

THE MESSENGER

The Monthly Newsletter of St. Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church
SEPTEMBER 2014



Nativity of the Theotokos — September 8

MARK THE DATES

September 1: Labor Day

September 3: ADULT FAITH FORUM RESUMES (Vespers 6:30 PM)

September 7: Welcome Back Church School Picnic follows Liturgy and Vespers

September 8: NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS, Divine Liturgy, 8:00 AM

September 13: Russian Confessions, 9:00 AM; Slavonic Liturgy, 10:00 AM

September 14: EXALTATION OF THE CROSS (Fast Day) **CHURCH SCHOOL STARTS**

September 15: Parish Council Meeting, 6:00 PM

September 16-26: Father John out of town for Metropolitan Council Meeting

October 1: Protection of the Theotokos, Divine Liturgy, 8:00 AM

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

September 2014

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

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14 STRICT FAST DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM HOURS: HOOD EPISTLE: PARKER POST-COMM: DEMKO CHURCH SCHOOL ELEVATION OF THE CROSS	15 PARISH COUNCIL, 6:00 PM	16	17 FATHER JOHN OUT OF TOWN, SEPTEMBER 16-26	18 ERITREAN SERVICE, 8:00 AM NO COFFEE CHAT	19	20 GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM NO CONFESSIONS
21 DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM HOURS: DEMKO EPISTLE: HOOD POST-COMM: PARKER CHURCH SCHOOL	22 METROPOLITAN COUNCIL, SYOSSET, NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 22-25	23	24	25 ERITREAN SERVICE, 8:00 AM NO COFFEE CHAT	26	27 BAPTISM, 10:00 AM GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM CONFESSIONS
28 DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM HOURS: BROOKS EPISTLE: STRANSKY POST-COMM: RIGGS CHURCH SCHOOL	29	30	OCT 1 DIVINE LITURGY, 8:00 AM PROTECTION OF THE THEOTOKOS DAILY VESPERS, 6:30 PM ADULT FAITH FORUM	GREETERS SEPTEMBER 7: CAMPBELL/JOHNSON SEPTEMBER 14: OSBURN/MURPHY SEPTEMBER 21: MCAULEY/BRITTON SEPTEMBER 28: MASON/CONDUCTOR		



The Messenger

St. Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

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SEPTEMBER 2014

Entering the Year of Grace

Each year, at the beginning of September, the Churches of the Byzantine Rite lead their congregations into a cycle of prayers and commemorations that constitutes the 'liturgical year' or the 'church year'. What does this liturgical year mean, exactly?

One could think of the liturgical year as if it were a picture of the services and feast days during a cycle of 365 days, from September to September: in short, the liturgical year could be reduced to a practical diagram, to a calendar. The liturgical year is, in fact, expressed as a calendar, but simply to identify it with a calendar would be totally inadequate. One could also say that the purpose of the liturgical year was to bring to the minds of believers the teachings of the Gospel and the main events of Christian history in a certain order. That is true, but this educational, pedagogical, function does not exhaust the significance of the liturgical year. Perhaps we could say that its aim is to orient our prayer in a particular direction and also to provide it with an official channel

which is objective, and even, in a certain way, artistic. This, too, is true, but the liturgy is more than a way of prayer, and it is more than a magnificent lyric poem. The liturgy is a body of sacred 'signs' which, in the thought and desire of the Church, have a present effect. Each liturgical feast renews and in some sense actualizes the event of which it is the symbol; it takes this event out of the past and makes it immediate; it offers us the appropriate grace, it becomes an 'effectual sign', and we experience this efficacy to the extent that we bring to it a corresponding inclination of our soul. But still, this does not say everything. The liturgical year is, for us, a special means of union with Christ. No doubt every Eucharist unites us intimately with Christ, for in it he is 'both he who offers and who is offered', in the same way that every prayer, being the prayer of the members of the mystical body, shares in the prayer of him who is the head of the body and the only one whose prayer is perfect. But, in the liturgical year, we are called to relive the whole life of Christ: from

Christmas to Easter, from Easter to Pentecost, we are exhorted to unite ourselves to Christ in his birth and in his growth, to Christ suffering, to Christ dying, to Christ in triumph and to Christ inspiring his Church. The liturgical year forms Christ in us, from his birth to the full stature of the perfect man. According to a medieval Latin saying, the liturgical year is Christ himself, *annus est Christus*.

It is not only the commemoration of the events in the life of the Lord Jesus that forms Christ in us. In addition to the cycle of feasts that bear directly on our Lord, the liturgical year includes the cycle of feasts of the saints. These two cycles, however, should not be thought of as two strands that run parallel to, or separate from, each other, for the saints are glorified members of the body of Christ. Their sanctity is but an aspect, a shining ray of the holiness of Christ himself. To celebrate the feast of a saint is to celebrate a special grace that flows from Christ to that saint and so to us; it is to celebrate that aspect of our Lord which is

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especially evidenced by the saint, it is to enter (for our profit) into the relationship of prayer which unites that saint to Christ. It is still more. In the same way that the feasts of our Lord in a mysterious way renew the events of his life, so the feasts of the saints make their lives, their merits and their deaths mysteriously actual, in as much as they participate in the life, the merits and death of the Lord Jesus. Thus commemorations of the martyrs somehow renew the grace of their violent deaths, so that, as these were a participation in the passion of Christ, it is this passion which is relived in remembering the martyrs. The liturgical year has but one and the same object, Jesus Christ: whether we contemplate him directly, or whether we contemplate him through the members of his body.

Great graces and great spiritual opportunities are offered us during the course of the liturgical year. It provides a frame and support for Christian piety; it gives it a style which is sober and objective; it maintains a bond of unity among believers. And, above all, it communicates an inspiration, it transmits a life. One should, however, beware of excessive 'liturgicalism' which would seek to enclose prayer in ritual frames. The liturgical way is not the only way. Saints and mystics have sometimes reduced outward forms to a minimum; solitaries have done without them altogether. Liturgical life is not an end in itself; it is but a means — amongst other means — of reaching the kingdom of God which 'is within us'. Our taking part in the liturgical year is empty and illusory if the outward

cycle is not matched by an inner cycle, and if the events of Christ's life that each feast represents do not find themselves mysteriously renewed in our soul. The liturgical year acquires its true meaning to the extent that it becomes an adoration in spirit and in truth.

A Monk of the Eastern Church
The Year of Grace of the Lord
SVS Press, 1980

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Father John

FEASTDAYS

During September, we celebrate the following feastdays. Please join us!

NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS
September 8
VESPERS FOLLOWS LITURGY (SUN)
DIVINE LITURGY, 8:00 AM (MON)

EXALTATION OF THE CROSS
September 14
VESPERS/LITIYA, 5:00 PM (SAT)
DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM (SUN)
Strict Fast Day

Protection of the Theotokos
October 1
DIVINE LITURGY, 8:00 AM (WED)

FATHER AWAY

Father John will be away in September for the Fall Session of the Metropolitan Council of the OCA. Father will be away for the meeting and a few days with his family **September 16-26**. Although he will check voice mail and email while away, in an emergency you are asked to contact Ginny Hood (702-526-4428). An appropriate local response will be coordinated.

Regular weekend services will be served with Father Damian Kuolt visiting during Father's absence. **However, there are no confessions scheduled on Saturday evening.**

THANK YOU

It seems like a long time because we don't publish a newsletter in August, but a great big "Thank You!" is due everyone who helped make the visit of His Eminence, Archbishop Benjamin, a wonderful visit. I want to especially thank everyone who planned the dinner which celebrated my 35th anniversary of ordination to the Holy Priesthood. A very heartfelt and grateful thanks to those who gave me the gift of a new set of priestly vestments. I am blessed to have such a wonderful parish family.

Father John

ADULT FAITH FORUM

The Adult Faith Forum will resume on September 3, with continuing discussion/bible study about the Orthodox teachings on contemporary issues. Once again, we will have Wednesday evening Daily Vespers at 6:30 PM, followed by class.

FEEDING THE HOMELESS

Our next Feeding the Homeless project date is **Saturday, September 6th**. We gather at 10:30 AM to prepare bag lunches then go down to distribute them to the needy. Join us! If you can donate any of the items needed for the lunches (or funds to provide such), it would be appreciated.

"WELCOME BACK" PICNIC

We will have a pot-luck picnic to welcome back our Church School

students and staff, following Liturgy and Vespers on Sunday, September 7. The parish will provide hot dogs and hamburgers and the pot-luck will fill in the rest of the menu. Please join us!

SLAVONIC SERVICE

Father Alexander will be here for the regular monthly services on **September 13**. Russian Confessions will be heard Saturday at 9:00 AM, followed by the Slavonic Liturgy at 10:00 AM.

CHURCH SCHOOL

Classes resume September 14, following liturgy. We do need **substitute teachers**, so if you can volunteer, please see Christina Sas or Amy McAuley. Church School registration is continuing in the church hall.

Qualifications to teach: you must be an active, communing Orthodox Christian at least 18 years of age, setting a good example for our children. You must have been a member of the parish for at least 12 months. You must undergo a criminal background check if one has not been done before. You must be willing to be regularly present each Sunday for classes.

COOKING CLUB

The next meeting of St. Paul's Cooking Club will meet on a date to be announced for early-mid October. Matushka Liz will lead the class in the art of making piroghi. Everyone interested is welcome to attend.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

We have established a goal of **\$60,000** to fund needed projects to maintain and repair our aging infrastructure. We ask everyone to consider a special donation to

this fund, above and beyond your normal contributions for the support of the parish.

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!

ORTHODOX VENDORS

We have established a list of businesses that our parish uses or are owned and operated by Orthodox Christians (some parishioners). We provide this information for you to consider if you need services.

Amco Plumbing
Howard Powell
(702) 839-1286

CB Air Conditioning
Cedomir Blagojevic
(702) 493-0295

Dolphin Court Salon & Day Spa
7581 W. Lake Mead Blvd.
(702) 946-6000

Nina Grozav, Realtor
bnv7777@gmail.com
(702) 521-0208
speaks Russian and Romanian

Kyklos Café (Greek food)
Galleria Mall
Sophocles Frangakis
(702) 450-1515

XpressPro (auto repair)
3190 E. Sunset Rd.
Bruce & Svetlana Balasky
(702) 815-0444

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 AUGUST 19, 2014 MEETING

Rector's Report:

Expressed thanks to all the parishioners of St. Paul's for their wholehearted participation in Archbishop Benjamin's visit to the parish on June 28-29. He also thanked everyone for the wonderful celebration of his ordina-

tion anniversary and the gift given.

Fr. John informed the council of his anticipated absences from the parish: August 21-26 for goddaughter's wedding in Michigan – Fr. Michael Molloy serving; August 28 for the Diocesan Finance Committee; east coast third week of September for the OCA Metropolitan Council meeting and a short visit with family – Fr. Damien Kuolt serving.

Fr. John announced Caryn Wheeler is now in charge of the parish bookstore. Fr. John has the key to the bookstore and Ginny Hood is able to assist with sales in either location. Joe Wheeler suggested creating a special visitor's desk in the vestibule; it will be considered for possible future action.

Fr. John informed the council that the Life Giving Spring Retreat Center is up for sale again. There are legal complications due to the previous purchaser's breaching the purchase contract and not maintaining the property. An adventure "wellness" company is currently considering purchase. This matter does not directly involve the parish; it is informational only.

Fr. John reports there are five potential adult catechumens with a possible sixth planning to start Orthodox classes. There are three potential children also, who will be chrismated along with their parents should the time come.

The date of the next parish council meeting will be changed from Tuesday, September 16 to Monday, September 15, due to Fr. John's absence in Syosset for the Metropolitan Council meeting. Parish council members ap-

proved.

Vice President: Reported that Pam Campbell prefers not to coordinate another Gourmet Dinner in 2015. She suggested other fundraising venues including an Octoberfest and/or Silent Auction with spaghetti dinner. Suggested that the Fellowship Committee should handle this. Two volunteer replacements have already been found.

Treasurer's Report: Karen Short reported on our financials.

Capital Fund: \$784.33

Rainy Day: \$8,005.38

Icon Fund: \$7,049.78

Income for June was \$21,165.83, with expenses of \$18,369.50 for a surplus of \$2,796.33.

Income for July was \$13,017.37, with expenses of \$18,003.54 for a **deficit of \$4,986.17.**

YTD 2014 (Jan-Jul)

2014 Inc \$ 150,895.95

2014 Exp \$ 128,412.38

Inc over Exp \$ 22,483.57

The changes in health insurance and housing allowance approved in June have been implemented. The 2014 YTD will reflect these changes and we will put the changes into the 2015 budget.

(The net is a savings to the parish of \$127.80 per month, or \$1533.60 annually.)

Discussion ensued regarding the financial implications of church-owned palm tree damage to the cement block wall of a neighbor's property. Joe Wheeler reviewed the parish's property insurance and suggested the possibility of making a claim on our own insurance to repair the damage. All church property should

be videoed for future reference or claims.

Fr. John clarified procedures to be followed for handling Sunday church collections in the event it cannot be immediately counted. The entire collection must be put immediately into the safe in the church office that day. None of the collection may leave the church property until it has been accounted for.

Buildings and Grounds:

Parking lot repaving is complete. Currently researching various styles of barrier gates to close off the church balcony to children's access.

Palm tree removal: Kevin obtained an estimate from Par 3 Landscape & Maintenance Inc. (See attached proposal) for tree removal from the rear of parish property. A parish family has agreed to a generous donation which will cover the whole cost. James Brophy moved and Cathy Wilkalis seconded that we hire Par 3 to remove the palm trees rather than attempt to do the work with parish volunteer labor. Motion carried unanimously. The donation will be credited to the Capital Fund. \$2600 of this will serve as the initial (33%) deposit.

Wall damage: extent will not be known until trees are removed. Parish may need to pay for repair. Also will need to ascertain if the drainage culvert running underneath the palm tree area has been damaged by tree roots since this may be causing water leaks onto neighbor's property that they also have been complaining about. Kevin will evaluate these two latter items.

Bell Tower: permit for fixes is approved, will be good for 6

months, then we have 6 more months to do the work. Kevin estimates he can do the work himself for \$3000 total. (See attached proposal from XL Steel). Architect's Proposal costs \$1800, which is to be donated back to the parish.

Lock on parish office door is broken. Fr. John will take care of this on his return. In the meantime lock only the deadbolt, not the handle.

New water heater in sacristy would cost \$300. It was determined a coffee pot will serve just as well.

Charity: Next feeding of the homeless will be on Saturday, Sept. 6, at 10:00 AM. The amount in the budget is currently \$291.35

Church School/Youth:

Church school youth met at Fr. John's house for swim and social on Sunday, August 10. They assembled bags of school supplies for refugee children in Syria, for a project sponsored by IOCC. Thank you to all who contributed money, school supplies, and to the women of our parish and from other churches who helped in sewing 50 cloth bags, and all the children and adults who decorated the bags, transforming each into a unique gift for a needy child. Joe Wheeler reports that all of the bags have been sent to IOCC headquarters in Baltimore. Fr. John suggested our church school take what it needs of any leftover school supplies, and the remainder donated to the "Stuff the Bus" project for needy kids in Las Vegas.

A kick-off cookout for the start of Church School will be

held on Sunday, September 7. Sign-up potluck and hotdogs and hamburgers will be served for coffee hour. Church School classes start on September 14. Adult classes will resume on Wednesday, September 3, preceded by Vespers.

Eritrean/Ethiopian: no report.

Fellowship:

Two new members have joined the Fellowship Committee. They are Steve Tanksley and Devin Athanasius Green. There will be a total of 5, possibly 6 on the fellowship committee.

Oktoberfest will be planned for late October or early November.

Outreach/Website: no report.

Russian: Fr. Alexander is expected to be here for Russian Liturgy in September.

Stewardship: Stewardship Month will commence in October. Our normal instruction, sermons and exhortations will coincide with the distribution of 2015 Pledge Forms.

OLD BUSINESS

Bell Tower: Addressed under "Buildings and Grounds"

Replacement on Parish Council: Joe Bowman has moved, leaving a vacancy on the parish council. It is only 3 months away from December nominations, and his position expires in December, so the council agreed that this position will remain open until then.

NEW BUSINESS

Diocesan Assembly: The Diocese of the West's Diocesan Assembly will meet at Ss. Peter and Paul Orthodox Church in Phoenix on 7–9 October. Cathy Wilkalis was nominated as the primary Lay delegate, and James Brophy as the alternate. Both positions nominated by Ginny Hood, and seconded by Karen Short. Carried unanimously.

Next Meeting: Monday, September 15, 2014, 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 SEPTEMBER

Oscar Thomas Abdoulah
September 3, 2001

John Vukmanovich
September 9, 2006

Milana Popovich
September 10, 1998

Darinka Janjic
September 12, 1994

Lucian Stefanescu
September 14, 1999

Theodore Shimsky
September 15, 2002

Dawit Kahassai
September 16, 2001

Yekaalo Gebremeskel
September 16, 2010

Tatiana Paul
September 17, 2003

Ruslan Zhgenti
September 17, 2010

Christina Manteris
September 25, 1992

Valentina Petrovna Demchenko
September 25, 2001

Norman Daniel Kuka
September 26, 2001

ON THE NATIVITY OF MARY FR ALEXANDER SCHMEMANN

The Church's veneration of Mary has always been rooted in her obedience to God, her willing choice to accept a humanly impossible calling. The Orthodox Church has always emphasized Mary's connection to humanity and delighted in her as the best, purest, most sublime fruition of human history and of man's quest for God, for ultimate meaning, for ultimate content of human life.

If in Western Christianity veneration of Mary was centered upon her perpetual virginity, the heart of Orthodox Christian East's devotion, contemplation, and joyful delight has always been her Motherhood, her flesh and blood connection to Jesus Christ. The East rejoices that the human role in the divine plan is pivotal. The Son of God comes to earth, appears in order to redeem the world, He becomes human to incorporate man into His divine vocation, but humanity takes part in this. If it is understood that Christ's "co-nature" with us is as a human being and not some phantom or bodiless apparition, that He is one of us and forever united to us through His and forever united to us through His humanity, then devotion to Mary also becomes understandable, for she is the one who gave Him His human nature, His flesh and blood. She is the one through whom Christ can always call Himself "The Son of Man."

Son of God, Son of Man...God descending and becoming man so that man could become divine, could become partaker of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4), or as the teachers of Church expressed it, "deified." Precisely here, in this extraordinary revelation of man's authentic nature and calling, is the source that gratitude and tenderness which cherishes Mary as our link to Christ and, in Him, to God. And nowhere is this reflected more clearly than in the Nativity of the Mother of God.

Nothing about this event is mentioned anywhere in the Holy Scriptures. But why should there be? Is there anything remarkable, anything especially unique about the normal birth of a child, a birth like any other? The Church began to commemorate the event with a special feast...because, on the contrary, the very fact that it is routine discloses something fresh and radiant about everything we call routine and ordinary, it gives new depth to the unremarkable details of human life...And with each birth the world is itself in some sense created anew and given as a gift to this new human being to be his life, his path, his creation.

This feast therefore is first a general celebration of Man's birth, and we no longer remember the anguish, as the Gospel says, "for joy that a human being is born into the world" (Jn. 16:21). Secondly, we now know whose particular birth, whose coming we celebrate: Mary's. We know the uniqueness, the beauty, the grace of precisely this child, her destiny, her meaning for us and for the whole world. And thirdly, we celebrate all who prepared the way for Mary, who contributed to her inheritance of grace and beauty...And therefore the Feast of her Nativity is also a celebration of human history, a celebration of faith in man, a celebration of man.

Sadly, the inheritance of evil is far more visible and better known. There is so much evil around us that this faith in man, in his freedom, in the possibility of handing down a radiant inheritance of goodness has almost evaporated and been replaced by cynicism and suspicion. This hostile cynicism and discouraging suspicion are precisely what seduce us to distance ourselves from the Church when it celebrates with such joy and faith this birth of a little girl in whom are concentrated all the goodness, spiritual beauty, harmony and perfection that are elements of genuine human nature. Thus, in celebrating Mary's birth we find ourselves already on the road to Bethlehem, moving toward the joyful mystery of Mary as the Mother to God.