

## **TO ARCHPRIEST STEFAN AND TATYANA OLEGOVNA PAVLENKO**

On behalf of the grateful bishops, clergy and flock of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, which nurtured and educated you, and on my own behalf, I cordially congratulate you on the significant anniversary, the 50th anniversary of your joint service to the Church of Christ!

Half a century ago, through the laying on of hands by Bishop Laurus, who later became the fifth First Hierarch of our Church, you, dear Father Stefan, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, were included among the host of priests, reverent servants of the altar of the Lord. It was a time of difficult trials for our Church, but the Chief Shepherd Christ gave you courage and strength not to hesitate to follow the path once chosen.

Fulfilling various obediences, both diocesan and church-wide, you have always sought to ensure that the word of God grows and spreads (Acts 12:24). The period of special creative work was the years of your rectorship in the Church of All Saints of the Russian Land in Burlingame. With the blessing of Archbishops Anthony (Medvedev) and Kyrill (Dmitrieff) and under your wise leadership, a great deal has indeed been done here.

It is gratifying to note that you, together with your pious wife, pay due attention to the issues of spiritual and moral education of the younger generation, the creation of a strong Orthodox-Christian community and the maintenance of family spirit in it, constructively interact with local representatives of the Local Orthodox Churches and the public.

In these difficult times, both of you, with patience and hope in God's mercy, continue to bear the cross of service to God, the Church and your neighbor entrusted to you 50 years ago. Following your calling and zealously working in the Vineyard of Christ, not only by word, but also by your personal example of active love, you strengthen those who waver, comfort those who mourn, and kindle the fire of faith in the hearts of many people.

In consideration of your hard work and in connection with the anniversary date that is now being celebrated, I express my deep gratitude to you and invoke God's blessing on you, your relatives and friends, Burlingame parishioners and pilgrims.

As a witness to this, this letter has been given to you, duly signed by us and approved by the Synodal seal in the God-saved city of Burlingame (California) on September 17/30, 2023, during the worldwide celebration of the 30th anniversary of the discovery of the imperishable and healing relics of St John, Archbishop of Shanghai and San Francisco the Wonder-worker.

+ NICHOLAS  
Metropolitan of Eastern America and New York,  
First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia

Archbishop Kyrill then presented Fr Stefan with a greeting and an icon of the Great Martyr and Healer Panteleimon.