





# Ascension of Our Lord Byzantine Catholic Church

*In February of 1988 Bishop Michael Dudick gave canonical status to Ascension of Our Lord Byzantine Catholic Church, which is located on Palace Lane.*

Since the church has become the home church to a number of area residents who treasure the tradition, reverence and beauty of the Byzantine Catholic tradition.

Each Sunday, approximately 100 people worship at the intimate church. Several people also attend daily celebrations at 9 a.m.

Deacon Nicholas Sotack said that many Catholic Christians may not be aware that there are two dozen churches within the Catholic Church in full communion with the See of Peter, the Pope of Rome, including the Byzantine Catholic.

He said that those who call the Ascension of Our Lord their home church revere the traditions and are uplifted by the beauty of the Divine Liturgy.

"Parishioners feel a contemporary spiritual uplift through all the human senses," Sotack said. "The description goes beyond words. One must experience the celebration in order to fully understand and appreciate the meaning."

The differences between Roman Catholic and Byzantine Catholic is in style and expression.

In the Byzantine church, the priest faces east, or toward the altar, leading the people in prayer, whereas the Roman priest faces the congregation. Incense is also used to symbolically offer prayers to God.

Many of the prayers are similar to both faiths, but at the Byzantine Church, all are chanted in a dialogue between the priest, deacon, and the faithful.

The church itself is adorned with icons. Ascension parish has a unique, hand-carved iconostasis (icon screen) that was made by a parishioner, Ignatius Stefaniw.

Those who attend the church are committed to community outreach. Several programs are held to raise money for various local charities. These include Ethnic dinners.

"They are sponsored by the parish guild each quarter to offer delicious home cooked Eastern European foods at very affordable prices," he explained. Money raised benefits various organizations.

Fr. Shuter has instituted a Tuesday morning coffee hour that follows the Divine Liturgy. Its purpose is to invite people to join in lively discussions about topics that are important to the group. Speaker programs are being considered for the upcoming year that range from spiritual topics such as iconography to practical life topics such as living wills, Well Being, and medicine.

The parish also hopes to add pysanky (Ukrainian Easter egg) decorating classes, as well as dance classes to its list of fun events for the parish and community.

— Ann Efimetz

Photos by Ann Efimetz

## ASCENSION OF OUR LORD BYZANTINE CATHOLIC

**Location** 114 Palace Lane

**Phone** 220-8098 (church) 253-5641 (rectory)

**Website** [www.ascensionva.org](http://www.ascensionva.org)

**Pastor** Father Alex Shuter

**Staff** Deacon Nicholas Sotack; Capt. Lee Alexander, U.S.C.G. (Ret.), Robert Linderman, John Rayno (trustees.)

**Worship schedule** 9 a.m., daily; 11 a.m., Sundays

**Church mission statement** Present worship to God Almighty according to the Holy Byzantine tradition of the Catholic Church, welcoming all who are presently Catholic Christians or for all who are searching for a genuinely warm Christian home.

**Church outreach ministries** Support for Lackey Free Clinic, Fish, American Red Cross local chapter, Arc of Greater Williamsburg, Habitat for Humanity and Wounded Warrior Foundation.

