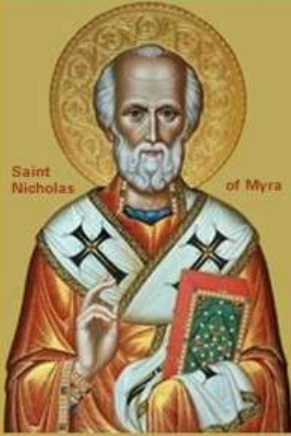


SUNDAY OF CHEESEFARE



Icon of Christ the Bridegroom



**ST. NICHOLAS OF MYRA
BYZANTINE CATHOLIC CHURCH**

*2200 Arctic Boulevard
Anchorage, AK 99503*

**BL. THEODORE ROMZHA
BYZANTINE CATHOLIC MISSION**

*Sacred Heart Church 1201 E Bogard Rd,
Wasilla, AK 99654
2nd and 4th Sundays of the month*



Administration

His Eminence, Metropolitan Archbishop William C. Skurla DD
Archeparchy of Pittsburgh

Bishop Artur Bubnevych

Ruling Bishop of the Holy Protection of Mary Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Phoenix

Pastor: Very Reverend Father Vasyl Mutka

Office Hours: Monday through Friday 10am-4pm (Please Call before coming to the office)

Phone: (907) 277-6731

E-mail: pastorstnicholas@yahoo.com

www.ak-byz-cath.org



WELCOME TO ALL PARISHIONERS & GUESTS WHO HAVE JOINED US TODAY

Whether you're searching for a new church home or just visiting, we're glad you're with us today. If you are looking for God, have a prayer request, looking for more information about the Eastern Catholic Church, would like to join our parish, or would like to speak with Fr. Vasyl, he will be happy to talk to you. Please join us for our coffee hour in the Parish hall following the Divine Liturgy. We want to get to know you! God bless you!

Schedule of Services FEBRUARY 15—FEBRUARY 22, 2026

**GLORY TO JESUS CHRIST! GLORY TO HIM FOREVER!
SLAVA ISUSU CHRYSTU! SLAVA NAVIKY BOGU!**

Sunday, February 15—Cheesefare Sunday

9:15-9:45 am Confessions

9:40 am 3rd Hour

10:00 am Divine Liturgy *For parishioners, founders, donors, decorators of our St. Nicholas Parish & Wasilla Mission and for their relatives*

The Ceremony of Mutual

Forgiveness

Monday, February 16—CLEAN MONDAY—First Day of the Great Fast. A day of Strict Fast & Abstinence: no meat or dairy products or eggs are allowed.

6:30 pm Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

Tuesday, February 17

No service

Wednesday, February 18

6:30 pm Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

Thursday, February 19

No service

Friday, February 20

6:30 pm Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

Saturday, February 21—Commemoration of the miracle of Saint Theodore

9:00 am Divine Liturgy

4:15-4:45 pm Confessions

4:35 pm Prayer Rule of the Theotokos (Byzantine Rosary)

5:00 pm Vespers/Divine Liturgy

Sunday, February 22—First Sunday of the Great Fast (Sunday of Orthodoxy)

9:15-9:45 am Confessions

9:40 am 3rd Hour

10:00 am Divine Liturgy *For parishioners, founders, donors, decorators of our St. Nicholas Parish & Wasilla Mission and for their relatives*

The Ceremony of Mutual Forgiveness

3:15-3:45 pm Confessions

4:00 pm Divine Liturgy in Wasilla



Please remember in your prayers:

For health and salvation: Fr. Chris Zegger, Fr. Joseph Wargacki, Fr. Robert, Veronica Frazier, David Bich, Max, Aniela, Ken Wake, Molly Buggy, Kim Bryan, Shawn, Anna Gage, Oceana Grabianowski, Anthony Heller, Solanche Stone, Dorothy Savok, Spruce Lynch, Truman Beer, Natalie, Basil, John Michalski, Phyllis Shepherd, Sherry, Bruce Heller

For repose of the departed: +Bishop Gerald N Dino, +Fr. Michael Artim, +Fr. Eric, +Christine Vincent, +Corine Hurst, +Ruth Langley Ayers, +Denise, +Ed, +Sandra

Please pray also for all our benefactors, friends, neighbors and anyone we may have forgotten. Please let Fr. Vasyl know if you would like to add new names to the prayer list and also notify him about any sick and/or hospitalized parishioners and family members.

St. Herman's Mens Group: Meeting is scheduled on Thursday, February 19, at 7:00 pm. All adult and young men are encouraged to join and participate as members of the Herman's Mens Group.

It is a great opportunity for common prayer and interesting meaningful conversations.

Year-End Contribution Acknowledgement: Please pick up your year-end contribution letter if you didn't pick it up last week. Each donor has an envelope that contains this information. Check the welcome table at the entrance to the church. Corresponding letters have been sent to some of you by mail or email (if we don't have your mailing address). If you don't see your name on an envelope, please see Fr. Vasyl. Thank you for your sincere financial support of our parish. May God reward you many times over.

Blessed candles: If you didn't have the opportunity to bless a candle on the feast of Presentation of the Lord, you can buy blessed candles in our Gift Shop.

Bishop's Appeal 2026: EA 2026 started last week. The Eparchy of Phoenix has sent letters to parishioners asking you to participate in this year's special Bishop's Appeal 2026. If you did not receive the letter, you can scan the QR code under the required find St. Nicholas of Myra, AK, and make your donation. Sincere thanks to everyone

who participated in last year's and past collections. Last year, we met our goal, and at the end of the year, we received a rebate from the Bishop's Office.

Our goal this year is: \$4,000.00. We ask everyone in our parish to take part in this Eparchial collection.

Eastern Christian Formation (ECF) for Families: next Sunday, February 15th, at noon, there will be an ECF class for families. Classes are held on the first and third Sundays of the month. The theme of the next class will be *"Fasting on the Path to Salvation"*. All are welcome.



All Souls Saturdays for 2026, we have four All Souls Saturdays on which we commemorate by name our beloved deceased. The dates for this year are: February 28, March 7, March 14, and May 23.

Please use the special envelopes marked "All Souls Saturdays" that are available in the narthex and at the welcome table. Please place an offering envelope with the names of your loved ones in the offering basket or give it to Father. The names are read during the Divine Liturgy and Panachida.

Mission trip to Athens, Greece: (June 8-20, 2026) for young adults organized by the Office of Youth and Young Adults Ministry of the Archeparchy of Pittsburgh. This mission opportunity is open to young adults ages 18-35. See archpitt.org for more information.

BISON HUNT RAFFLE



2018 Winners Britany Brown & Cassie Rogers of North Pole, Alaska

PRIZE DESCRIPTION

- > Guided hunt on "Kodiak Game Ranch", Kodiak Island
- > Guaranteed 2 to 4-year-old bull (Head, meat, and hide)
- > Up to three days' meals and lodging with ground transportation during hunt
- > No hunting license required (private ranch)
- > Travel to and from Kodiak is not included.
- > Hunt scheduling to be arranged by winner (Optimum period is September through January)

OR
> \$3,500 CASH

> **Drawing is 10 AM, May 10, 2026, at St. Ann's Hall, Co-Cathedral of Nativity of BVM in Juneau**

- > One drawing for each 1300 Tickets Sold!
- > Ticket Price \$20.00 - Tickets are transferable - Need not be present to win.
- > The proceeds benefit Knights of Columbus charitable works in Alaska.
- > Alaska Permit # 1631 - Winners posted at www.alaskakofcstate.com.

> Winners of 2025 Raffle were John Samuelson of Saint Paul MN, Tom Reupke of Columbia SC, Alex Zerbinos of Soldotna AK, Tim Finley of Eagle River, AK, and David Garcia of Ketchikan AK. All chose the hunt.

ANSWERING GOD'S CALL: "Where your treasure is, your heart will be also". It is easy to mistake what our true treasure is, and we need wisdom and insight to see clearly. In the kontakion for today we sing that God is the "guide to wisdom and giver of insight". Is he guiding you to a vocation to the religious or ordained life? As you pray and seek wisdom, consider contacting the Vocations Office at 602-861-9778 or email: vocations@ephx.org

Vocation Icon:



Everyone in the parish is invited to pray for and encourage others within the Church that they might respond generously to God's call in their lives. God relies on generous men and women to minister among us as priests, deacons, monks, and nuns. The Church needs people like you to pray for and encourage them. Sign up today to have the

Pilgrim Vocation Icon "The Call of the Disciples" in your home for one week. You will be greatly blessed. Please sign up on the sheet that is posted in the parish hall on the table.

Prayer for Vocations

Lord our God, older than all creation, you have made us in your image and likeness. You have given us the gift of the Holy Spirit through your servants who proclaim the good news of your Church all that is necessary for our sanctification. We humbly beg you, do not leave your people deprived of spiritual gifts, but grant us an abundance of vocations to your holy priesthood, the diaconate and consecrated life, and to lives dedicated to your service. Open the hearts of men and women to hear your words, "Come, follow me!" Indeed, do not leave us orphans, but be with us through your Holy Spirit, who is present everywhere and fills all things, and who raises up mere mortals to divine service by the mystery of his grace. Truly you will never forget your promise to be with us always, until the end of the world, but forgive us if we have, in our weakness, failed to follow you as we should. For you alone are holy now and ever and forever. Amen.

But you, when you fast

Hegumen Nektary

Prayer and fasting

First of all, fasting is something without which we will not be able to overcome the evil one's forces; as the Bible says: Howbeit this kind goes not out but by prayer and fasting (Mt. 17:21). Fasting strengthens our prayer and, as an action connected with our body, it weakens the sinful desires of our body. Because it is difficult for people to lead a prayerful life and at the same time to

ignore all the urges of the body. Let us confess: often during our prayer, our mind wanders somewhere, we are thinking of something different, sometimes even something indecent. And we stop our thoughts and try to remember which prayer we are reading: to the Mother of God or to Christ? And we even turn over the page in order to look. It appears that we stopped praying at some point: sinful suggestions acted on us as a result of the weakening of the flesh. Fasting helps overcome it. Fasting is the most favorable time for praying. Our soul is directly linked to our body, and if the body is not under control (especially by prayer), it is an assault on the soul.

The soul needs training and endurance. This training is fasting, the support is prayer. Even the body becomes weak unless we do exercises and train it. There are so many people who go in for sports, go to gyms in order to be in good shape! But why don't we have such a serious attitude about our souls?

When we eat only fasting food, we as if returned to the state of Paradise. For Adam and Eve ate only vegetable food in the Garden of Eden.

Food restrictions are vital. I will repeat myself: it is significant because the body, restrained by prayer,

Continued on Page 6

Let us pray to the Lord.

O Lord Jesus Christ, our God, who art the Giver of Light and Creator of all things:

Thou hast commanded us to forgive our debtors, that we may be forgiven by Thee.

Cleanse my heart, O Master, of all bitterness and grudge-bearing,

That I may truly forgive my brother his trespasses, And by Your grace, receive pardon for my own transgressions.

As I enter upon the fast, let me not be as the hypocrites, Who look gloomy to be seen by men,

But let me wash my face in sincere repentance, Fasting in secret for Your sake, that I may receive my reward from You, my Father.

Deliver me, O Savior, from the greed of this world. Help me to store up my treasures in heaven,

Where neither moth nor rust destroys, and thieves do not break in.

For where my treasure is, there let my heart be also, bound to Thee.

Set my mind on things above, that I may not be enslaved to earthly things.

By the prayers of the Theotokos and all the Saints, Make me worthy to walk in the way of righteousness,

For You are good and the Lover of mankind, And to You we ascribe glory, with the Father and the Holy Spirit,

Now and ever, and forever. Amen.

Continued from Page 5

allows us to concentrate on prayer.

Fasting is a good time for other kinds of body "training" as well: when, for instance, spouses by mutual agreement decide to refrain from marital relations during the fast to exercise their prayer. Refusal of non-fasting food during this period helps a lot in that.

Reading the Holy Scripture is an important spiritual support during the fast

It is very important to read the Holy Scripture during a fast as it gives spiritual support. It is clear that it is difficult to read the whole Bible during the fast time for those who have a job. Then choose only one part of it, for example, the Gospels, and read them with due attention, maybe even with comments by the Holy Fathers. And next time, in the period of another long fast, read other Biblical books, very carefully and thoughtfully. So not only will fasting be a time for a spiritual exercise for us, but it will be a period of our spiritual education as well.

And one should not forget that there are daily Gospel and Epistle readings, and it is indicated in the calendars which part of the New Testament the Church reads on one or another day. These indications are not only for the clergy, but also for the laity. It is recommended to read the Gospel and the Epistle of the day every day right after the morning prayers. These are short pieces of reading, and it will be very good if a believer meditates on the subject of the reading during the day.

Why else is it important to combine prayer with the reading of the Word of God? If I just pray, then such a prayer may become a mere monologue and not rise higher than my ceiling. But if I combine reading of the Word of God with prayer, then it comes out that I ask God in my prayer, and He answers me through the Holy Scripture.

Relaxations in fasting

For whom do fast relaxations exist? Pregnant women, nursing mothers, prisoners and servicemen are exempt from fasting. Also, there are fast relaxations for sick people: they discuss their diet with doctors and ask for their priests' blessing.

Small children have a large number of relaxations in fasting – the Holy Fathers wrote about this. But it is necessary to remember that the relaxations concern only food. And if someone – either a pregnant woman or a serviceman – does not stop eating meat and milk foods at fast time, they should choose some other form of fasting for themselves. For example, they can abstain from watching shows, films, sports competitions...

Thus, if someone cannot observe the fast properly, it does not mean that he or she should not fast at all. We can always deprive ourselves of something for the sake of spiritual perfection.

By the way, fasting makes our meals joyful. If a person, for instance, eats only meat and dairy products, he or she no longer appreciates the taste of this food. But if a person

does not eat them for the period of fast, then, when the fast is over, he or she can duly appreciate the taste of these kinds of food!

During the winter season, our organisms get tired of heavy food, like meat, and the Nativity Fast and Great Lent help us in this enormously. And when we eat more vegetables and fruit during this period, we sleep better and our body gets rest. We no longer feel sleepiness during prayer. However, prayer combined with non-fasting food is difficult prayer.

Studying the Holy Scriptures in the period of fast is very different, too: it is easier for your mind to memorize the texts, you apprehend them figuratively, and your mind is not wandering during reading.

You say: "I cannot." But have you ever tried? What if you can?

I would advise people who have never observed fasts properly: please, try! If a person tries, that is, enters the world of fasting, he or she will be able to form an opinion of it. Because you cannot reject the things of which you have absolutely no idea! You say: "I cannot". But have you ever tried? What if you can?

Today we have many overweight people, and I think many of them might keep the fast some extra days, not only during fasts. For some reason, many people are willing to keep very strict diets, when they are supposed to eat almost nothing, but at the same time these people, unfortunately, avoid fasting. Meanwhile, there are so many tasty and healthy fast dishes!

Sometimes it happens this way: one of my acquaintances did not keep fast during Lent, but suddenly resolved to fast during Bright Week, saying: "I have decided to keep a strict diet." I asked him: "Why didn't you make this decision during Lent?" "I don't know. Actually I was about to begin, but something kept diverting me from this." And I explained him that it was not "something" – these were living creatures, that is, evil spirits, who diverted his attention. The demons did their best to turn everything upside down. They suggest, "You may eat whatever you wish during Lent, but during Bright Week, when it is time to break your fast – keep a strict diet!"

I would like to give advice to those who think they will not be able to "get through" the forty days of fast: begin to observe the fast on Wednesdays and Fridays during this Nativity Fast. And, nevertheless, try what the fast is about – make an effort to keep the strict fast for a week. And then, when you have a clear feeling of this lightness – in praying, in reading the Holy Scriptures – such a strong spiritual and quiet joy will come to you, that you will want to continue your fasting. Why not try? Since fasting is an expression of your free will. Be brave! And you will see how good it is. You will feel how these restrictions and prayer, in combination with fasting, enrich your soul greatly.

Parish Giving

Great news for those donating online

Now you can use our new online giving tool to tithe online using your credit card or bank account information. You can also do a one-time donation or set up weekly donations! You will receive a receipt and statement immediately after donating. The software takes a very small percentage of the donation, but its worth it for the ease of the system. You can donate at:

<https://donorbox.org/support-st-nicholas-and-help-us-grow>



Tithes & Attendance:

February 8
Tithes: \$625.00
Youth tithe: \$20.00
Attendance: 40

Thank you for your support and love for our Parish.

Also, feel free to send in your regular tithe check by mail to:

2200 Arctic Blvd,
Anchorage, AK 99503.

It is very important that we continue to give a percentage of what Our Lord has given us, and continue to support the structure and ministry of the parish. Thank you!

Fred Meyer Rewards: St. Nicholas of Myra participates in the community rewards program with Fred Meyer stores which gives a



percentage of purchases by those signed up with the program to St. Nicholas. It does not cost anything for customers. Fred Meyer pays out each quarter and will send a check if it's above a certain amount. It won't cost parishioners and friends of St. Nicholas anything to participate. The steps to participate are:

- 1) Set up a Fred Meyer Rewards account if you don't have one or sign up at one of the stores.
 - 2) Set up an online account.
 - 3) Log into the account and search for Community Rewards.
 - 4) Search for **Saint Nicholas of Myra Byzantine Catholic Church** or our account number **QD147** and select as the charity to receive the funds.
 - 5) Shop at Fred Meyer as you normally would and the St. Nicholas account will automatically be credited.
- Thank you!

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Support Our Church
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PASTORAL MINISTRY AND SACRAMENTS:

SACRAMENT of CONFESSIONS: on Sundays and Holy Days: 30 min. before Divine Liturgy and other days, by appointment.

HOLY COMMUNION: for the sick, by appointment, anytime.

BAPTISMS - by appointment.

MARRIAGES - by appointment, at least 6 months in advance.

FUNERALS - by appointment.

ANOINTING of the sick, hospital visits - by appointment, anytime

Safe Environment:

The Eparchy, within all its parishes, institutions, and programs, is committed to assuring a Safe Environment in ministry for its children and vulnerable adults that conforms to the USCCB Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. For additional information regarding the eparchial Safe Environment Program or to report any concerns, please contact:

Subdeacon Paul Kilroy, Safe Environment Program Coordinator

Cell: (480) 745-0316 ~ Office: (602) 861-9778 ext. 204 ~ Email: sbdcnkilroy@ephx.org -

or -

Victim Assistance Coordinator, Deacon Michael Hanafin

Cell: (480) 307-5182 ~ Email: vac@ephx.org

“As long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast.” (Mark 2:19)

This evening, Forgiveness Vespers begins the Great Fast. Texts from the propers of Vespers include the following:

Entering into the arena of the Holy Fast, let us make every effort to humble our flesh by abstinence; in prayer and with tears let us seek the Lord our Savior, and, that we might turn away from our evil deeds, let us say to Him: we have sinned against You, O Christ our King, save us as You saved the Ninevites of old, and in Your goodness, grant us a share in the kingdom of heaven.

When I see my deeds that deserve such punishment, I am without hope, O Lord; for I have disobeyed Your holy commandments, and I have led a foolish

life. Therefore, I beseech You: purify me in the waters of repentance by fasting and prayer, O Savior, full of goodness; do not reject me, O Benefactor of the Universe.

Let us begin the time of this bright fast, giving ourselves over to spiritual struggle. Let us sanctify our soul and purify our flesh. Let us not fast only from food; let us also abstain from every passion and cultivate spiritual virtues. And let us faithfully preserve in this, so that we may be worthy to see the holy passion of Christ our God and the joy of His holy Resurrection.

*Text from the Lenten Triodion,
Sisters of Saint Basil, Uniontown, PA.*