

*Our Lady of the Sign
Byzantine Catholic Church*

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Contribute

Fr. Deacon Michael Opalka

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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

**Fourth Sunday of the Great Fast
w/4th All Souls Panachida**
EPISTLE Hebrews 6: 13-20
GOSPEL Mark 9: 17-31

Saturday, March 14, 2026, 5:00 p.m.
Madelyn Cipyak
by Jon & Suzie Cipyak

Sunday, March 15, 2026, 10:00 a.m.
For the Faithful of the Parish

*Sanctuary Candle:
Health & Blessing of the Parish Family*

Moleben

Wednesday, March 18, 2026, 7:00 p.m.

Fifth Sunday of the Great Fast
EPISTLE Hebrews 9: 11-14
GOSPEL Mark 10: 35-45

Saturday, March 21, 2026, 5:00 p.m.
For the Faithful of the Parish

Sunday, March 22, 2026, 10:00 a.m.
For the Faithful of the Parish

*Sanctuary Candle:
Health & Blessing of the Parish Family*

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

- Wednesday: 6:40 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, Angie Nemeth, Lesia, and Natasha Lemeshova. 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. ***Please check our website 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!

As we gather on this 4th Sunday of the Great Fast, we reflect on the life and teachings of St. John Climacus, the Venerable, and the Gospel reading from Mark 9:17-31. In today's Gospel, we witness a powerful encounter between Jesus and a father desperate for his son's healing. The father cries out, "I believe; help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24). This plea resonates deeply with us, especially during this season of Lent. We are reminded of our own struggles with faith and the moments when we, too, feel overwhelmed by doubt and uncertainty. Yet, it is in these moments that we are called to turn to Christ with humility and trust, just as the father did.

St. John Climacus, known for his spiritual masterpiece "The Ladder of Divine Ascent," provides us with a guide for our Lenten journey. He teaches us that the path to God is a gradual ascent, requiring perseverance, prayer, and repentance. Each step on this ladder represents a virtue we must cultivate, such as humility, patience, and love or a vice we must strive to unload. As we climb this spiritual ladder, we are reminded that our journey is not solitary. We are supported by the prayers of the saints, the teachings of the Church, and the grace of God. St. John Climacus encourages us to remain steadfast in our efforts, even when the climb seems arduous.

In today's Gospel, Jesus demonstrates His power over evil and His compassion for those who suffer. He reminds us that nothing is impossible for those who believe. As we continue our Lenten journey, let us echo the father's prayer, "I believe; help my unbelief," and trust that Christ will strengthen our faith and guide us towards His eternal light. May the intercessions of St. John Climacus inspire us to persevere in our spiritual ascent, and may we find comfort and strength in the loving embrace of our Savior.

The context: Today's Gospel passage describes an exorcism and healing which Jesus performed after coming down from the mountain of Transfiguration.

Why did the Apostles fail to heal the epileptic? The father of the epileptic boy complained to Jesus about the inability of the apostles to cure his son. They failed to heal the boy because: 1) although they had been given the power of healing, they failed to vitalize or activate it by prayer as Jesus did; 2) they did not have strong, trusting and expectant Faith in God's power; 3) as Jesus remarked, exorcism requires not only healing power but also a life of prayer and penance. Jesus heals the epileptic by a word of Divine command: Jesus demanded strong Faith from the boy's father as a condition for healing. Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!" Then Jesus commanded the evil spirit, using His Divine authority: "You dumb and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him, and never enter him again." As the evil spirit left the boy, he was healed of his epilepsy.

Life messages: 1) God will work daily miracles in our lives, provided we pray with trusting Faith. 2) Jesus offers us freedom from bondage to sin, evil habits, and addictions. 3) Let us make full use of the protection and help God offers to those who seek Him with Faith in His power and trust in His mercy.

*In Christ,
Fr. Martin Vavrak - Pastor*

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 NEXT Sunday, March 22.

EASTERN CATHOLIC FORMATION 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 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.

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.

SPECIAL CONTRIBUTIONS Many of the projects performed around the parish have been funded by the generosity of parishioners. If you would like to contribute towards a project, please speak with Fred Wilson or lay trustee Michael Donegan.

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.

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.

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 Passaic 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.

Important Dates to Remember

As we enter into the final weeks of the Fast, there are many liturgical services and parish events to be mindful of. These are in addition to our normally scheduled weekend liturgies. Please review the following schedule, and maybe even post it on your refrigerator.

❖ Wednesday, March 18:	Moleben	7:00 p.m.
❖ Sunday, March 22:	Slavic Kitchen Orders due	
❖ Wednesday, March 25:	Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts	7:00 p.m.
❖ Thursday, March 26	Pysanky class w/dinner	6:00 p.m.
❖ Palm Sunday, March 29:	Divine Liturgy followed by Annual Picnic	10:00 a.m.
❖ Holy Wednesday, April 1:	Liturgy of the Presanctified w/Holy Anointing	7:00 p.m.
❖ Holy Thursday, April 2:	Vespers with Divine Liturgy	7:00 p.m.
❖ Holy & Great Friday, April 3:	Vespers with Stations of the Cross	7:00 p.m.
❖ Friday / Saturday, April 3-4:	Grave Watch	9 p.m. - 10 a.m.
❖ Holy Saturday, April 4:	Divine Liturgy	5:00 p.m.
❖ Pascha Sunday, April 5:	Matins with Divine Liturgy	10:00 a.m.

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

Announcements & Reminders

ANNUAL PICNIC Our second annual parish picnic is scheduled for Palm Sunday, and will take place on the parish grounds immediately following liturgy. 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 tickets available now for purchase. Please see Fred to purchase your tickets.

THE ART OF PYSANKY To write a pysanka during Lent is to do what the Byzantine Catholic tradition has always done; to take ancient human longing and fill it, from the inside, with Easter. Join us on Thursday, March 26, at 6:00 p.m. to learn how to write your own pysanka! Cost is only \$20.00, and includes supplies and a light bite to eat. Speak with Fred to RSVP.

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.

Fourth Sunday of the Great Fast

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

Page Number		Page Number	
11-13	Enarxis & Litany of Peace SIT	53 Melody B	Creed
14-15	First & Second Antiphons	55	Anaphora
18 Melody A	Hymn of the Incarnation STAND	56 Melody A	Holy, Holy, Holy
22	Third Antiphon		Take, eat... PROFOUND BOW
25	Entrance Hymn		Drink of this... PROFOUND BOW
156 & 226	Troparion SIT	58 Melody A	We praise you...
226	Kontakion	62	It is truly proper...
27 Melody A	Thrice-holy Hymn STAND	63-65	Preparation of Communion SIT
158	Prokeimenon	74	Our Father STAND
	Epistle SIT	78 Melody A	Communion Hymns
158	Alleluia STAND	83	We have seen...
35	Preparation for Gospel	84	May our mouth... SIT
	Gospel	87	Arise! Now that we... STAND
	Homily SIT	88 Melody A	Blessed be the name...
35-37	Litany of Fervent Supplication	432	Panachida
42 Melody A	Cherubikon STAND	454 Melody A	Beneath your Compassion
49-50	For the precious gifts...		

EPISTLE

Hebrews 6: 13-20

When God made this promise to Abraham, he swore by himself, having no one greater to swear by, and said, "I will indeed bless you, and multiply you," And so, after patient waiting, Abraham obtained what God had promised. Men swear by someone greater than themselves; an oath gives firmness to a promise and puts an end to all argument. God, wishing to give the heirs of his promise even clearer evidence that his purpose would not change, guaranteed it by oath, so that, by two things that are unchangeable, in which he could not lie, we who have taken refuge in him might be strongly encouraged to seize the hope which is placed before us. Like a sure and firm anchor, that hope extends beyond the veil through which Jesus, our forerunner, has entered on our behalf, being made high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

Hymns

The grieving mother

1. The grieving Mother stood beneath the Cross; weeping in sorrow, tearfully she prayed: O Son, my Son, innocent and faultless, why must You suffer this bitter passion on the Cross?
2. Bitter tears are falling near Your holy body. O my child I raised You long before these enemies. Now as I lose You, while I weep before You, O my Son You leave me and Your life I will no longer see.

Beneath Your Cross I stand

1. Beneath Your Cross I stand, O Savior hear my request. Turn me from all sin; let me feel remorse; here let me pray and rest.
2. For me You suffered shame; for me You suffered Your Cross. You paid for my sins; You paid for my faults; You redeemed mankind lost.
3. From You I'll never turn; for me Your last breath You spent. Let Your seven words, spoken from Your Cross be my strength to repent.

In Gethsem'ne's darkness

1. In Gethsem'ne's darkness Jesus prayed for us, when He asked God for the strength to bear the cross.
2. Angels came to serve our Lord the help He sought; strength to suffer from the chalice which they brought.

Refrain: The sword of sorrow, foretold long ago, Your Mother's heart will know.

HOLY GOSPEL

Mark 9: 17-31

At that time a man approached Jesus and said: "Teacher, I have brought my son to you because he is possessed by a mute spirit. Whenever it seizes him it throws him down; he foams at the mouth and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. Just now I asked your disciples to expel the spirit, but they were unable to do so." Jesus replied by saying to the crowd, "What an unbelieving lot you are! How long must I remain with you? How long can I endure you? Bring the boy to me." When they did so the spirit caught sight of Jesus and immediately threw the boy into convulsions. As he fell to the ground he began to roll around and foam at the mouth. Then Jesus questioned the father: "How long has this been happening to him?" "From childhood," the father replied. "Often it throws him into fire and into water. You would think it would kill him. If out of kindness of your heart you can do anything to help us, please do!" Jesus said, "'If you can'? Everything is possible to a man who trusts." The boy's father immediately exclaimed, "I do believe! Help my lack of trust!" Jesus on seeing the crowd rapidly gathering, reprimanded the unclean spirit by saying to him, "Mute and deaf spirit, I command you: Get out of him and never enter him again!" Shouting, and throwing the boy into convulsions, it came out of him; the boy became like a corpse, which caused many to say, "He is dead." But Jesus took him by the hand and helped him to his feet. When Jesus arrived at the house his disciples began to ask him privately, "Why is it that we could not expel it?" he told them, "This kind you can drive out only by prayer." They left that district and began a journey through Galilee, but Jesus did not want anyone to know about it. He was teaching his disciples in this vein: "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men who will put him to death; three days after his death he will rise."