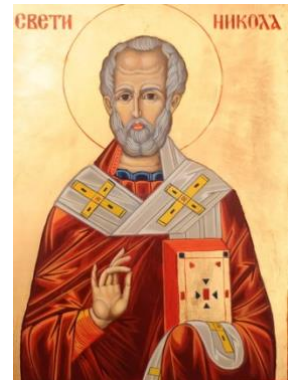


Saint John's Advent Celebrations - 2024

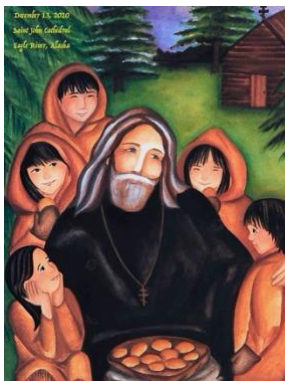
Saint Nicholas Dec. 6 - Saint Herman Dec. 13 - Saint Ignatius Dec. 20

It is important that St. John's Church family has many occasions both to pray together and to play together, especially during the dark winter months in Alaska. The commemoration of three Saints, each observed one week a part, provides an opportunity for such celebrations that have become an important part of our Advent season.

Saint Nicholas of Myra is remembered on December 6. We will celebrate this day on **Friday, December 6 at 6:15pm with Great Vespers**, a service about 45 minutes long. The earlier time will serve families better also. It is a fun custom that people leave their shoes in the basement as they come so that during Vespers Saint Nicholas might visit and fill them with a small gift. This custom comes from the story of Saint Nicholas secretly dropping a gift of gold coins through the window of a poor family and having it land in a hung stocking below.



Saint Herman of Alaska is remembered on December 13. We will celebrate this day on **Friday, December 13 at 6:15pm with the "Akathist" Hymn**. This Hymn recounts many aspects of Saint Herman's life on Kodiak and Spruce Island and his work among the native people of Alaska. There is a good amount



of congregational singing and the service lasts just over half an hour, so it is manageable for families with children. Following the singing of the Akathist Hymn we will have a cookie "exchange and giveaway" with a campfire and spiced tea and cookies to share outside. This idea is inspired by the story that Saint Herman made cookies for the native children in Kodiak. The cookies can be festive and non-fasting because the suggestion is that they can be frozen and enjoyed later during the Christmas season.

"Cookie Exchange" Details: Families are invited to bring 4-dozen holiday cookies divided into small baggies with 3 cookies each. Before the Akathist Hymn begins, these are arranged on tables set up in the Narthex, labelled with the family name and kind of cookie. After the Akathist, one member from each family can go in line along the tables and pick up a bag of cookies of each kind. (Bring your own container.) Even families who do not bring cookies should be able receive cookies to take home. Meanwhile, outside the Cathedral there will be fire-pits in the upper parking lot below the sledding hill. There will also be a table outside with hot, spiced tea and cookies to enjoy right away. Families are invited to visit outside around the fires and children can play on the sledding hill.

Saint Ignatius of Antioch is remembered on December 20. We will celebrate this day on **Friday, December 20 at 6:15pm with the Great Vespers**. Saint Ignatius was a bishop and martyr in the early Church. One legend says he was one of the children brought to Jesus and blessed by Him. This day also begins the special "Holy Week" leading up to Christmas. Beforehand the interior of the Church is decorated and families bring a poinsettia to place in front of the Icons. On December 20 we set up a simple Nativity scene on the porch of the Church.



**Come and enjoy these
Advent celebrations!**