

THE MESSENGER

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE ORTHODOX CHURCH
DECEMBER 2011



NATIVITY IN THE FLESH OF OUR LORD,
GOD AND SAVIOR, JESUS CHRIST

MARK THE DATES

December 4: ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

December 6: St. Nicholas, Archbishop of Myra in Lycia

December 10: Slavonic Liturgy

December 13: St. Herman of Alaska; †Protopresbyter Alexander Schmemmann

December 14-15: Bishop's Council, Diocesan Council (Father Away)

December 24: Eve of Nativity Vigil

December 25: Nativity of the Lord

December 25-January 4: Fast Free Period

Send email addresses and corrections to: frjohn@lasvegasorthodox.com

DECEMBER 2011

St. Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church • Las Vegas, Nevada

<p>COFFEE HOUR SCHEDULE</p> <p>DEC 4: ABEBA DEC 11: AMLESET & FREWOINI DEC 18: SARA & ROMA DEC 25: ABIL</p>	<p>CHURCH CLEANING SCHEDULE</p> <p>DEC 4: DEC 11: ARAYA DEC 18: FANA DEC 25: AZMERA</p>	1	2	<p>BAPTISM, 10:00 AM</p> <p>VESPERS, 5:30 PM CONFESSIONS</p>		
<p style="text-align: right;">4</p> <p>LITURGY, 9:00 AM HOURS: DRESKO EPISTLE: SAS POST-COMM: BASSO CHURCH SCHOOL PARISH MEETING</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">5</p> <p>GREAT VESPERS, 6:30 PM CHOIR REHEARSAL</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">6</p> <p>DIVINE LITURGY, 8:00 AM ST. NICHOLAS</p> <p>BAPTISM, 11:00 AM</p> <p>CHURCH SCHOOL MEETING 7:00 PM, DRESKO HOUSE</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">7</p> <p>DAILY VESPERS, 6:30 PM ADULT CLASS</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">8</p> <p>COFFEE CHAT, 10:00 AM EL RANCHO, PECOS AND RUSSELL</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">9</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">10</p> <p>RUSSIAN CONFESSIONS 9:00 AM SLAVONIC LITURGY, 10:00 AM</p> <p>VESPERS, 5:30 PM CONFESSIONS</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">11</p> <p>LITURGY, 9:00 AM HOURS: HOOD EPISTLE: OSBURN POST-COMM: STRANSKY CHURCH SCHOOL</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">12</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">13</p> <p>DIVINE LITURGY, 8:00 AM ST. HERMAN OF ALASKA †FR. ALEXANDER SCHMEMANN</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">14</p> <p>FATHER JOHN IN SAN FRANCISCO Bishop's Advisory Committee Diocesan Council</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">15</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">16</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">17</p> <p>FEEDING THE HOMELESS, 10:30 AM</p> <p>VESPERS, 5:30 PM CONFESSIONS</p>
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The Messenger

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DECEMBER 2011

ON THE NEW YEAR

Saint Alexander Hotovitzky
1902
(Feastday December 4)

Again I stand on the threshold of a New Year. Again I stand on the crest of a mountain, where I may make a halt and review, before I walk again on the path I have brod. I shall halt, I shall rest, I shall hush my troubled heart, be it only for this short moment, I shall hide from the blizzard, which had followed me ever since I set out, and will meet me again the moment I leave my seclusion. Oh, Lord! help me calmly examine my soul and Thy creation.

I gaze at God's creation, at everything which He had sent to me, which has been placed close to me, which, through His will, has come together in my life, and, with my hand on my heart, from the depth of my heart and conscience, I say: all this is very good! Yonder is my happy childhood — how brightly it shines, diffusing its aroma from the distant long ago, how it lights up my path before me, how it freshens my soul, during spells of exhaus-

tion! Yonder is my ardent youth and with it all that brought to my soul the first raptures of feeling. Here are my lessons, my joys, my bitter losses, here are the people to like with whom is my happiness, here are others, whom I have buried in the damp earth, almost unconscious with grief; here are all in whose company I grew up, with whom I worried, from whom I have received gifts of love and of wrath, from whom have I accepted honour and dishonour; here is Nature, which, at times, appeared to me more alive and more responsive, which had more power to energize my spirit, than living beings themselves; here are my pleasures, my connections, my illnesses. All, all this is very good. All was good, that God's Providence sent into my life. Nothing was in vain. Everything was for good.

My past! How far it stretches back in the wondrous country, whence come to me a glad sound, or a beloved image, consolation, and hope, and bitter remorse. I gaze at it and I smile for joy, I gaze at it and I cover my face

with my hands for shame. Yet I know: it is mine, it is myself, it is a part of my life, and no power can take it from me or erase what is written in it. And that which is written in it is the future, it is the fate of man. Many are the lives in it, whose mysterious meaning will be disclosed at some future time, at the time when the seed that was sown, will come to ripeness, when, in letters of fire, it will bring forward the word, traced on it by eternal wisdom, unrevealed as yet to mind and conscience, but not to be separated from life. Whilst man lived his days, whilst he worked and slept, whilst he laughed and cried, whilst he moved and rested — eternal Wisdom traced this word on his life and sealed it with a seal of its own, putting a magic spell on it, until the time comes for the seal to be broken, and for a dark corner of a man's life to be lit up by the light of God's understanding, which lies hidden in life. It is an agony to read some of these words, but once you have read them, your heart will know, that those are words of God's love, of God's solicitude for man. And with every new

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Priest Aaron Oliver

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PARISH COUNCIL

Laura Draskovic, Vice-President

Karen Short, Treasurer

Nadine Wood, Secretary
Church School Coordinator

Harold Anagnostopoulos
James Brophy
Alan Buttell
Robert Conductor
Stephen Osburn
Catherine Wilkalis

SUB-COMMITTEES

Building & Grounds
Harold Anagnostopoulos
Nikolai Melnikov

Eritrean & Ethiopian Outreach
Genet Bokre

Russian Outreach
Anna Vishnevsky Mauck

word, a mystery is revealed, a veil is drawn away and man is made able to understand the thoughts and longings of his own heart.

All is very good. Yet, even now, my restless heart is throbbing with unknown longing and straining to see into the distant future.

Oh Lord! let Thy blessing rest on us.

FEASTDAYS

Please join us for the following festal celebrations during December.

St. Nicholas, Archbishop of Myra
December 6

Great Vespers, 6:30 PM (MON)
Divine Liturgy, 8:00 AM (TUES)

St. Herman of Alaska
†Fr. Alexander Schmemmann
December 13

Divine Liturgy, 8:00 AM (TUES)

The Eve of the Nativity of Christ
December 24

Divine Liturgy, 9:00 AM (SAT)

COFFEE HOUR SCHEDULE

Dec 4: Abeba

Dec 11: Amleset & Frewoini

Dec 18: Sara & Roma

Dec 25: Abil

CHURCH CLEANING SCHEDULE

Dec 4:

Dec 11: Araya

Dec 18: Fana

Dec 25: Azmera

PLEDGE FORMS PAST DUE

2012 Pledge Forms were due by the end of November. Please take time to prayerfully and seriously

consider your commitment to the parish and God's holy Church by making a generous gift to our work. There are also various tasks needing attention for which you can volunteer.

ALL-AMERICAN COUNCIL

Father John and Catherine Wilkalis did attend the 16th All-American Council in Seattle. A report will be given at our annual meeting on December 4.

ANNUAL MEETING

The annual meeting of our parish will be held following Divine Liturgy on Sunday, December 4. All voting members of the parish are asked to stay for the meeting.

A voting member of the parish is:

- a) a baptized and chrismated Orthodox Christian at least 18 years old;
- b) has come for Confession and Communion regularly, but at least once, during the calendar year;
- c) has financially supported the parish;
- d) has been a member for 12 consecutive months.

BY-LAWS AMENDMENT

A small amendment to our Parish By-Laws will be proposed at the annual meeting. The text of the amendment:

Current Text

ARTICLE I

THE PARISH MEMBERSHIP

Section 1 Voting Member

A voting member of the parish shall fulfill the following requirements:

- a) be a Baptized and Chrismated Orthodox Christian, and
- b) be at least 18 years of age, and

c) regularly, but at least once a year, partake of the Sacraments of Private Confession and Communion in the Parish, and

d) have been a member of the Parish for a prior consecutive twelve (12) month period, and

e) regularly fulfill such financial obligations as may be established by the Parish, within that year.

Proposed Text

ARTICLE I

THE PARISH MEMBERSHIP

Section 1 Voting Member

A voting member of the parish shall fulfill the following requirements:

a) be a Baptized and Christened Orthodox Christian, and

b) be at least 18 years of age, and

c) regularly, but at least once a year, partake of the Sacraments of Private Confession and Communion in the Parish, and

d) have been a member of the Parish for a prior consecutive twelve (12) month period, and

e) have a current (within the calendar year) signed Pledge Form on file with the church office, making and fulfilling a financial commitment to the parish.

INTERNATIONAL FOOD FESTIVAL

Our annual International Food Festival was held the weekend of November 5-6. Although the weather was not cooperative, everyone agreed that it was a great weekend of fun and fellowship. The parish realized \$9,081.50 from the festival. Thanks to everyone who helped make the weekend so successful!

SLAVONIC LITURGY

The monthly Slavonic Liturgy will be held on the second Saturday of the month, December 10th.

Confessions begin at 9:00 AM.

Liturgy will begin at 10:00 AM.

FATHER AWAY

Father John will be in San Francisco on December 14-15 attending the Bishop's Advisory Committee and Diocesan Council meetings. In the event of an emergency, please contact Matushka Liz.

NATIVITY FAST

The Nativity Fast continues until the Feast of the Nativity, December 25th. During the fast, regular communicants should make the journey to the Sacrament of Confession. Father John is available after evening services and by appointment.

FEED THE HUNGRY

Our next scheduled date is Saturday, December 17th. Join us!

We are asking for assistance in doing this project. If you can donate any of the items needed for the lunches, it would be appreciated. **We also have a need for basic toiletries: toothpaste, toothbrushes, soap, etc.** If you have any *travel* size items, leave them in the bin in the church vestibule. **We especially need socks, hats and gloves/mittens for MEN.** Thank you!

CHRISTMAS CLEAN-UP

We will have a more "intensive" clean-up of the church in preparation for the Feast of the Nativity of Christ (Christmas). If you are available, please join us on Tuesday, December 20th, at 10:00 AM. It should take no more than a

couple of hours.

HOUSE BLESSINGS

Orthodox Christians traditionally have their homes blessed during the feast of Theophany. Father John will begin blessing houses after the liturgy of the feast on January 6th. *A sign-up list will be available in the vestibule of the church if you wish to have Father come.* Please make note of any special requests such time of day and if would like to plan a meal, etc., around the visit. Father will coordinate the date and time of your visit as we draw near to the Feast.

CHURCH CLEANING

Our schedule for the **weekly** clean-up of the church needs volunteers. The duty is easy, takes two hours at the most, and you can do it at your convenience as Father will provide a key and entry instructions. Please consider offering some time and talent to the Lord in the care of His Church. A sign-up list is available in the church.

COFFEE CHAT

We meet on Thursdays, at 10:00 AM at El Rancho on Pecos and Russell.

PRAYER FOR OUR PARISH

We ask everyone to remember our parish in daily prayer:

Lord, God and Savior of all, we thank You for the blessing of St. Paul parish in our lives. May Your word become alive in each and every one of us who strive to follow You. Please bless and multiply all the gifts — time, talent and treasure — which are given in thanks to benefit our mission

and glorify Your name. Bless and multiply the givers and help us all to make present Your Kingdom. For You are the Giver of all that is good, O Christ our God, and to You we give glory, together with Your Father who is without beginning and Your all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

CHARITY

Our normal collections of food for Friends of the Desert continue. *Special needs at this time: jelly, jam, peanut butter, canned fruit, canned tuna/chicken.* Thank you!

SACRAMENTS/SPECIAL SERVICES

Please follow these guidelines.

• **Baptisms.** A date and time must be requested at least three weeks in advance. In addition, a personal meeting scheduled with Fr. John will be necessary.

• **Matrimony.** A date and time for weddings must be requested at least six months (preferably twelve) in advance. There will be premarital sessions for both bride and groom to attend.

• **Memorials (Panikhida).** Requests for a memorial must be made at least one week in advance. If possible, the service should not be served on Sunday, the Day of the Resurrection, when all departed have already been remembered in the Liturgy.

PARISH COUNCIL SYNOPSIS NOVEMBER 20, 2011 MEETING

Rector's Report:

- Father John welcomed Jim Brophy and Bob Conductor to the parish council.
- All-American Council: Father spoke on some of the top-

ics discussed at the AAC and expressed his disappointment in the acceptance of the Resolution regarding the assessment to the National Church. Karen Wilkalis also spoke on her first time experience at an AAC stating she especially liked the IOCC and FOCUS programs that were discussed.

- Santa Rosa: Father John expressed his appreciation of having a spiritually mature parish 'sharing' him with another church. His stewardship retreat in Santa Rosa was successful.
- Father John will be away in Connecticut for Thanksgiving 11/22-29. Father Aaron will also be away that week. In the absence of both priests, Father Damian Kuolt from Phoenix, AZ will celebrate services at St. Paul's on November 26/27.

Vice President: no report.

Treasurer's Report: Karen Short distributed reports to council members earlier via e-mail. Discussion of our current financial situation took place. Karen spoke about the successful refinancing of the mortgage. This will cut our mortgage expenses by almost \$1000 per month. Income has improved slightly since summer. Finances are current except for assessments. **We have \$16,572.21 in outstanding bills that have not been paid to date.** Income for October was \$18,143.50 and expenses were \$17,647.10 for a net surplus of \$496.40.

YTD 10/31/11

2011 YTD Inc \$ 185,164.35

2011 YTD Exp \$ 197,016.88

Exp over Inc \$ 11,852.53

Buildings and Grounds:

- Work Tickets Project is ready. Harry will post on the bulletin board in the Community Center and "buttonhole" a few workers to help with various projects.
- Kitchen cabinets are in bad shape. Harry repaired the drawer next to the dishwasher. More repairs are needed.
- Air filters in the church need to be replaced on a more frequent basis. The church filters should be replaced every few weeks. Harry will look into a bulk purchase of the filters. Alan Buttell provided a website address.

Church School: Nadine reported that attendance has been unusually poor this year. A meeting of the whole church school staff will take place on December 6th.

Charity: Cathy Wilkalis reported that the "feeding the hungry project" is doing well. She especially noted the participation of Jason and Cheryl Basso which contributes to the success of the program. Sandwiches and other items will be distributed to the homeless on Saturday, December 17th. Stephen Osburn will contact Jason Basso for information to put on the Church website regarding this outreach project.

Eritrean/Ethiopian: no report.

Outreach/Website: Stephen Osburn reported that he has been working on the website continuously. Stephen installed a new computer in the Church

Office. Father Aaron submitted an Outreach Project Outline (attached) which includes a Mission Statement and areas of outreach projects. This will be presented at the Annual Parish Meeting on December 4th.

Russian: no report. A discussion took place regarding the place of the Russian community in our parish. It has been reported to Father that "the Russians are now going to the Serbian church" and also that a renegade "Russian priest" has been regularly visiting Las Vegas performing baptisms in homes and trying to organize a "Russian parish." As a parish we have tried to accommodate the spiritual needs of everyone, including those of Russian descent. We will continue to make that effort, but cannot prevent people of their own free will leaving or otherwise expressing dissatisfaction. **No one has spoken personally to Father John about any of these matters.** It has all been hearsay, rumors, gossip and innuendo. Father's door is always open to anyone who wishes to speak about anything.

Stewardship: Pledge Forms need to be submitted by December 1. Discussion followed. Anyone wishing to serve on the parish council must have a signed pledge form on file.

OLD BUSINESS

Bell Tower: Harry reported that he has inspected the bell tower. Kevin will be submitting architectural drawings to the town for approval next week. Discussion on the ringing of the bells took place.

Wine tasting/Cook-off Fundraiser: Status quo.

Iconography Project: Status quo.

Food Festival: Nadine Wood thanked everyone for helping to make this year's Festival a day of good food and fellowship. A profit of \$9081.50 has been realized to date. This includes additional sales of bakery items. A final reporting will be given at the Annual Parish Meeting.

Money Procedures: we have not purchased a fire-proof safe/file cabinet yet.

NEW BUSINESS

Annual Meeting: Sunday, December 4, 2011. A proposed budget was presented and discussed noting the following (proposed budget attached):

- The proposed budget for 2012 is almost \$20,000.00 **less** than the 2011 budget.
- The stewardship portion of the budget is set for the approximate amount that we have anticipated receiving by the end of this calendar year.
- The budgeted Festival Income has been reduced.
- The Gourmet Dinner will be discontinued and replaced with another type of fund raiser.
- The only adjustment to the compensation package of the Rector is the payment of 12 months of health insurance rather than 10 months in 2011.
- The disbursement of budgeted amounts for the Church School, Charitable Outreach and Missionary Outreach should be mandated.
- The passing of a resolution obligating us to place \$250.00 on the first of each month into a separately established

"Reserve Fund".

By-Laws: A proposed By-Laws Amendment (attached) was presented changing Section 1(e) of Article 1 The Parish Membership as follows:

Currently: "regularly fulfill such financial obligations as may be established by the Parish, within that year"

Proposed: "have a current (within the calendar year) signed Pledge Form on file with the church office, making, and fulfilling, a financial commitment to the parish"

Discussion followed. It was unanimously agreed to present the proposed resolution to the parish at the Annual Parish Meeting on December 4.

Elections: Laura Draskovic, Nadine Wood, and Cathy Wilkalis have terms expiring at the annual meeting. All are eligible to run again. Nominations will also be taken from the floor.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, December 20, 2011, 6:00 PM.

PARISH DIPTYCHS

This list of parish departed is to remind us all of those whom we love and miss and to spur us to remember them in our daily prayers. They will be remembered in the proskomedia before each liturgy.

MONTH OF DECEMBER

Tiblets Araia

December 12, 2003

Mila Popovich

December 13, 1997

John Kort

December 13, 1998

Olga Neitzke

December 13, 2003

Gennady Skobelev
December 13, 2006

James Makovlev
December 20, 1999

Alexandra Otterness
December 22, 1996

Andrijana Djokic
December 26, 2002

Alexander Sabanov
December 27, 2005

WHY FAST FOR CHRISTMAS? FATHER STEPHEN FREEMAN

Fasting is not very alive and well in the Christian world. Much of that world has long lost any living connection with the historical memory of Christian fasting. Without the guidance of Tradition, many modern Christians either do not fast, or constantly seek to re-invent the practice, sometimes with unintended consequences.

There are other segments of Christendom who have tiny remnants of the traditional Christian fast, but in the face of a modern world have reduced the tradition to relatively trivial acts of self-denial.

I read recently (though I cannot remember where) that the rejection of Hesychasm was the source of all heresy. In less technical terms we can say that knowing God in truth, participating in His life, union with Him through humility, prayer, love of enemy and repentance before all and for everything, is the purpose of the Christian life. Hesychasm (Greek Hesychia=Silence) is the name applied to the Orthodox tradition of ceaseless prayer and inner stillness.

But these are incorrectly

understood if they are separated from knowledge of God and participation in His life, union with Him through humility, prayer, love of enemy and repentance before all and for everything.

And it is the same path of inner knowledge of God (with all its components) that is the proper context of fasting. If we fast but do not forgive our enemies – our fasting is of no use. If we fast and do not find it drawing us into humility – our fasting is of no use. If our fasting does not make us yet more keenly aware of the fact that we are sinful before all and responsible to all then it is of no benefit. If our fasting does not unite us with the life of God – which is meek and lowly – then it is again of no benefit.

Fasting is not dieting. Fasting is not about keeping a Christian version of kosher. Fasting is about hunger and humility (which is increased as we allow ourselves to become weak). Fasting is about allowing our heart to break.

I have seen greater good accomplished in souls through their failure in the fasting season than in the souls of those who “fasted well.” Publicans enter the kingdom of God before Pharisees pretty much every time.

Why do we fast? Perhaps the more germane question is “why do we eat?” Christ quoted Scripture to the evil one and said, “Man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.” We eat as though our life depended on it and it does not. We fast because our life depends on the word of God.

I worked for a couple of years as a hospice chaplain. Dur-

ing that time, daily sitting at the side of the beds of dying patients – I learned a little about how we die. It is a medical fact that many people become “anorexic” before death – that is – they cease to want food. Many times family and even doctors become concerned and force food on a patient who will not survive. Interestingly, it was found that patients who became anorexic had less pain than those who, having become anorexic, were forced to take food. (None of this is about the psychological anorexia that afflicts many of our youth. That is a tragedy)

It is as though at death our bodies have a wisdom we have lacked for most of our lives. It knows that what it needs is not food – but something deeper. The soul seeks and hungers for the living God. The body and its pain become a distraction. And thus in God’s mercy the distraction is reduced.

Christianity as a religion – as a theoretical system of explanations regarding heaven and hell, reward and punishment, is simply Christianity that has been distorted from its true form. Either we know the living God or we have nothing. Either we eat His flesh and drink His blood or we have no life in us. The rejection of Hesychasm is the source of all heresy.

Why do we fast? We fast so that we may live like a dying man – and in dying we can be born to eternal life.

**CHRIST IS BORN!!
GLORIFY HIM!!**