

# **100th Anniversary of St. Sava Church of Los Angeles - San Gabriel**

St. Sava parish of San Gabriel will celebrate its 100 years of existence on October 2nd and 3rd, 2010. This occasion inspires parishioners to look back with justifiable pride at what has been accomplished and to look forward with hope at what is yet to come.

St. Sava parish is fortunate to have two churches, the St. Sava Church built in 1910 at the Serbian cemetery in Los Angeles, and the new St. Sava Church built in 1984 in San Gabriel. If one considers history, it must be said, St. Sava Church marks the beginning of the Orthodox faith and Serbian culture in Los Angeles. Being the oldest organized Church in Southern California, this Jubilee of St. Sava parish will also draw the attention of other Orthodox jurisdictions in Western America.

Church records show that the early settlers of Los Angeles immigrated primarily from Montenegro, Boka and Hercegovina. Through the years at St. Sava, the parish was enlarged by immigrants from other areas of the former Yugoslavia, i.e., Serbia, Bosnia, Dalmatia, Lika, etc.

Many stories can be told about the faith, labor of love, inspiration, dreams and commitments of St. Sava parishioners. One of those is a story of how the St. Sava Church at the cemetery was built with very modest means. Most immigrants worked as common laborers for small wages. Not being able to pay the artist for Altar Icons, parishioners used their paper Slava Icons to complete the Iconostas themselves. Another story tells of the time when Church members realized that the project of building the new St. Sava Church in San Gabriel would cost 3 million dollars, and they formed a construction committee to act as a general contractor. The Church was built for less than half of the projected price. It is the story of a miracle that 2 million dollars were raised for the Church interior and its majestic mosaic made by the famous Italian artist Sirio Tonelli. Another story can be told of how St. Sava Church Hall was built in 1963 at the time when the split happened in the Serbian Orthodox Church of America. There are also stories of remodeling the old St. Sava Church and the St. Sava Church Hall in San Gabriel.

All of these stories reflect the deep appreciation of the St. Sava parishioners for their Orthodox faith and Serbian culture. They are an expression of the beauty and goodness of each St. Sava member, of the stewards and parishioners involved. They point out a perfect story to live by, the story of love. And for my own story, I have been proud to have the opportunity to serve St. Sava parish for the past 30 years.

Proto-Stavr. Fr. Petar Jovanovic