MARK THE DATES

November 25-December 4: Father out of town
December 6: St. Nicholas, Archbishop of Myra in Lycia, Divine Liturgy, 8:00 AM
December 8: Annual Parish Meeting following liturgy
December 10-11: Father out of town (Diocesan Council)
December 13: St. Herman of Alaska, Divine Liturgy, 8:00 AM
December 14: Russian Confessions, 9:00 AM; Slavonic Liturgy, 10:00 AM
Christmas Cookie Walk Sale, 9:00 AM-12:00 PM
December 17: Parish Council Meeting, 6:00 PM
December 21: General Church Clean-up, 9:00 AM
December 21: EVE OF THE NATIVITY, Vespers/Liturgy, 9:00 AM
  Nativity Vigil Service, 6:30 PM
December 25: NATIVITY OF OUR LORD, Divine Liturgy, 9:00 AM
January 1: Circumcision of our Lord; Civil New Year, Divine Liturgy, 9:00 AM

Send email addresses and corrections to: frjohn@lasvegasorthodox.com
## December 2013

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

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<td>2</td>
<td>WOMEN’S READING GROUP, 10:00 AM</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Eritrean Service, 8:00 AM COFFEE CHAT, 10:00 AM</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>ST. NICHOLAS, ARCHBISHOP OF MYRA DIVINE LITURGY, 8:00 AM</td>
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<td>DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM HOURS: YOUTH Epistle: Youth POST-Comm: Brophy CHURCH SCHOOL</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>ST. HERMAN OF ALASKA DIVINE LITURGY, 8:00 AM</td>
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<td>CHRISTMAS COOKIE WALK, 9:00 AM-12:00 pm</td>
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<td>RUSSIAN CONFESSIONS, 9:00 AM SLAVONIC LITURGY, 10 AM</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>WOMEN’S READING GROUP, 10:00 AM</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>DAILY VESPERS, 6:30 PM ADULT FAITH FORUM</td>
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<td>Eritrean Service, 8:00 AM COFFEE CHAT, 10:00 AM</td>
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<td>EVE OF THE NATIVITY LITURGY/vespers, 9:00 AM</td>
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<td>WOMEN’S READING GROUP, 10:00 AM</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>CIRCUMCISION OF THE LORD DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM</td>
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December 13, 2013 marks the thirtieth anniversary of the repose of Father Alexander Schmemann: friend, father, confessor and teacher of generations of pastors. He was 63 when he died and a great hole was left in the hearts of those of us who know and love him. The following was written not even a year after Father Alexander’s death by Father Thomas Hopko, who besides being a theologian is Father Alexander’s son-in-law. These beautiful words have not lost their power and meaning over the years. They continue to comfort me. May the memory of His faithful servant and teacher, the Protopresbyter Alexander, be eternal!

Father John

From all parts of the Church, from all parts of the world, we have heard the same lament in the last ten months: How powerfully we experience the absence of Father Alexander! How strongly we sense the great void in our lives! How deeply we feel ourselves lonely, unprotected and exposed! When Father was alive we often went to him for encouragement and advice. Sometimes we went for no particular reason, but just to see him and talk, and to receive some reaction or reassurance about something or another. And sometimes we didn’t even call or go because it was enough for us to know that he was there and could be reached when things got too bad, or too unbearable, or too far out of hand. But now he is gone. And though we sense his spiritual presence everywhere and in everything, particularly at the altar – and most particularly in the seminary chapel with the marvelous new frescoe of the Eucharist which so magnificently expresses Father’s faith and vision of Christ and the Church – we mourn his physical absence, and the comforting strength and support which he always so surely and powerfully provided. How appropriate are Christ’s words about John the Baptist when we try to express our feelings about Father Alexander: “He was a burning and shining light, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light” (John 5:35).

A Timely Death

Father Alexander’s death has been called “untimely,” and in a human sense it was. As Archbishop Iakovos said on the CBS television tribute, “He was taken from us much earlier than we thought.” Yet he was taken from us by God, and in this sense his death was certainly “timely.” With God there are no accidents, and every moment is the right one for everything, including one’s death. It was God’s will, which always works with our human freedom which we can use for good and for ill, that Father Alexander should leave us when he did. The Lord does not want his creatures to die. We die because
of our sins. But when and how we die is still in God’s hands, to be accomplished according to His will. As we search for the meaning of Father’s parting from us, edified and strengthened by the beautiful way in which he was enabled to transform his death into a victory of life, we can find it in the simple conviction that he finished what he was given to do upon this earth and is now called to work among us from heaven.

A Word of God

In reading the book of Archimandrite Vasileios, the abbot of Stavronikita monastery on Mount Athos, called Hymn of Entry (SVS Press, 1984), a quotation of Saint Ignatius of Antioch struck me as the perfect “word” to give meaning to Father Alexander’s passing. The holy bishop was on his way from Antioch to Rome where he was to face execution for being a Christian. He writes a letter to his friends in the city asking them not to interfere with his approaching death, for he desires to give his life for the Lord. In this letter to the Romans he writes: For if you hear my voice no more; I shall become a Word of God; but if you are in love with my bodily existence, I shall be merely an echo (Rom 2:1).

Father Alexander did not die a martyr’s death in the strict sense of the word as Saint Ignatius did, but his life and his death were those of a martyr in the original sense of the term – which literally means witness. Father Alexander was a witness to the presence and power of God in the life of the Church and in the life of God’s people. He was a witness to the Kingdom of God defined by Saint Paul, in what was surely Father’s favorite and most-quoted scriptural passage, as “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 14:17).

Father bore witness to Christ and the Kingdom of God. And like every Christian witness, his testimony was finalized in his death. However holy a person may be, however eloquent in speech and articulate in expression, however powerful in action and fruitful in deeds, while he remains alive in this world, on this side of eternity, he is “merely an echo” of God, a voice crying in the wilderness of the fallen world about the beauty and glory of the kingdom to come. But when a person dies and departs to be with Christ, he is not “unclothed,” as the Apostle Paul has told us, but he is “further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life,” it becomes a “Word of God.”

No Longer An Echo

In his dying, Father Alexander has become a Word of God for us. He has become finally and forever his real and true self. He has become who he eternally is, and was called by God to be from before the foundation of the world. If we are in love with Father’s temporal being, if we love his bodily existence, if we lament his passing and long for his earthly voice – however beautiful and comforting, strong and encouraging, instructive and inspiring it has been in preaching and teaching, in liturgical prayer and personal conversation – we remain in love with “merely an echo.” But if we hear Father’s voice no more and learn to commune with him as he now is in his eternal condi-
tion of glory with Christ in God, then we will come to know him as a Word of God given to us by the Lord not merely to be heard and obeyed, but to be personally encountered in the Spirit as “living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Heb. 4:12).

We receive a new relationship with Father Alexander in his death, and deeper and fuller and richer communion. We are given now to know him as a completed person, a perfected image of God purged of all of the faults and frailties which were his in the days of his flesh. We are now blessed to know him alive in eternal life, fully graced with the glory of God, wholly enlightened with the Light of the Day without evening of the kingdom of heaven, which Light is the Lord Christ Himself.

How sad it would be for us now to long for the echo when we have finally been given the Word.

Fr. Thomas Hopko
The Orthodox Church
December 1984

FEASTDAYS
In December, we celebrate the following feastdays. Please join us!

St. Nicholas, Archbishop of Myra
December 6
Divine Liturgy, 8:00 AM (Fri)

St. Herman of Alaska
30th Anniversary of the Repose of Fr. Alexander Schemann
December 13
Divine Liturgy, 8:00 AM (Fri)

Eve of the Nativity of Christ (Strict Fast Day)
December 24
Vespers/Liturgy, 9:00 AM (TUE)

THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD
December 25
Vigil Service, 6:30 PM (TUES)
Divine Liturgy, 9:00 AM (Wed)

NATIVITY FAST
The Nativity Fast continues and ends with our celebration on December 25. All regular communicants should take the time during this holy season to come to the Sacrament of Confession. Father will hear confessions on Saturdays after Vespers and by appointment.

FAST FREE PERIOD
The days following the Nativity of the Lord (December 25) until January 4 are fast-free days in the Orthodox Church. The Eve of Theophany (January 5) is a fast day.

TRAVELS
Fr. John will be away on personal time off from November 25-December 4. If you need a priest when Father is away, please call Ginny Hood (526-4428) and she will coordinate an appropriate local response. Father Aurel Sas will be serving for Fr. John the weekend of November 30-December 1. Please welcome him warmly!

Father will also be in San Francisco for the meetings of the Bishop’s Advisory Committee and the Diocesan Council on December 10-11.

ANNUAL MEETING
The annual parish meeting will be held on Sunday, December 8th, following liturgy and a brief coffee hour. All voting members of the parish are asked to make every effort to be present!

A voting member of the parish is one who: 1) is at least eighteen (18) years of age; 2) has been a member of the parish for the past twelve consecutive months; 3) has participated in the Sacraments of Confession and Holy Communion regularly, but at least once in the past year; and; 4) has a signed financial pledge form on file with the office.

CHOIR REHEARSALS
All choir members are reminded that there are two scheduled rehearsals in December. Rehearsals will be held after Vespers on December 7 and December 14. If you might be interested in singing, see Matushka Elizabeth.

SLAVONIC LITURGY
Father Alexander will be here on the normal second Saturday of the month (December 14). Russian Confessions begin at 9:00 AM, followed by Slavonic Divine Liturgy at 10:00 AM.

CHRISTMAS COOKIE WALK
The second annual Christmas Cookie Walk Sale will take place on Saturday, December 14, 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM (noon). Bakers are going to be asked to make plenty of goodies, so you may want to start early. Tanya Riley is chairing the effort and if you are contacted to bake, please help! If you are not contacted, please seek out Tanya (775-513-9457) to offer your help. Let’s make this successful!

CHURCH CLEAN-UP
Our semi-annual general church
clean-up in anticipation of Christ-mas, will take place on Saturday, December 21st, beginning at 9:00 AM. We need some muscle and elbow grease to get our temple shiny and bright for the feast. Please join us and offer a couple of hours of stewardship to glorify God!

**HOUSE BLESSINGS**
Father John will begin the annual schedule of house blessings following the liturgy of the Feast of Theophany on January 6. A sign-up list will be available in the vestibule of the church for those who wish to request a visit. Please sign up and Father will determine a schedule and contact each family with a date and time.

**CHILI COOKOFF**
Mark your calendars! Our first annual St. Paul’s Great Chili Cookoff will be held after Vespers on Saturday, January 18, 2014. More details will be forthcoming, but Chef Extraordinaire Father John Bruchok will welcome all challengers as pots and spoons cross swords in our church hall and kitchen!

**2014 BENEFIT DINNER**
Our annual Benefit Dinner (not held in 2013 because of the 25th anniversary celebration), will be scheduled for February 23, 2014 at the Sunset Gardens. Tickets will be $100. Dinner, dancing and a silent auction will benefit the Capital Fund of the parish. Start planning to attend now, and if you have possible silent auction items, please see Pam Campbell or Eve Kaganovitch.

**COFFEE CHAT**
We meet on Thursdays, at 10:00 AM. We have gone back to our usual Badger Cafe at the corner of Tropicana and Spencer.

**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.

**SACRAMENTS/SPECIAL SERVICES**
Please follow these guidelines.
• **Baptisms.** A personal meeting scheduled with Fr. John will be necessary to schedule any baptism requested.
• **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 be served on Saturday. Other requests will be met as pastorally possible.

**PARISH COUNCIL SYNOPSIS**
November 19, 2013 Meeting

Rector’s Report:
Father John reminded the council that he will be away visiting family for Thanksgiving.
Also, he will be in San Francisco for the meeting of the Bishop’s Advisory Council and the Diocesan Council, December 10-11.

**Vice President:** Laura graciously informed the council that she will be stepping down from her duties as Vice President and on the Parish Council with the election of the new council at the Annual Parish Meeting.

**Treasurer’s Report:** Karen Short reported that we owe $10,000.00 in back assessments. We will owe $12,000.00 by the end of the year. We are current on all other bills. It is a matter of timing on how they are paid.

- **Change of Banks:** All accounts have been switched over to Wells Fargo. Father John thanked Karen for her hard work and diligence during this process.
- **Capital Fund:** $3,500.00
- **Rainy Day:** $4,500.00
- **Icon Fund:** $7,500.00

Income for October was $14,361.69, with expenses of $17,029.39 for a deficit of $2,667.70.

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<th>YTD 2013</th>
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<td>2013 YTD Inc</td>
<td>$168,109.22</td>
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<tr>
<td>2013 YTD Exp</td>
<td>$180,335.53</td>
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<td><strong>Exp over Inc</strong></td>
<td><strong>$12,226.31</strong></td>
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**Buildings and Grounds:**
- **Pigeons:** Kevin had heard if you kill a few pigeons and leave them out the other pigeons will leave. So he tried that to no avail. He will come Saturday, November 23rd and clean the bell tower and net the tower. Hopefully this will take care of the problem.
- **Grounds:** Someone is illegally dumping by our dumpster. Nikolai is graciously coming and cleaning the area and removing the extra debris. This is not an unusual problem.
- **Roof:** The parish council received a proposal for roof repair for the church and the hall from The Original Roofing Company for $17,400.00. This is something to be filed away at this time.

**Church School/Youth:** No report.

**Charity:** The Feeding of the Homeless on November 16th went well. There were not as many volunteers this time, but the lunches did get made. About 200 lunches were distributed. The total spent was $86.36, leaving a total of $35.37 for the next feeding. Next date is January 25, 2014.

A suggestion was made about looking into helping other charitable organizations. The problem is we would have to work on their time line. Father John suggested possibly cutting the Homeless project to 4 times a year instead of 5. On this last outing there was another group doing the same thing and the homeless people are being moved making it difficult to find them. We will reevaluate after the next feeding.

**Eritrean/Ethiopian:** No report.

**Fellowship:**
- **Oktoberfest:** Was very successful. They raised $810.00 dollars. The only problem was that they ran out of bratwurst. David Poe and his band did a great job as a German band.
- **Cookie Walk:** Tanya Riley has over a dozen people signed up to bake. She is advertising on Facebook and will be placing posters in prominent places around the valley. The event takes place on Saturday, December 14th from 9am-12 noon.

**Outreach/Website:**
- **Reconnecting with Lapsed:** This is a program Father John has begun in which he is reconnecting with parishioner’s he has not seen in awhile. He is also going to be reaching out to more of our seniors in the parish community, who may be having a problem getting to church.

**Russian:** Father Alexander’s November visit did happen.

**Stewardship:** Pledges are due by December 1st.

### OLD BUSINESS

**Bell Tower:** Will be cleaned on Saturday, November 23rd. The door handle was broken on the tower door and had to be removed by the hinges. It is an interior door and will need to be replaced eventually.

### NEW BUSINESS

**Annual Meeting December 8:**
- **Treasurer/Financial Secretary:** Joe Wheeler has begun to work with Karen. His job at this time is accounting for the money. He will be counting the money after the services, posting and depositing. Karen will be receiving the money and paying the bills.
- **Budget Committee:** The balanced budget of $220,518.00 for 2014 was distributed to the parish council members for review. It was moved, seconded and passed unanimously to present the budget to the Annual Parish Meeting.
- **Nominating Committee:** A full slate for the proposed 2014
Parish Council was distributed. Nominations from the floor at the meeting will be accepted.

**Mission Request:** A member from the new ROCOR Mission approached Father John with two questions. 1. Would we publicize their upcoming Christmas party? 2. Donate our two candelabras? Following discussion, the council unanimously declined both requests. The candelabras will be offered to a mission of the OCA.

**Next Meeting:** Tuesday, December 17, 2013, 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

**ON THE NATIVITY**

**St. Peter Chrysologos**

The birth of Christ stems not from necessity but from the power of God...It is the sacrament of His love and reestablishes the salvation of men.

He who caused man to be born of a virgin earth, through His own birth, caused a man to be born of an inviolate body. The hand which has taken earth to fashion us has willed to take on flesh itself in order to renew us. The fact that the Creator is in the creature and God in the flesh constitutes an honor for the creature without any dishonor to the Creator.

O man, why do you have such little value in your own eyes, you who have so much value in God’s eyes? Why do you seek to discover from what matter you came forth and fail to search out the meaning of your existence? Has not the entire dwelling of the world which you see been established for you? It is for you that the light dispels the darkness surrounding you, tempering the night and measuring the day.

It is for you also that the sky is made radiant by the varying brightness of the sun, moon, and stars. It is for you that the earth is adorned with flowers, forests, and fruits. It is for you that the astonishing multiplicity of living creatures in the air, in the field, and in the beautiful water was created.

Yet the Creator discovers how to give you even greater glory. He impresses His image on you so that this visible image might manifest to the earth the presence of the Invisible Creator. And He has given you His place in this earthly world so that the vast domain of this world might not be deprived of a representative of the Lord....And what God has done in you by His power He has been good enough to take on Himself. He has willed to manifest Himself truly in man in whom until then he had appeared only in image. He had granted man the power to be in reality something that he was previously only in image....

For this purpose, Christ took on childhood and accepted to be fed. He entered time in order to inaugurate the only perfect age, the age which lasts, the age which He Himself had made. He bears man up so that man might no longer fall away. He causes the one whom He made a terrestrial being to become a celestial one, and He grants the life of the Spirit of God to the one whom a human spirit had animated.

So utterly does He transport him to God that there remains no trace of any sin, death, pain, sorrow, or purely earthly thing that was in him. This takes place through our Lord Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, for He is God, now and ever and unto the immortality of the ages. Amen.

**CHRIST IS BORN!!**

**GLORIFY HIM!!**