



# Crossroads

The Monthly Newsletter of the Orthodox Church of the Holy Cross

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11 Wilkins Station Road - Box 805 - Medford, NJ 08055

Rectory Phone: 856-665-2491 - Fr. John's Cell Phone: 609-315-2894 - Email: [frjs@aol.com](mailto:frjs@aol.com)

[www.holycrossmedford.org](http://www.holycrossmedford.org)

**December, 2009**

## **Giving Thanks for Everyone and Everything**

from Fr. John

I came to St. Vladimir's Seminary in the fall of 1972, having finished high school in the spring. At the time the school had a pre-theological program that allowed men and women while living at the Seminary to do their undergraduate studies at local colleges. In the early days when St. Vladimir's was located in the upper West Side of Manhattan that meant the possibilities of studying at Columbia or Fordham. I began at Iona College in New Rochelle and eventually transferred to Concordia College in Bronxville where I was able to study music. Upon graduation in 1976, I moved on to the Master's Program at the Seminary, eventually graduating in 1980, using the time between 1978-79 as a kind of study abroad year in Old Harbor, Alaska.

We may sometimes think of the times we grew up, the places we may have lived, or the music played during our formative years as the best. I'm not sure about all of that, but it may be argued that the decade of the 1970's represented a kind of golden era for St. Vladimir's – it certainly was for me. It would be the last full decade that theologians like Frs. Alexander Schmemmann and John Meyendorff would be working together for the Church broadly speaking and teaching at St. Vladimir's – the two efforts of Church and school were always common efforts, joys, and concerns for them. I had the opportunity of studying with them both over that time and working closely with Fr. Alexander during the three years I coordinated the materials for the liturgical services as the ecclesiarch and as the advisor for my graduation thesis (which was a study of reports prepared by the bishops of the Russian Church in 1906 regarding their thoughts about liturgical reform – my interest in this subject began after reading an article by him entitled, “On the Question of Liturgical Practices: A Letter to My Bishop” written in 1973 – you can read it at: [http://jacwell.org/Supplements/liturgical\\_practices.htm](http://jacwell.org/Supplements/liturgical_practices.htm) ). I ended up studying Russian well enough to plow through the untranslated original documents, being aided by a fellow student Larissa Volkonsky – now, with her husband Richard Pevear, recognized as perhaps the best professional translators of Russian literature. Their version of *Anna Karenina* was included in Oprah Winfrey's book list).

Fr. Alexander was the strong, charismatic, and joyful leader of the school. Despite the pressures no doubt raised by financial necessity and administrative frustration he had a

wonderful sense of humor and was often radiant – especially on feast days. After services it would be common to hear him singing down the hall. Once during Holy Week, I passed him by and he asked if I was aware of a certain poem about Mary Magdalene written by Boris Pasternak. While his classes on liturgical theology were very influential upon me and generations of students, I was particularly moved by his presentations on “The Church and Russian Literature.” He knew many of the texts by heart and the writers – from the inside out. He graded them for their knowledge of our worship – Chekhov got the “A.”

Father Alexander Schmemmann celebrated the divine liturgy for the last time on Thanksgiving Day, 1983 – a few weeks before his death on December 13. This was particularly appropriate since he had devoted his whole life to teaching, writing and preaching about the Eucharist; for the word *eucharist* in Greek means thanksgiving. At the conclusion of the liturgy, Father Alexander took from his pocket a short written sermon, in the form of a prayer, which he proceeded to read. This was a strange occurrence since Father never wrote his liturgical homilies, but delivered them extemporaneously. These were his words, which proved to be the last ever spoken by him from the ambo in Church.

### **Thank You, O Lord!**

Everyone capable of thanksgiving is capable of salvation and eternal joy.

Thank You, O Lord, for having accepted this Eucharist, which we offered to the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and which filled our hearts with the joy, peace and righteousness of the Holy Spirit.

Thank You, O Lord, for having revealed Yourself unto us and given us the foretaste of Your Kingdom.

Thank You, O Lord, for having united us to one another in serving You and Your Holy Church.

Thank You, O Lord, for having helped us to overcome all difficulties, tensions, passions, temptations and restored peace, mutual love and joy in sharing the communion of the Holy Spirit.

Thank You, O Lord, for the sufferings You bestowed upon us, for they are purifying us from selfishness and reminding us of the "one thing needed;" Your eternal Kingdom.

Thank You, O Lord, for having given us this country where we are free to Worship You.

Thank You, O Lord, for this school, where the name of God is proclaimed.

Thank You, O Lord, for our families: husbands, wives and, especially, children who teach us how to celebrate Your holy Name in joy, movement and holy noise.

Thank You, O Lord, for everyone and everything.

Great are You, O Lord, and marvelous are Your deeds, and no word is sufficient to celebrate Your miracles. Lord, it is good to be here! Amen.

### **UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS**

- **COMMUNITY LUNCHEON – SATURDAY DECEMBER 5 - 9AM**
- **ST. HELENA’S GUILD MEETING – SUNDAY DECEMBER 6, following the Liturgy**
- **INREACH/OUTREACH MEETING – SUNDAY DECEMBER 13 after the Liturgy**
- **PARISH COUNCIL MEETING – MONDAY DECEMBER 14 at 7 PM.**
- **CHURCH SCHOOL CHRISTMAS PROGRAM – SUNDAY DECEMBER 20, following the Divine Liturgy**

**CROSS WORDS** - is Fr. John’s weekly email message that will include a reflection and information about various parish activities. A printed version of it will be available on Sundays, as part of weekly bulletin.

**CROSSROADS** – will be available on the **last Sunday of each month**. ALL material for inclusion needs to be received by Fr. John (ideally by email: [frjs@aol.com](mailto:frjs@aol.com)) the Sunday before. So, the **January, 2010** edition will come out on **December 27**, ALL material must be received by **SUNDAY December 20** or there is no guarantee it will be included.

**STOCKINGS FOR COVENANT HOUSE:** We will be collecting boys & girls toiletry items. When asked how many would be needed, Fr. Siniari said – “We could use 50.”

**PARISH CHRISTMAS CARD:** **Wally Loza** will be our coordinator. Forms are included in this Crossroads – page 8, will be sent out by email, are at the church. The deadline will be **December 13**.

**CONFESSIONS DURING ADVENT:** All parishioners are encouraged to take advantage of this Sacrament of Healing and Reconciliation. Confessions will be heard from 9:15 until 9:55 on Sunday mornings, after Great Vespers on Saturday evenings, and on Saturdays December 12 & 19 from 4:00 – 5:00, before Great Vespers.. Other times can be arranged.

**ADVENT VESPERS** will be celebrated at our parish on **Sunday December 6**, beginning with a special *Choral Prelude* at 6:30. The service will begin at 7:00 and will feature a homily by **Professor George Parsenios**, Associate Professor New Testament from Princeton Seminary and a graduate of Holy Cross Orthodox Seminary and Yale University.

**MUGS:** Our Inreach Committee has recommended that we begin utilizing ceramic mugs rather than Styrofoam cups. We are asking all parishioners to bring and donate any extra, normal-sized mugs. Special washing teams have been set up to take care of clean-up so it

will not be the responsibility of those who have coffee hour. As soon as we have an adequate amount we will begin making them available. The Parish Council approved this recommendation at its November Meeting and will review its success.

**MEMORY ETERNAL – JULIE GRIMES:** Julie, who fell asleep in the Lord on Wednesday November 25, was among the founders of our parish. Her dedication, energy, and commitment to our community

### **FROM CHRISTINA SEMON:**

Hello Everyone!

Doamne Ajuta!

I wanted to share with all of you some events that took place. Before you read below, I ask for your continued prayers. Happy Thanksgiving to all of you! I give thanks to God for our teamwork and your support!

St. Dimitrie the New of Basarabov 12-13th century

October 27, 2009

The weather was overcast and rainy. However that did not stop the staff at the St. Dimitrie Center to honor their patron saint. It was the name's day of the St. Dimitrie Center. I went to the open house. They received a troitsa, which is a two bar cross that they planted in their modest courtyard. One of the hierarchs from the diocese of Cluj did come to bless it. The patients and the guests were together praying during the service to bless the troitsa. After the service the hierarch gave a speech. Then following after the speech we all enjoyed the agape meal. I did not have a big part in this event but I volunteered to pick up the food for the agape meal and helped to clean up the place after the guest left.

Our last meeting of the mother's group was about filling empty stomachs. At one of the Wednesday meetings a mother expressed how she would really be happy if she could have a sandwich to eat. The Protection of the Theotokos Family Center (PTFC) wanted to give some happiness to the mother and so they began to look for a sponsor to bring in food for the next meeting. I volunteered to bring in food for sandwiches. I also experimented in baking banana bread for dessert.

When it came to the Wednesday mother's meeting, it was also a birthday of one of the boys. So we did not have a regular meeting but more of a birthday party for the little boy who turned one. I had help at the PTFC from the staff to prepare the sandwiches. Then we went down stairs to the children's area. We said Our Father and began passing around the food. I saw the mothers enjoying the sandwiches. Their little ones were making noises because they were hungry too. One of the mothers thought the banana bread was from the store.

I was grateful to serve the PTFC through giving a meal to the mothers and their children. They were all grateful for the food. There was a sense of unity and support for each other at this meeting.

On November 1st the Roman Catholics here in Cluj-Napoca, Romania have All Souls Day. Many of the Orthodox faithful like the holiday as well. What happens on this holiday is that people buy candles and flowers especially mums. They go together as a family to the cemetery to clean the graves and plant the flowers and light candles on the graves. They take this time to remember their loved ones who have passed away. There could also be a memorial service done as well. In Cluj the cemeteries are huge and on a side of a hill.

I decided to go and see what the cemetery would look like at night with all the candles lit. Some Romanians told me that the cemetery at night looks like the hill is on fire. I saw from a distance hundreds of red vigil lamps burning. I understand now why the Romanians say the hill of fire. Once I got in to the cemetery I saw some graves that looked beautiful. I saw the care and the time people took to decorate their graves. It was a sight to see! I have attached some pictures of the cemetery at night to this email.

With gratitude,  
In Christ's love,  
Christina Semon

--

OCMC Missionary to Romania  
Glory to God for all things!  
Visit the Christina's website at: [csemon.ocmc.org](http://csemon.ocmc.org)

### **COLLECTIONS DURING NOVEMBER:**

- ***EMERGENCY SERVICES*** – We will be taking financial donations at the end of the liturgies this month and also are looking for the following items:
- Cereal, canned soups & stews, rice, pasta, beans, tomato sauce, macaroni & cheese, peanut butter and jelly, tuna & canned chicken  
Toiletries, toilet paper, tooth paste, tissues, shampoo, feminine products, diapers, deodorant, and paper towels
- **STOCKINGS FOR COVENANT HOUSE:** We will be collecting boys & girls toiletry items. When asked how many would be needed, Fr. Siniari said – “We could use 50.”

**DONATIONS TO THE CHURCH:** Please note that donations, particularly of liturgical items (icons, etc) for use in our church, should be reviewed in advance with Fr. John before being brought to the church for placement.

**OUR COLLEGE STUDENTS:** **Alexander** (Abdallah),/ **Anastasia** (Shimchick), **Andrew** (Abdallah), **Antonio** (Chong), **Bryan** (Thompson), **Christine** (Lane), **Christopher** (Abdallah), **Christopher** (Shimchick), **Danielle** (Giovanni), **Matthew** (Brook), **Ethan** (Detwiler), **Gianluca** (Keeler), **Jacquelyn** (Chong), **John** (Pierman), **Joshua** (Dowiak), **Julia** (Skuby), **Katherine**

(Lane), **Kristin** (Little), **Martha** (Skuby), **Michael** (Shimchick), **Nikolas** (Tranchik), **Peter** (Abdallah), **Rachel** (Tranchik), **Stefan** (Keeler)

Be Part of our

2009

**PARISH CHRISTMAS CARD**

Your names and donation can be left at the church office or sent to:

**Wally Loza**  
229 Boxwood Lane  
Cinnaminson, NJ 08077  
(856) 829-9511

**DEADLINE: SUNDAY DECEMBER 13, 2009**

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**Parish Christmas Card 2009**

Please print clearly

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Donation: \_\_\_\_\_

# RESPONSIBILITIES for December, 2009

## COFFEE HOUR:

December 6: Rebecca Nugent  
13: Donna Woodhull  
25: Please bring Christmas Cookies  
20: Open Sunday - volunteer(s) Needed  
27: Open Sunday - volunteer(s) Needed

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## READERS

(Epistle Readers are expected also to read the "3<sup>rd</sup> Hour" which precedes the liturgy, starting around 9:50, after the adult class)

December 6: Don Dercole  
13: Diana Pasca  
20: Gene Dubiago  
27: Greg Sapnar

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## ALTAR SERVERS

December 6: Stephen Shimchick & Leo Weismantel  
13: David Hamaty & Brendan Detwiler  
20: Anatoly Lane & Eli Nugent  
25: All boys welcome  
27: Andrew Abdallah & Paul Giovanni

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## COMMUNION USHERS

December 6: Kristina Zanghi & Faye Nugent  
13: Natalia Rommen & Elisabeth Graham  
20: Sierra & Miranda McCleery  
25: Volunteers welcome  
27: Alexandra & Magdalena Plachuta

# Orthodox Church of the Holy Cross – December, 2009

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2 <b>Burlington Nursing Home 1:30</b>	3	4	5 <i>Community Luncheon: 9 AM</i>  <b>Great Vespers: 5</b>
6 <b>St. Helena's Guild Meeting</b>  Divine Liturgy – <b>10:00</b>	7	8	9 Fr. John at NJ Deanery Meeting	10	11	12  <b>Confessions 4 -5 Great Vespers: 5</b>
13 <b>Church School &amp; Adult Ed 9:15</b> Divine Liturgy <b>10:00</b> <b>Inreach Meeting</b>	14  <b>Parish Council Meeting – 7 PM</b>	15	16	17	18	19 <b>Confessions 4 -5 Great Vespers:5</b>
20 <b>Church School &amp; Adult Ed 9:15</b> Divine Liturgy <b>Christmas Program after the liturgy</b>	21	22	23	24 <b>Vesperal Liturgy for Christmas – 9 AM</b>  <b>Matins &amp; Complines – 6 PM</b>	25 <b>Christmas Liturgy 10:00</b>	26  <b>Great Vespers: 5</b>
27 <b>Church School &amp; Adult Ed</b>  Divine Liturgy <b>10:00</b>	28  <b>Fr John &amp; family will be away (12/28 – 12/30)</b>	29	30	31	1 January	2  <b>Great Vespers: 5</b>

						Saturday

