

Saints Peter & Paul St. Mary's (Dormition of the Mother of God)
 Byzantine Catholic Church Byzantine Catholic Church
 107 South Fourth Street 131 South Morris Street
 Minersville, PA 17954 Saint Clair, PA 17970

Parish Office: (570) 544-2074

Website: www.sspeterandpaulminersville.com

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Served by: Very Reverend Gregory J. Noga, Pastor

SS. Peter & Paul Cantor: Mr. Paul Konkus St. Mary Cantor: Dr. Peter Yasenchak

CONFESSIONS: SS. Peter & Paul: Saturday 1:00 - 2:00 p.m. and Sunday 8:00 – 8:30 a.m. prior to
 Divine Liturgy and Daily prior to Divine Liturgy

St. Mary's: Saturday 3:00 PM

SICK CALLS: As scheduled, or anytime in case of an emergency. If anyone is homebound or
 hospitalized, please call the rectory (544-2074)

Bulletins are sponsored by
Mahal-Ritzel Funeral Home
 Minersville, PA 544-5111

Mark J. Mahal – Funeral Director

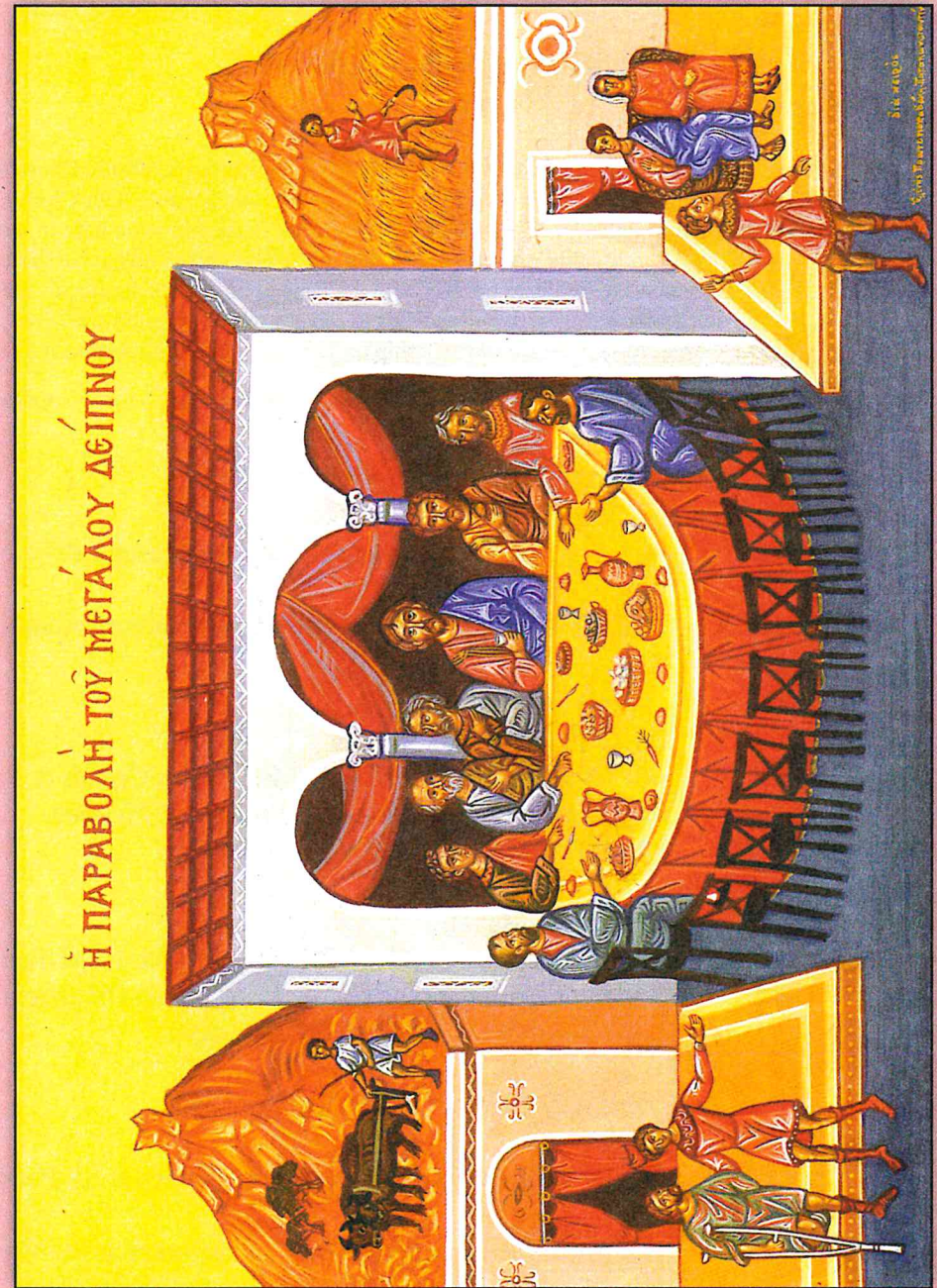
The Great Feast

This familiar parable is read in the Church each year just two Sundays before the feast of our Lord's Nativity. In it we are reminded of the great care with which God prepared the way of His incarnation. All of the Law and the Prophets look forward to this moment, the moment when the God-man Jesus Christ comes into the world. He is, in fact, the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets – the goal towards which they were all aiming. The whole world was prepared by them for this great event. As the parable tells us the King – that is God – has prepared a great feast for us and has invited us to come and enter into the joy that He has prepared for us.

Today we begin in earnest to move toward the

feast of the birth of our Incarnate Savior Jesus Christ. Today we are called to see the great preparation that has gone into this event, to marvel at the great love and care of God for us that He would labor so long and with such great care for us. Today we look back at the whole of the history of the people of God and see that it is the history of God's preparation all leading to the moment when He would take flesh, become incarnate and enter the world as a child. We have been given an invitation to come and join the feast, to abandon the world and enter the Kingdom of God, to leave our own life and receive instead the Life of Christ. We have been invited, chosen by God – will we then accept the invitation and choose Him?

SUNDAY OF THE FOREFATHERS



Icon of the Parable of the Great Feast

**Sunday of the Forefathers
Tone 4**

Welcome to the parish communities of SS. Peter and Paul and St. Mary Byzantine Catholic Churches of Minersville and Saint Clare, Pennsylvania. We greet and welcome you to our Church. Our Church is a holy place. Our Church is where we get together in Jesus' Name. It is holy because we come here to worship, to be nourished in faith through Sacred Scripture and preaching, to open our hearts and minds to celebrate the mystery of salvation in Jesus Christ and to dedicate ourselves to a life of holiness and service to the Lord and others. The church building itself reflects this faith and calls us to enter into communion with God. We invite you to share our faith in Jesus Christ, to experience our worship and to live a life dedicated to the service of God and one another in Jesus' Name.

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December 17 – December 27, 2023

Vigil of Sunday (at St. Mary)

Saturday 4:00 p.m. + **Joseph & +Julia Gera** req. by son, Joseph & Cheryl Gera

Sunday 9:00 a.m. **Health & Blessings of the Parishioners** (livestreamed)

Monday 9:00 a.m. **No Divine Liturgy Today**

Tuesday 9:00 a.m. **No Divine Liturgy Today**

Wednesday 9:00 a.m. +**Joseph R. Gretskey** req. by Mrs. Metro Cremo & Family

Thursday 9:00 a.m. +**Michael Popovich** req. by MM Joseph Hydock

Friday 9:00 a.m. +**Mary Marencin** req. by Julia Hardock

Vigil of Sunday before Christmas (at St. Mary)

Saturday 4:00 p.m. +**John Dukmen** req. by MM Edward Kubilus & Family

Sunday 9:00 a.m. Sunday before the Nativity of Jesus Christ (livestreamed)

Health and Blessing of the Parishioners

Nativity of Jesus Christ (Christmas)

11:30 p.m. Compline

12:00 a.m. **Health and Blessing of the Parishioners** at SS Peter & Paul

Monday 10:00 a.m. **Health and Blessings of the Parishioners** at St. Mary

Synaxis of the Theotokos

Tuesday 9:00 a.m. +**Lewis Tokarick, Sr.** req. by son, Bruce Tokarick (SS P&P)

4:00 p.m. +**Charles Sinko** req. by Mrs. Helen Brusco (at St. Mary)

Epistle Readers: 12/3 – Judy Kostura; 12/6 – Marie Wanchick; 16/7 – Beverly Kostishak; 12/10 – Dolores Kramer; 12/17 – Judy Kostura; 12/24 – Ellen Sinkovich; 12/24 – Gail Burgess; 12/26 – Beverly Kostishak; 12/27 – Marie Wanchick; 12/31 – Judy Kostura; 1/1 – Jennifer Keer.

Candle Offering: Icons of the Mother of God; Jesus Christ;
For the Intention of **Justine & Mary Kafora** req. by Anna Adley & Joseph Kafora

Breakfast with Father: The Annual St. Nicholas Breakfast

Sunday, December 17, 2023 following the Divine Liturgy. ECF Class will participate in place of the regular class time. All are welcome to attend.

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COMMENTARY ON LUKE, HOMILY 101.

14:7-14 First and Last at the Banquet Table

JESUS CALLS US TO BE HUMBLE, MODEST AND PRAISEWORTHY. CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA: "When," he says, "a man more honorable than you comes, he that invited you and him will say, 'Give this man place.'" Oh, what great shame is there in having to do this! It is like a theft, so to speak, and the restitution of the stolen goods. He must restore what he has seized because he had no right to take it. The modest and praiseworthy person, who without fear of blame might have claimed the dignity of sitting among the foremost, does not seek it. He yields to others what might be called his own, that he may not even seem to be overcome by empty pride. Such a one shall receive honor as his due. He says, "He shall hear him who invited him say, 'Come up here.'"...

If any one among you wants to be set above others, let him win it by the decree of heaven and be crowned by those honors that God bestows. Let him surpass the many by having the testimony of glorious virtues. The rule of virtue is a lowly mind that does not love boasting. It is humility. The blessed Paul also counted this worthy of all esteem. He writes to those who eagerly desire saintly pursuits, "Love humility." COMMENTARY ON LUKE, HOMILY 101.

The Incredible Truth

In him we live and move and have our being
Acts of the Apostles 17: 28.

Our heavenly Father seeks himself in us and the aridity and sorrow of our heart is the sorrow of God who is not known in us, who cannot find himself in us because we do not dare to believe or trust the incredible truth that He can live in us and live there out of choice, out of preference simply because of our incredible desire for his presence. Indeed, we exist and live solely for this, to be the place He has chosen for his presence, his manifestation in the world, his always ready epiphany. But we cannot seem to gather together enough faith response that would attract the attention of the Holy Spirit to raise our level of worthiness and render us the abiding place of our Creator God! We do not become excited enough to be the chosen throne of the God of the universe!

We meek all this dark and inglorious, even seemingly sinister because we fail to accept it, to believe it; we refuse in fact to believe and live it. It is not that we hate God, rather that we hate ourselves, despair of ourselves. If we once began to recognize, humbly but truly the real value of our own self, we would see that this value was the sign of our God in our being, the signature of God upon our body and soul.

Perhaps we still do not understand truly that our God created us out of love, that He does in fact love us intimately and dearly, can be present in us, can live in us, can dwell in us, actually daily invites us, continually saves us and offers an understanding and light which are like nothing ever found in books or heard in sermons.

His revelation in Scripture and in the liturgical life of the Church offer again and again a witness to this endearing love and truth. We ought never stop praying to come to an abiding belief in the incredible truth that He chooses to abide in us, his choicest creation. May we never stop asking him to shatter our doubts about his intentions and purpose. May we become as focused and zealous in response to his first shown love as He is in making it plainly manifest to us. Lord, burn from my soul all bitterness that the sweetness of your engaging love is made plain for me.

Praising God

By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually. That is, the fruits of our lips giving thanks to his name
Hebrews 13 15.

Christians seem to use petition more than praise in their prayers. Yet St. Paul says we should praise God "continually." The Spirit was sent into our hearts that we might glorify Jesus. Praising and glorifying opens us to God.

We have been taught and we take seriously to give respect to family and friends. How much more is it important to render respect to our Creator God! When we praise and honor God, then He will honor us, "for those who honor me I honor in my turn...." 1 Samuel 2: 30.

We must learn that it is especially important to praise God when we have doubts and temptations, when we are not in the proper mood to praise. Praise him when things go right and when things go wrong. In little things, like a friend's rebuke and in big things like having a spouse with terminal cancer. We can praise our God when we are driving, we can sing his praises when we are alone, walking or jogging. We can praise him as we prepare for bed and as we awaken. We can praise him "continually," because if we awaken during the night his glory can be formed on our lips.

First and foremost, we can join believers in praising our God at the public services of the Church each Sunday and holyday. We are afforded an opportunity to sing and pray his praises with glorification in song and word. We can learn from the saints experience for ourselves that singing the praise of the Holy Trinity is doubly praying.

As we establish the pattern of praise and glorification of our God daily, we can expect him to abundantly bless us for our sincere efforts for He has promised to honor "in my turn." Ours should be the soul-set, mind-set of praising and glorifying our God without ceasing. May there be true substance to our prayer life not simply empty form.

Immortal Deeds

What this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her
Mark 14: 9.

Which of your accomplishments in life do you think will be most remembered and valued by others after you?

Sculptor Frank Eliscu might have guessed that his signature work would be the Cascade of Books outside the Library of Congress or the Presidential Eagle in the White House. But the most coveted piece of his art is a small statue that can be held in one hand – the Heisman Trophy – awarded annually to the most outstanding college football player in the United States.

The trophy was Eliscu's first commission, completed when he was only twenty two years of age. "It was not one of my best works of art," he said, but it turned out to be like the Statue of Liberty: not beautiful, but dear to the hearts of people."

No doubt Mary of Bethany never guessed she would be remembered for an action initially criticized as wasteful and inappropriate. After she poured a jar of very expensive perfume on Jesus, the Lord silenced the outcry against her by saying, "Wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her" Mark 14:9.

Our truly immortal deeds will be like hers – simple acts of love for the Lord Jesus Christ – accepted and commended by him. We often make the mistake of thinking those positions we occupy in the world which bring us great renown or notoriety are the ones for which we will gain the notice of our God. Many times it is precisely these which drag us down into the depths of degradation and alienation from God.

*No service in itself is small,
none great, though earth it fill;
but that is small which seeks its own,
and great that does God's will.*

A life lived for God leaves a lasting legacy.

He Waited Too Long

And the Lord said, my Spirit shall not always strive with man, for he is flesh; yet his days shall be a hundred and twenty years
Genesis 6: 3.

When the Holy Spirit invites and calls someone, it is very dangerous to neglect, ignore or disregard it. The Holy Spirit will finally cease to call if his invitation is not heeded and the heart is hardened.

A young man heard the Holy Spirit call him, but he pushed it off. He thought to himself that he wanted to have a good time in the world first and live for himself until he was somewhat older. He was young and had many years to spend with God. Then he would make the change, accept Christ as his Saviour and live for him. But this young man never lived to be thirty years old. When he was twenty nine- years, eleven months and some twenty five days old, our heavenly Father called him from this earth. It is questionable he would ever have repented after living so long simply for himself. No doubt our heavenly Father saw he would not repent so he was mercifully taken before he sinned and degraded himself even worse. He used God's time as his own.

Augustine in the West was inclined to pursue the truth of Christ but wanted to wait and prayed the Lord grant him repentance, but not yet. Finally, before it was too late, he submitted to the grace of his praying mother, Monica and entered the rich life of the Church. Similarly, we have the example of St. Seraphim of Sarov who as a young man pursued the invitation and grace of redemption offered by the Holy Spirit and rose in adulthood as an example for all to follow Christ.

Never make plans to serve self and the world even for a season and then at a certain age to begin serving God which is the purpose of our life. Our Christian vocation is all inclusive. Tomorrow is not promised to anyone and that age or time may never come. "God is not mocked; for what a man sows, he shall also reap" Galatians 6: 7. The temptations of youth are myriad, but we can thank our heavenly Father He will help us resist any and all temptations.

Young people, immature people, take warning. If you have rejected the invitation of the call of the Holy Spirit, repent now and fulfill your baptismal vows by repenting, confessing your shortcoming sins and give your heart and soul entirely to our Lord. Time is short and running out. It is about the twelfth hour for so many of us. "Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts" Hebrews 3: 15. The time to respond is when He calls.