

[November 5, 2015] Exactly 50 years ago, on the Sunday of Orthodoxy, the great wonderworker of the XX century, St. John of Shanghai and San Francisco, celebrated the first Divine Liturgy in the beautiful newly constructed Holy Virgin "Joy of All Who Sorrow" cathedral in San Francisco, the diocesan see of the Western American Diocese. The parish had no wealthy sponsors, no subsidies, no help from the state and thus is truly a cathedral of the Orthodox community, built by its parishioners.

Many historical events, important not only for the Western American Diocese, but for both the Russian Orthodox Church at large and for Orthodoxy worldwide, took place here: the canonizations of the heavenly protector of North America, St. Herman of Alaska, and of the great universal saint, Hierarch John (Maximovitch); three All-Diaspora Youth Conferences convened here; the cathedral hosted a number of Bishop's Councils and meetings of the Synod of Bishops; the IV All-Diaspora Council, where the decision proceeded with the restoration of Russian Church unity, took place here; the cathedral parish hosted and underwrote the visit of numerous miraculous icons to the diocese – the wonderworking Kursk-Root, Vladimir, Iveron-Myrrhstreamig, Reigning, Sitka and "Softening of Hearts" icons of the Theotokos.

Our cathedral is the only parish church in North America where evening services and Divine Liturgy are celebrated daily, uninterruptedly for the last 50 years. Undoubtedly no other church in North America is visited as often as Holy Virgin Cathedral because of the presence of the incorrupt and miraculous relics of St. John, the Wonderworker of Shanghai and San Francisco. There is a constant flow of pilgrims from Russia, Mt. Athos, Romania, Georgia, Europe, Greece, Ukraine, Belarus, as well as from different provinces and states of Canada and the US.

The cathedral parish is well known for its benevolence. In the nineties it was

extremely active in sending both humanitarian aid and religious literature to Russia; the parish has provided and continues to provide substantial aid not only for general church needs of the Russian Church Abroad, but for needy parishes and communities worldwide. Annually around 10,000 bottles of St. John oil are mailed and given out (for free) and the parish feeds hundreds of faithful on St. John's and cathedral feastdays. Two schools function under the auspices of the cathedral: Saints Kyrill and Methodius Russian High School and St. John of San Francisco Orthodox Academy.

The Holy Virgin Cathedral parish used to be the biggest parish of ROCOR, but now many people, especially families, cannot afford to live in such an expensive city as San Francisco. Over the last 20 years many have moved away and the number of parishioners has dwindled notably, although the number of pilgrims and visitors has increased (our cathedral is now open from dawn to dusk 7 days a week).

50 years after the cathedral's first service the church building is in need of serious repair.

- Restoration of the crosses – estimated cost approximately \$50,000.00
- Repair of roof cracks, cleaning sealing/painting – \$100,000.00
- Repair and re-construction of entry stairs and re-modelling of facade – \$100,000.00

The roof repairs and sealing/painting are priority items and work is under way. The roof repair is absolutely mandatory to prevent deterioration and leakage.

In light of the above the clergy and parish council of Holy Virgin Cathedral appeal to the faithful worldwide, to everyone for whom the cathedral is dear, who love St. John and who acknowledge and support the cathedral's Orthodox witness in North America, to help us fix and bring our church into proper order, both for the present generation and for future ones, unto the glory of God and Orthodoxy in America.

We ask for your holy prayers and hope in your generosity.

The Clergy & Parish Council of Holy Virgin «Joy of All Who Sorrow» Cathedral

Checks should be made out to HOLY VIRGIN CATHEDRAL with memo: 50th Renovation and mailed to:

**Holy Virgin Cathedral
6210 Geary Boulevard
San Francisco, CA 94121
U.S.A.**

Contact e-mail address: sfsobor@gmail.com

Payment can also be made via PayPal