

*Our Lady of the Sign  
Byzantine Catholic Church*

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

**Rev. Martin Vavrak**

*Pastor*

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**Mr. Fred Wilson**

*Parish Manager & Cantor*

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*Website*



*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**

**First Sunday of the Great Fast**

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

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

Savannah L. Cipyak  
by Jon & Suzie Cipyak

*Sanctuary Candle:*

*Health & Blessing of the Parish Family*

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

For the Faithful of the Parish

**Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts**

EPISTLE Genesis: 5: 32-6: 8  
GOSPEL Proverbs: 6: 20-7: 1

**Friday, February 27, 2026, 6:00 p.m.**

**Second Sunday of the Great Fast  
with Second All Souls Panachida**

EPISTLE Hebrews 1: 10-2: 3  
GOSPEL Mark 2: 1-12

**Saturday, February 28, 2026, 5:00 p.m.**

Jon & Melissa Cipyak  
by Jon & Suzie Cipyak

*Sanctuary Candle:*

*Health & Blessing of the Parish Family*

**Sunday, March 1, 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!

The Great Fast of Lent began this past Monday. This solemn and reflective period focuses on repentance, fasting, and spiritual preparation for the resurrection of Christ.

In the Gospel of John, specifically in verses 43-51 of chapter 1, we encounter an intriguing account of Jesus' early ministry and the calling of his disciples. After Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist, he begins to gather followers, and one of the first is Philip. Philip then finds Nathanael and excitedly tells him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. "Initially skeptical, Nathanael questions, "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" However, Philip invites him to "come and see." As Nathanael approaches Jesus, Jesus greets him with a profound statement, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false." Astonished, Nathanael asks Jesus how he knows him, and Jesus replies, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you." This revelation convinces Nathanael that Jesus is indeed the Son of God and the King of Israel. This passage highlights the power of personal encounters with Jesus and the transformative effect it can have on individuals. It also emphasizes Jesus' divine knowledge and ability to see beyond the surface, illuminating the depths of one's soul.

The First Sunday of the Great Fast is also called the Sunday of Orthodoxy in commemoration of the victory of orthodoxy-true faith in controversy over Holy Icons in the year 843. This day serves as a reminder of the importance of visual representations in worship and the role of icons in connecting believers with the divine. It is a day of rejoicing and thanksgiving for the preservation of our faith and its traditions.

*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.

**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! Seriously, this week the forms are in the back of the church.

**WHY IS LITURGY LONGER DURING LENT?** During Lent, the Byzantine Catholic Church replaces the more commonly used Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom with the longer, more ancient Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great. This is done intentionally as the extended prayers of St. Basil invite the faithful into a deeper, more meditative posture of worship that complements the penitential character of the Lenten season. The longer anaphora (eucharistic prayer) slows the rhythm of the liturgy, creating more space for reflection, contrition, and an awareness of God's mercy. St. Basil's prayers are notably rich in theological depth, drawing heavily on Scripture and expressing profound humility before God; a fitting spirit for a season devoted to fasting, prayer, and repentance. In this way, the very structure of the liturgy becomes itself a form of ascetic practice, uniting the worshiper's body and soul in the Lenten journey toward Pascha.

**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.

**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** Our shed now has a new roof and has been power washed and painted. Thank you to George and Bob for dedicating the supplies and their time. Next, we plan to empty the shed to repair the floor, and to paint the interior. If you are available to lend a hand, please speak with either George or Bob.

**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.

### **DIVINE LITURGY OF THE PRESANCTIFIED GIFTS – FRIDAYS AT 6:00 P.M.**

As we journey together through the holy season of Great Lent, we are called to slow down, to fast, to pray, and to enter more deeply into the mystery of God's love for us. At the heart of this sacred season shines a treasure of our Byzantine tradition: The Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts. We do not consecrate the Eucharist anew, but rather bow in adoration before the Gifts already sanctified.

The faithful who gather bow before the living Christ. The church is dim as the incense rises and the priest and cantor sing with quiet longing. It is not a service of triumphant joy but rather of tender aching hope; the hope of a people who know that Pascha is coming, and who prepare their hearts to receive it. "Let my prayer rise before You as incense, the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice." — Psalm 141

This Lent, consider joining us each Friday evening for this sacred service.

**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.

### **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*

## *First 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 <b>SIT</b>	49-50	For the precious gifts...
14-15	First & Second Antiphons	53 Melody B	Creed
18 Melody A	Hymn of the Incarnation <b>STAND</b>	55 & 96	Anaphora
22	Third Antiphon	96	Holy, Holy, Holy
25	Entrance Hymn		Take, eat... <b>PROFOUND BOW</b>
141 & 220	Troparion <b>SIT</b>		Drink of this... <b>PROFOUND BOW</b>
220	Kontakion	98	We praise you...
27 Melody A	Thrice-holy Hymn <b>STAND</b>	98	Instead of "It is truly proper..."
221	Prokeimenon	63-65	Preparation of Communion <b>SIT</b>
	Epistle <b>SIT</b>	74	Our Father <b>STAND</b>
221	Alleluia <b>STAND</b>	78 Melody A	Communion Hymns
35	Preparation for Gospel	83	We have seen...
	Gospel	84	May our mouth... <b>SIT</b>
	Homily <b>SIT</b>	87	Arise! Now that we... <b>STAND</b>
35-37	Litany of Fervent Supplication	88 Melody A	Blessed be the name...
42 Melody A	Cherubikon <b>STAND</b>	454 Melody A	Beneath your Compassion

### *Readings*

#### EPISTLE

Hebrews 11: 24-26, 32-40, & 12: 1-2a

By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter, he wished to be ill-treated along with God's people rather than enjoy the fleeting rewards of sin. Moses considered the reproach borne by God's Anointed greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. - What more shall I recount? I have no time to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthat, of David and Samuel and the prophets, who by faith conquered kingdoms, did what was just, obtained the promises; they broke the jaws of lions, put our raging fires, escaped the devouring sword; tough weak they were made powerful, became strong in battle, and turned back foreign invaders. Woman received back their dead through resurrection. Others were tortured and would not receive deliverance, in order to obtain a better resurrection. Still others endured mockery, scourging, even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, sawed in two, put to death at sword's point; they went about garbed in the skins of sheep or goats, needy, afflicted, tormented. The world was not worthy of them. They wondered about in deserts and on mountains, they dwelt in caves and in holes of the earth. Yet despite the fact that all of there were approved because of their faith, they did not obtain what had been promised. God had made a better plan, a plan which included us. Without us, they were not to be made perfect. - Therefore, since we for our part are surrounded by the cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every encumbrance of sin which clings to us and persevere in running the race which lies ahead; let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, who inspires and perfects our faith.

#### HOLY GOSPEL

John 1: 43-51

At that time Jesus wanted to set out for Galilee, but first he came upon Philip. "Follow me, Jesus said to him, Now Phillip was from Bethesda, the same town as Andrew and Peter. Philip sought out Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses spoke of in the law – the prophets too – Jesus, sone of Joseph, from Nazareth." Nathanael's response to that was, "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" and Philip replied, "Come, see for yourself," When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he remarked: "This mas is a true Isrealite. There is no guile in him." "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked Jesus. "Before Philip called you," Jesus answered, "I saw you under the fig tree." "Rabbi," said Nathanael, "you are the Son of God; you are the king of Isreal." Jesus responded: "Do you believe just because I told you I saw you under the fig tree? You will see much greater things than that." Jesus went on to tell them, "I solemnly assure you, you shall see the sky opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

### *Hymns*

#### *The grieving mother*

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? 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.

### 'Neath your holy icon kneeling

MOTHER OF GOD



1. 'Neath your ho - ly i - con kneel - ing, we poor sin - ners
2. From the star - ry heights of heav - en look up - on your
3. Keep us free from all life's e - vils, free from an - y



bring our plead - ing. In - ter - ces - sor for — all man - kind,  
 plead - ing chil - dren. We be - seech help to — be faith - ful,  
 kind of trou - bles. Help us gain e - ter - nal hap - pi - ness,



O most ho - ly Mar - y.  
 O most ho - ly Mar - y.  
 O most ho - ly Mar - y.

