

*Our Lady of the Sign
Byzantine Catholic Church*

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Contribute

Fr. Deacon Michael Opalka

Mr. Jon Cipyak, III & Ms. Lynn McFadden
Assistant Cantors

Ms. Susan Scotts & Mr. Mike Donegan
Parish Guild Co-Chairs

Mr. Jon Cipyak, IV & Mr. Mike Donegan
Lay Trustees

**SLAVA ISUSU CHRISTU! SLAVA NA VIKI!
GLORY TO JESUS CHRIST! GLORY FOREVER!**

LITURGY SCHEDULE

Sunday of Cheesefare

EPISTLE Romans 13: 11-14: 4
GOSPEL Matthew 6: 14-21

Sanctuary Candle:

Health & Blessing of the Parish Family

Saturday, February 14, 2026, 5:00 p.m.

For the Faithful of the Parish

Sunday, February 15, 2026, 10:00 a.m.

+Mary R. Monito
by Susan Scotts

Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

EPISTLE Genesis: 2: 20-3: 20
GOSPEL Proverbs: 3: 19-34

Friday, February 20, 2026, 6:00 p.m.

First Sunday of the Great Fast

EPISTLE Hebrews 11: 24-26 & 32-12: 2
GOSPEL John: 1: 43-51

Sanctuary Candle:

Health & Blessing of the Parish Family

Saturday, February 21, 2026, 5:00 p.m.

Savannah L. Cipyak
by Jon & Suzie Cipyak

Sunday, February 22, 2026, 10:00 a.m.

For the Faithful of the Parish

CONFESSION SCHEDULE

Fr. Martin is available to hear confession immediately following each Divine Liturgy or by scheduling an appointment in advance by contacting Fr. Martin.

ROSARY SCHEDULE

• Friday: 5:40 p.m. • Saturday: 4:40 p.m. • Sunday: 9:40 a.m.

WELCOME!

We welcome our guests and visitors, and are happy to have them join us in prayer.
If you have not officially registered in the parish, and would like to, please speak with Fred.

REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS Please continue to remember in our prayers all the needs of the parish family, the sick and suffering, those who have asked for our prayers, especially Frantisek Vavrak, Helena Huk, Nadiia Mykytiak, Angie Nemeth, Lesia, Chris Finnegan, Dan Asche, Natasha Lemeshova, Henry Zondagh and Stephen Finnegan. Let us remember the priests and bishops of the Catholic Church, those people who have been denied their basic human rights and dignity, the oppressed, the lonely, the homeless and those who suffer, and those who have no peace of mind or heart. **The prayer list is now available on our website!** Please check the list during your daily prayers for an up-to-date listing of those who are in need of our prayers.

Pastoral Message

Dear faithful parishioners, and you who have come to our church for the first time – welcome!

He began His ministry by being hungry, yet He is the Bread of Life. Jesus ended His earthly ministry by being thirsty, yet He is the Living Water. Jesus was weary, yet He is our rest. Jesus paid tribute, yet He is the King. Jesus was accused of having a demon, yet He cast out demons. Jesus wept, yet He wipes away our tears. Jesus was sold for thirty pieces of silver, yet He redeemed the world. Jesus was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, yet He is the Good Shepherd. Jesus died, yet by His death He destroyed the power of death.

By St. Gregory Nazianzus, (329-390)

Prayer of Ephrem the Syrian to the Holy Spirit

O Lord and Heavenly King, Comforter and Spirit of Truth, have pity and mercy upon me, Your sinful servant. Forgive me, though I am unworthy, and remit whatever sins I have committed against You today - both as a man and not as a man, but acting worse than an animal. Forgive my voluntary and involuntary sins, those committed knowingly and in ignorance, from my youth and knowledge of evil, and those which have arisen from insolence and despondency. Forgive me if I have cursed in Your name or have blasphemed it in my mind. Forgive me if I have reproached or cursed someone in my anger, or if I have caused grief or become angry because of something. Forgive me if I have turned away a poor person who came to me. Forgive me if I have caused my brother grief, or judged or condemned anyone. Forgive me if I have exalted myself or become angry. Forgive me if, while standing in prayer, my mind was turned to the evil of this world and I considered returning. Forgive me if I have eaten or drunk inordinately or acted foolishly. Forgive me if I have thought of evil, and have seen the good as something strange, and by this strangeness was wounded in heart. Forgive me if I have spoken dishonorably, or have laughed at the sin of my brother; for my own sins are without number. Forgive me if I have been negligent concerning prayer, or have forgotten any other evil which I have done; for I have committed all these and greater sins than these I have committed. O Master and Creator, have mercy on me, your humble and unworthy servant. Remit, pardon, and forgive me; for You are Good and the Lover of Mankind. May I, who am sinful, dissolute, and cursed, lie down in peace to sleep and rest; and I will adore, praise, and glorify Your all-honorable Name with the Father, and His only-begotten Son, now and always, and forever and ever. Amen.

In Christ,

Fr. Martin Vavrak - Pastor

Directives for the Great Fast
from the Office of the Bishop

Our Tradition is to abstain from meat after Meatfare Sunday and from dairy products after Cheesefare Sunday until Easter. The following are the minimum requirements:

1. All who receive Communion in the Eparchy of Passiac are required to abstain from meat on Wednesdays and Fridays of the Great Fast.
2. All adults who receive Communion in the Eparchy of Passaic are required to abstain from meat, eggs, and milk products on the first day of Lent, Monday, February 16, and on Great and Holy Friday, April 3.

Announcements & Reminders, continued...

SLAVIC KITCHEN If you would like to order pierogi, kielbasa, stuffed cabbage and baked goods from our sister church in Ft. Pierce, you are in luck as order forms are now available! Orders are due, with payment, by Sunday March 15, and will be available for pickup on Sunday March 22.

FLOWERS Parishioners are encouraged and should feel free to bring fresh flowers as a devotion. The wall containers placed inside the church surrounding some icons are for everyone's use.

EASTERN CATHOLIC FORMATION Are you seeking to grow closer to Christ through the beautiful liturgical and spiritual heritage of the Byzantine Catholic Church? Our Eastern Catholic Formation classes offer a transformative journey into the depths of our ancient faith. Everyone is welcome, whether you're a lifelong Byzantine Catholic or newly discovering our traditions. Contact David Wilson for more information at: 407.985.8834

GRAVE WATCH Great and Holy Friday is one of the most solemn days of the Byzantine Church. On this day, we witness our Lord willingly give His life for our sake. We watch our Lord's crucifixion by the hands of those He came to save. An ancient tradition in the Byzantine Church is the Holy Vigil at the Tomb of Christ, also referred to as Grave Watch. After our Lord died on the Cross, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea took the body of Jesus, bound it in linen cloths with spices and buried it in a new tomb. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary sat opposite the tomb watching as their Lord was buried. The Church has joined with these two women in keeping watch over Jesus' tomb. The Holy Vigil is our opportunity to help keep watch over our Lord's body as He descends into Hell to loosen the bonds of death.

A Grave Watch will be held following Friday night Vespers and end Saturday morning. Individuals or families may sign up via the sheet posted by the coffee table for one-hour blocks of time throughout the evening of Great and Holy Friday. Time slots are used to ensure our Lord's body is not left alone in the tomb. That does not mean if a slot is full, others cannot join. Everyone is welcome to pray at any time throughout the vigil. Just remember to be respectful, as this is a time for quiet self-prayer.

BLOOD DRIVE Our first blood drive last year was a success, so much so that OneBlood has requested to come back! Our next date has been scheduled for Sunday, April 12 from 9 a.m. until 12 noon.

2025 / 2026 BISHOP'S APPEAL You should have received a mailer from the Chancery for this year's pledge drive. If not, copies are available in the back of the church. Our goal, \$6,200.00, equates to \$175.00 per family. If we are successful again in reaching our goal, Bishop Kurt will generously refund our parish 40%. This year, we ask you to submit your contribution directly to the Chancery via the mailer, or via the link on our website.

Announcements & Reminders

THANK YOU A very special thank you to Bob and George for both donating and replacing the shed roof and facia. They also power washed the exterior walls, and plan to give the shed a fresh coat of paint this week.

ANNUAL PICNIC Our second annual parish picnic is scheduled for Palm Sunday, and will take place on the parish grounds immediately following liturgy. The menu will include hamburgers, hot dogs, lamb chops, garden salad, soda, coffee, and cookies. There will be games for kids and adults. Tickets for the event are \$20 per adult, and \$10 per child under 10 years old. Friends and family are most welcome to attend. A 50/50 raffle will also be held, with advance purchase available starting this week. Please see Fred to purchase your tickets.

HOUSE BLESSINGS As we enter the Great Fast, house blessings are postponed until after Pascha. Contact Fr. Martin or Fred for scheduling.

GREAT FAST LITURGICAL SCHEDULE As noted in the calendar section of the bulletin, Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts will be celebrated on Friday evenings at 6:00 p.m. during the Great Fast. There will be no services on Wednesday evenings.

LITURGY INTENTIONS If you would like a Liturgy offered for the blessed memory or health of a loved one, please fill out the form located in the back of the church. **Requests can also be made online.** Simply visit the Contribute page on the parish website, and follow the link to our secure online payment portal.

SANCTUARY CANDLE Each week, we light a seven-day candle, that remains lite inside the church for the entire week, symbolizing the presence of Jesus within the Tabernacle. The faithful can offer the week-long burning light in remembrance or for the health and blessings of a loved one. This is a long-standing tradition within many of our churches. If you would like to make an offering, please complete the form located in the back of the church.

WHY DO WE LIGHT CANDLES WHEN ENTERING THE CHURCH? As Byzantines, we are taught that candles symbolize the Light of Christ. In the Byzantine tradition, the first thing people do when entering the church, is to approach the tetrapod, make two profound deep bows while simultaneously making the sign of the cross, venerate the icon, (do not kiss icons) then, light a candle in prayer. This is even done if entering after Liturgy has already started, however, one should wait for an appropriate time, i.e. not when the priest or deacon is outside of the iconostasis, during the homily, or during the reading of the Epistle or Gospel. It is common to light a candle for someone in need, to commemorate a deceased love one, or to honor a saint. The burning candle symbolizes our prayers rising to heaven and the light of Christ in our midst.

HOLY WEEK & PASCHA LITURGICAL SCHEDULE

- ❖ Holy Wednesday, Holy Thursday, Great and Holy Friday: 7:00 p.m.
- ❖ Holy Saturday: 5:00 p.m.
- ❖ Pascha: 10:00 a.m.

Blessing of Baskets will take place after Liturgy on Holy Saturday and Pascha Sunday

Cheesefare Sunday

The following is an outline to use with the Green Hymnal.

Page Number		Page Number	
11-13	Enarxis & Litany of Peace SIT	49-50	For the precious gifts...
14-15	First & Second Antiphons	53 Melody B	Creed
18 Melody A	Hymn of the Incarnation STAND	55	Anaphora
22	Third Antiphon	56 Melody A	Holy, Holy, Holy
25	Entrance Hymn		Take, eat... PROFOUND BOW
135	Troparion SIT		Drink of this... PROFOUND BOW
218	Kontakion	61 Melody H	We praise you...
27 Melody A	Thrice-holy Hymn STAND	62	It is truly proper...
219	Prokeimenon	63-65	Preparation of Communion SIT
	Epistle SIT	74	Our Father STAND
219	Alleluia STAND	78 Melody A	Communion Hymns
35	Preparation for Gospel	83	We have seen...
	Gospel	84	May our mouth... SIT
	Homily SIT	87	Arise! Now that we... STAND
35-37	Litany of Fervent Supplication	88 Melody A	Blessed be the name...
42 Melody A	Cherubikon STAND	454 Melody A	Beneath your Compassion

THRICE-HOLY HYMN

Svjatyj Bože, svjatyj kripkij, svjatyj bezsmertnyj pomiluj nas.

Readings

EPISTLE

Romans 13: 11-14: 4

It is now the hour for you to wake from sleep, for our salvation is closer than when we first accepted the faith. The night is far spent; the day draws near. Let us cast off deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us live honorably as in daylight; not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual excess and lust, not in quarreling and jealousy. Rather, put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the desires of the flesh. Extend a kind welcome to those who are weak in faith. Do not enter into disputes with them. A man of sound faith knows he can eat anything, while one who is weak in faith eats only vegetables. The man who will eat anything must not ridicule him who abstains from certain foods; the man who abstains must not sit in judgment on him who eats. After all, God himself has made him welcome. Who are you to pass judgment on another's servant? His master alone can judge whether he stands or falls. And stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

HOLY GOSPEL

Matthew 6: 14-21

The Lord said, "If you forgive the faults of others, your heavenly Father will forgive you yours. If you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive you. When you fast, you are not to look glum as the hypocrites

do. They change the appearance of their faces so that others may see they are fasting. I assure you, they are already repaid. When you fast, see to it that you groom your hair and wash your face. In that way no one can see you are fasting but your Father who is hidden; and your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you. Do not lay up for yourselves an earthly treasure. Moths and rust corrode; thieves break in and steal, Make it your practice instead to store up heavenly treasure, which neither moths nor rust corrode nor thieves break in and steal. Remember, where your treasure is, there your heart is also."

Sunday of Cheese-fare

Commemoration of the Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise



1. Lord and Cre - a - tor, from clay you formed me,
 2. Stripped of my heav - n'ly gar - ment through sin - ning,
 3. In dis - o - be - dience, Ad - am was ban - ished;
 4. As we be - gin this sea - son of fas - ting,



Gave me a soul through life - giv - ing breath;
 Clothed now with leaves and gar - ments of skin,
 Par - a - dise closed! He sat there and cried.
 Thus sanc - ti - fy - ing bod - y and soul,



O - ver cre - a - tion made me a rul - er!
 I eat my bread through work - ing and swea - ting.
 Give us your grace to wel - come this sea - son;
 Flee - ing from pas - sions, vir - tues e'er seek - ing,



But Sa - tan tempt - ed, lured me to death.
 Your voice is deaf - ened through e - vil's din.
 Fast - ing and pray'r will hum - ble our pride.
 We set Christ's Pas - cha as fi - nal goal!