This organization laid the foundation for the establishment of a permanent Orthodox Christian parish in Scranton.

Through the dedication, generosity, and personal sacrifices of its founding members, construction of the first parish church began in March 1897 at 1820 Division Street, Scranton, Pennsylvania. Later that same year, the newly completed church was consecrated by Bishop Nicholas.

From its earliest years, the parish became a spiritual home where the Divine Liturgy was celebrated, the Holy Mysteries were administered, children were instructed in the Orthodox Faith, and successive generations were united in prayer and Christian fellowship.

II. Saint Alexis of Wilkes-Barre and the Establishment of Orthodoxy

The founding history of the parish is closely associated with the missionary work of Saint Alexis Toth of Wilkes-Barre, one of the most significant figures in the development of Orthodox Christianity in North America.

During a period of considerable religious and cultural transformation among Eastern European immigrant communities, Father Alexis labored to strengthen Orthodox Christian identity and establish parishes under the canonical authority of the Orthodox Church. His ministry contributed to the organization of Orthodox communities throughout Pennsylvania and beyond.

The establishment of the Saints Peter and Paul Brotherhood was part of this wider missionary movement, through which Orthodox Christians sought to preserve the fullness of the Apostolic Faith and transmit it to future generations.

In recognition of his missionary labors and steadfast confession of the Orthodox Faith, Father Alexis was glorified among the saints in 1994. The parish remembers him with gratitude as its founding pastor and spiritual guide.

III. Trials, Destruction, and the Preservation of Parish Life (1912-1969)

Throughout its history, Saints Peter and Paul Russian Orthodox Church endured numerous challenges, including two devastating fires that threatened the physical existence of its sacred temple.

On January 18, 1912, the original church building suffered a serious fire. Despite the destruction and hardship, the faithful remained steadfast in their commitment to preserving their parish and continuing Orthodox Christian worship.

More than half a century later, on February 24, 1969, another devastating fire struck the church. This second tragedy marked a turning point in parish history. Faced once again with the loss of their place of worship, the faithful undertook the difficult task of rebuilding and securing a permanent future for their community.

Rather than allowing these circumstances to bring parish life to an end, the congregation united in a renewed commitment to the preservation and continuation of the Orthodox Christian Faith in Scranton.

IV. Construction and Consecration of the Present Church (1970-1972)



Following the fire of 1969, the parish began preparations for a new church at Washburn Street and South Fillmore Avenue in Scranton.

On July 12, 1970, the Feast of the Holy, Glorious, and All-Praised Leaders of the Apostles Peter and Paul according to the Julian Calendar, Bishop Dositheus blessed the groundbreaking for the new temple.

The selection of the parish's patronal feast for this occasion reflected the spiritual significance of the undertaking and the community's continuing devotion to its heavenly patrons. Construction was made possible through the sacrifices, generosity, and collective labor of clergy, parishioners, and benefactors.

On March 19, 1972, the completed church was solemnly consecrated by Bishop Mark, who celebrated the Divine Liturgy in the new temple. The consecration marked a new chapter in parish history, providing a spiritual home for future generations.

The present church stands as a visible testimony to the faith, determination, and enduring devotion of those who preserved the parish through hardship and uncertainty.

V. Ecclesiastical Life and the Patriarchal Parishes

Throughout its history, the parish has maintained its ecclesiastical identity within the Russian Orthodox tradition. It belongs to the Patriarchal Parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church in the United States, under the canonical jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate.

Its ecclesiastical life is centered upon the Divine Liturgy, the observance of the Church's liturgical calendar, the administration of the Holy Mysteries, and the preservation of Orthodox Christian doctrine and sacred tradition.

In 1987, Saints Peter and Paul hosted the Fifth Convocation of the Patriarchal Parishes, bringing together hierarchs, clergy, and representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate for prayer, fellowship, and discussions concerning the Church's life and mission in America.

VI. The Centennial and Subsequent Anniversaries (1997-2017)

The year 1997 marked the centennial of the construction and consecration of the parish's first church. On October 5, Bishop Paul celebrated a Hierarchical Divine Liturgy commemorating the one-hundredth anniversary; the refurbished church bells were also blessed.

In 2007, the parish celebrated its 110th anniversary on the Feast of the Protection of the Most Holy Theotokos. In 2017, it commemorated its 120th anniversary on the Feast of Saint Alexis of Wilkes-Barre, recalling the missionary labors that had contributed to its foundation.

These anniversaries offered opportunities to remember the clergy, parishioners, benefactors, and departed members who contributed to the establishment, preservation, and growth of the parish.

VII. Pastoral Leadership and Continuity

The parish's history is inseparable from the ministry of the priests who served its congregation. Among those remembered in its historical records are Archpriest Ignatius Lachno, Archpriest John Zeltonoga, Mitred Archpriest Dimitry Kudrikoff, and Archpriest Alexander Golubov.

Particular recognition is given to Mitred Archpriest Basil Micek, who served as Rector from August 1985 until his repose in March 2026. Through more than four decades of pastoral ministry, Father Basil guided successive generations of parishioners and oversaw the community's liturgical, pastoral, and administrative life.

Following his repose, Priest Oleg Cruz assumed the responsibilities of Rector, continuing the parish's pastoral ministry and undertaking initiatives in religious education, missionary outreach, administration, and Orthodox Christian community life.

The succession of pastoral leadership reflects the continuity of the Church's sacred ministry and each generation's responsibility to preserve and transmit the Orthodox Faith.

VIII. The Parish in the Twenty-First Century

Today, Saints Peter and Paul Russian Orthodox Church continues its mission as a community dedicated to worship of the Holy Trinity, proclamation of the Holy Gospel, and spiritual formation of Orthodox Christians.

The Divine Services remain the center of parish life, uniting the faithful in prayer and participation in the Holy Mysteries. Alongside its liturgical life, the parish develops educational, missionary, and community initiatives to strengthen its members and introduce others to the Orthodox Christian Faith.

These initiatives include Sunday School, theological and catechetical instruction, a parish bookstore and church supplies ministry, and opportunities for Christian fellowship and charitable service.

The parish also seeks to use modern communications to make information about Divine Services, educational programs, and pastoral ministries accessible to parishioners and visitors. While preserving its Russian Orthodox heritage, it welcomes all who sincerely desire to encounter the Orthodox Christian Faith.

IX. Toward the 130th Anniversary (2027)

In 2027, Saints Peter and Paul Russian Orthodox Church will commemorate 130 years since the construction and consecration of its first church in 1897.

This milestone offers an opportunity not merely to celebrate the parish's longevity, but to reflect upon the spiritual inheritance entrusted to the present generation. For nearly thirteen decades, the faithful have gathered in prayer, received the Holy Mysteries, celebrated the Church's great feasts, and entrusted their joys and sorrows to God's mercy.

Throughout prosperity and adversity, through the destruction and rebuilding of sacred temples, and through the succession of generations, the parish has continued its sacred calling.

The anniversary is a fitting occasion to remember with gratitude its founders, departed clergy, faithful parishioners, benefactors, and all whose sacrifices contributed to its preservation. Above all, it calls the present generation to strengthen parish life and faithfully transmit the Orthodox Christian Faith to those who follow.

May the Holy, Glorious, and All-Praised Leaders of the Apostles Peter and Paul continue to intercede before Almighty God for the clergy, parishioners, benefactors, and all who enter this holy temple in faith and prayer.

Through their holy prayers, O Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us. Amen.

Historical note: This account follows the parish history provided for this publication. Dates, pastoral succession, and archival details should be verified against original parish records before a commemorative edition.