

Saints Peter & Paul  
Byzantine Catholic Church  
107 South Fourth Street  
Minersville, PA 17954

St. Mary's (Dominion of the Mother of God)  
Byzantine Catholic Church  
131 South Morris Street  
Saint Clair, PA 17970

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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 Sunday One half hour prior to Divine Liturgy and Daily  
prior to Divine Liturgy. Saturday 1pm to 2pm

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 570-544-2074

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Mahal-Ritzel Funeral Home

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Mark J. Mahal- Funeral Director

### Mercy and Forgiveness

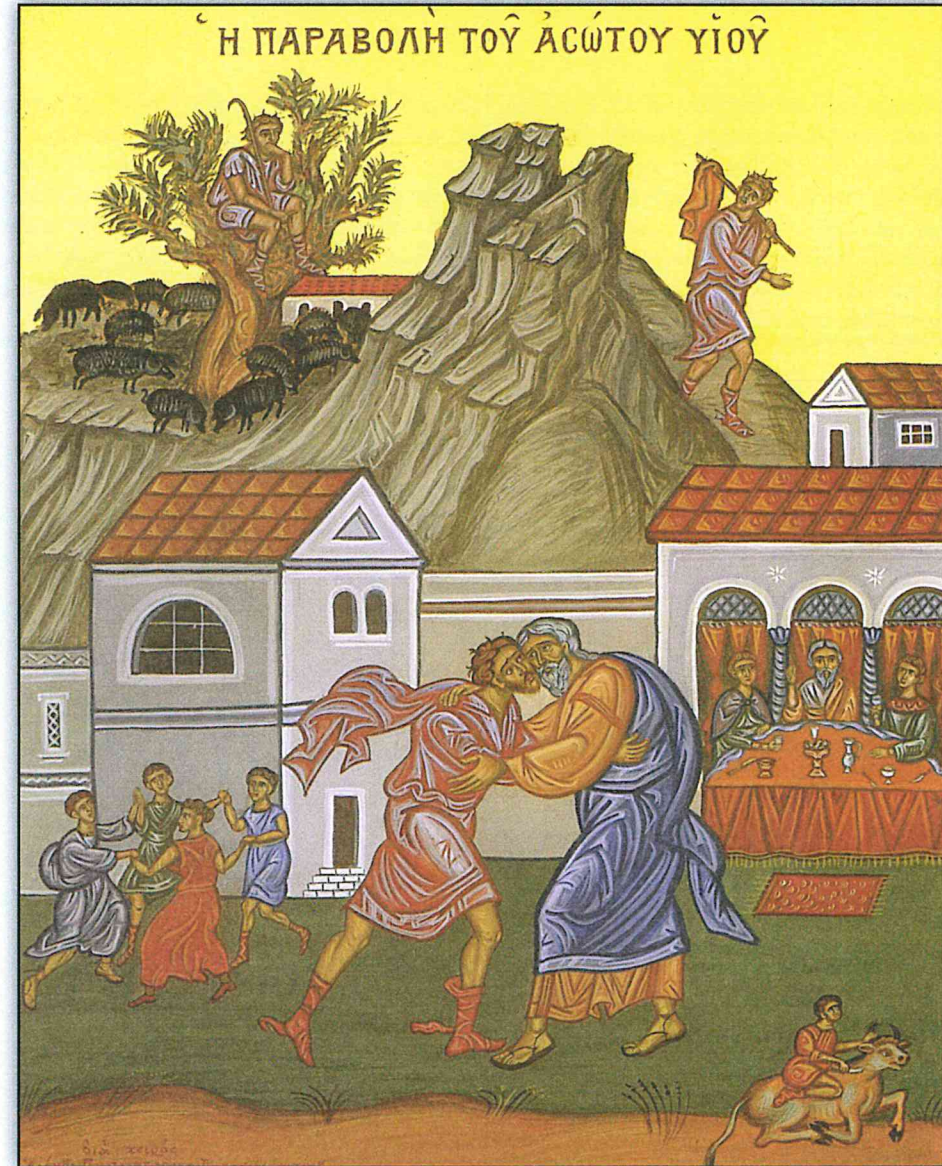
All that God looks for from us is the slightest opening and He forgives a multitude of sins. ... There were two brothers: they divided their father's goods between them and one stayed home, while the other went away to a foreign country, wasted all he had been given, and then could not bear the shame of his poverty. The son who went away represents those who fall after baptism. This is clear from the fact that he is called a son, since no one is called a son unless he is baptized. Also, he lived in his father's house and took a share of all his father's goods. Before baptism no one receives the Father's goods or enters upon the inheritance. We can therefore take all this as signifying the state of believers.

What does he say after falling into the depths of evil? I will return to my father. The reason the father let him go and did not prevent his departure for a foreign land was so that he might learn well by experience what good things are enjoyed by the one who stays at home. For when words would

not convince us God often leaves us to learn from the things that happen to us. When the dissolute returned after going to a foreign country and finding out by experience what a great sin it is to leave the father's house, the father did not remember past injuries but welcomed him with open arms. Why? Because he was a father and not a judge. And there were dances and festivities and banquets and the whole house was full of joy and gladness.

Are you asking: "Is this what he gets for his wickedness?" Not for his wickedness, but for his return home; not for sin, but for repentance; not for evil, but for being converted. What is more, when the elder son was angry at this the father gently won him over, saying: You were always with me, but he was lost and has been found; he was dead and has come back to life. "When someone who was lost has to be saved," says the father, "it is not the time for passing judgment or making minute inquiries, but only for mercy and forgiveness."

## SUNDAY OF THE PRODIGAL SON



Icon of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32)

**Sunday of the Prodigal Son**  
Tone 1

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.

**February 1 – February 7, AD2026**

**Vigil of Sunday**  
**Saturday** 4:00 p.m. **+Fr. Francis Gera req. by The Estate \***

**Sunday** 9:00 a.m. **Health and Blessings of the Parishioners\***

**Monday** 9:00 a.m. **Encounter of our Lord with Simeon**  
**H&B Parishioners\***  
**4:00 p.m. H&B Parishioners\***

**Tuesday** 9:00 a.m. **+John KovichB req. by Marie Wanchick\***

**Wednesday** 9:00 a.m. **Private Intention\***

**Thursday** 9:00 a.m. **Private Intention\***

**Friday** 9:00 a.m. **Private Intention\***

**Saturday** 9:00 a.m. **+All Souls\***

**Saturday Vigil**  
4:00 p.m. **+All Souls\***

\*St. Mary  
\*SS Peter & Paul

**Epistle Readers;** 2/1 – Ellen Sinkovich; 2/2 – Dolores Kramer; 2/8 – Laura Mitchell; 2/15 – Jennifer Keer; 2/22 – Paulette Murphy; 3/1 – Gail Burgess.

**Breakfast with Father** will resume on February 15 following the Divine Liturgy. Two things will occur: 1) we will follow the more Western tradition and have a full breakfast menu, and 2) the instruction will include our liturgical practices which include all the penitential periods and their corresponding monastic roots.

Scheduled projects:  
2/7 – Spaghetti prep 9a.m. to 1p.m.  
2/8 – Spaghetti Dinner 11a.m. till 1p.m.

Desserts are needed on February 7

This past Sunday we commemorated the Publican and Pharisee and learned of the need for humility in our celebrating the Great Fast or Great Lent. Humility is the key to accepting God's grace in our lives without which our struggles are magnified.

This week we encounter the Prodigal Son and his realization of mistakes he made in his life. He finally recognized the gift of his father and all he did for him.

As we prepare for Great Lent, let us put aside our wants and desires and recognize all that our God does for us. We do not often see that He puts people in our path in life's journey to guide us. We sometimes think in the same way as the Prodigal Son which is to enjoy life to the fullest extent that our limited abilities allow, not realizing the spiritual harm we are causing to our immortal soul.

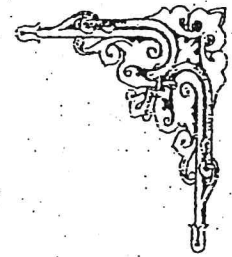
The Great Fast is the time to get our spiritual lives in order. We cannot simply attend the Divine Liturgy on Sundays and think that just by being here we will have kept our salvation. Christ won for us on the Cross. Not, it takes a real relationship with Him through the teaching of Holy Mother Church and her magisterium to keep what Christ has won for us. Take the time this Great Lent to pray, sacrifice and give alms to enjoy eternal life which begins here and now for those who keep the Commandments and follow the narrow road that Jesus trod.

I commend you to God's great mercy and pray that the celebration of the Great Fast is of benefit to you. May God, bless, save and protect you.

**This is what you shall tell the  
Israelites: I AM sent me to  
you...This is my name forever  
Exodus 3: 14, 15.**

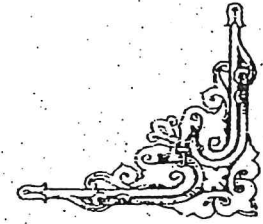
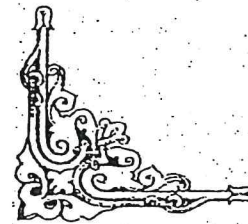
**Say to my soul, "I AM your  
salvation" Psalms 35: 3.**

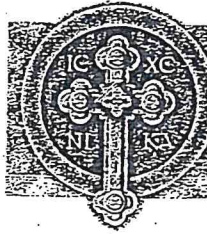
**Hear my people and I will  
speak; Israel, I will testify  
against you: God, your God,  
I AM Psalms 50: 7.**



O LORD my God,  
I called to you for help  
and you healed me.

Psalm 30:2





# EPISTLE OF JEREMIAH

*Author*—Jeremiah the prophet

*Date*—Written in the aftermath of the sack of Jerusalem (597 BC) and the exile to Babylon of her leaders, probably from Egypt.

*Major Theme*—Beware of idols!

*Background*—The epistle is a diatribe against the sin of idolatry as represented by the Baal cult. Jeremiah wrote to the Israelites to exhort and warn them to be free of a sin that must have been on the increase at this time. Because the epistle has very little historical information, it became timeless and was used by certain Church Fathers to combat pagan errors and superstitions practiced in their own day. The epistle conveys a message that heresy and false ideas about God are both ridiculous and untenable.

## Outline

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|--|--|
| I. Historical Information (vv. 1-6)  | E. The Chaldeans even bring shame upon their own idols (vv. 40-44)             |
| II. Condemnation of Idolatry (vv. 7-73)  | F. Idols are the works of human hands (vv. 45-52)                              |
| A. Idols adorned like people (vv. 7-14)  | G. Idols are powerless (vv. 53-57)   |
| B. Uselessness and helplessness of idols (vv. 15-24)                                   | H. Idols cannot be compared to the sun, moon, stars, animals, etc. (vv. 58-69) |
| C. Idols cannot move (vv. 25-28)   | I. Idols compared to scarecrows, brambles, and a corpse (vv. 70-73)            |
| D. Idols cannot repay good or evil; they cannot give wealth, save, or heal (vv. 29-39) |  |

I give up my life for my sheep. I have other sheep that are not in this sheep pen. I must also bring them together, when they hear my voice. Then there will be one flock of sheep and one shepherd.

**John 10: 11 - 16.**

**I AM the one who raises the dead to life!**

Jesus then said to Martha, "I am the one who raises the dead to life! Everyone who has faith in me will live, even if they die. And everyone who lives because of faith in me will never really die. Do you believe this?" "Yes, Lord," she replied. "I believe that you are Christ, the Son of God. You are the one we hoped would come into the world."

**John 11: 25 -27.**

**I AM the way, the truth and the life!**

I am the way, the truth and the life! Without me no one can go to the Father.

**John 14: 6.**

**I AM the vine.**

I am the vine and you are the branches. If you stay joined to me and I stay joined to you, then you will produce lots of fruit. But you cannot do anything without me. If you do not stay joined to me, you will be thrown away. You will be like dried out branches that are gathered up and burned in a fire. Stay joined to me and let my teachings become part of you. Then you can pray for whatever you want and your prayer will be answered.

**John 15: 5 - 7.**

**I solemnly assure you, before Abraham came to be, I AM John 8: 58.**

**Where I AM, there will my servant be John 12: 26.**

**I will that they be with me where I AM John 17: 24.**

**I AM he that lives Revelation 1: 18.**

**I AM the bread that gives life!**

I am the bread that gives life! Your ancestors ate manna in the desert, and later they died. But the bread from heaven has come down so that no one who eats it will ever die. I am that bread from heaven. Everyone who eats it will live forever. My flesh is the life-giving bread that I give to the people of this world.

**John 6: 47 – 51.**

**I AM the light of the world!**

Once again Jesus spoke to the people. This time he said, "I am the light of the world! Follow me and you will not be walking in darkness. You will have the light that gives light"

**John 8: 12.**



**I AM the sheep gate.**

Jesus said: "I will tell you for certain that I am the gate for sheep. Everyone who came before me was a thief or a robber, and the sheep did not listen to any of them. I am the gate. All who come in through me will be saved. Through me they will come and go and find pasture. A thief comes only to rob, kill, and destroy. I come so everyone would have life, and have it abundantly."

**John 10: 7 -10.**

**I AM the good shepherd.**

I am the good shepherd and the good shepherd gives up his life for his sheep. Hired workers are not like the shepherd. They do not own the sheep and when they see a wolf coming, they run off and leave the sheep. Then the wolf attacks and scatters the flock. Hired workers run away because they do not care about the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep and they know me. Just as the Father knows me, I know the Father and

## **Prodigal Son**

**There is nothing parallel to this wonderful parable in the other New Testament writers. We can observe, even casually, that the description is too restricted; it could just as well have had the better title of The Prodigal Father, who was as reckless in unreservedly loving as the son was in spending and sinning.**

**In this parable, which no mortal would dared to invent, our Lord reveals the very heart of God in order to inspire the sinner with confidence in his approach to the Almighty. It is not now a question of one out of a hundred, or even one out of ten, but one out of two and these two the only sons of a loving and devoted father.**

**The contrasts are striking; the younger son and spoiled child, little sensible of the father's devoted love, almost impatient for the father's death so that he may receive his inheritance, departing as soon as he has received his heart's desire. The following details are masterly; loss of money, a great famine, absolute want, a Jewish hireling under a pagan gentile master in a "faraway country," one who has become so desperate he succumbs to being a "feeder of swine." A Jew in a pig sty with his head almost in the pig trough! Revolting circumstances, we can be sure!**

**In all the allegorization of the parable these details provide a compelling and powerful picture of the sad state to which the sinner is reduced when he departs from his heavenly father. At last his eyes are opened to realize the gravity and seriousness of his situation.**

**As the gospel insists, the true basis of penance or repentance is the sincere admission of sinfulness with a determination to destroy sin by returning to the embrace of God. The suggestion of the parable is clear: all the time that the son has forgotten his father, the father has not forgotten his son but has looked out daily over the long course of his absence, for his return with eager longing; so that one day, he sees him "when he was yet afar off." Unlike the Pharisees, he is waiting with love and compassion to make the first move towards reconciliation. The erring son is not allowed to finish even the words of the confession he has prepared; there cannot be a question of his being taken back as a hireling; he is restored immediately to the dignity of a son. And lest he be disgraced, the father quickly orders a robe of first quality, a ring for his finger, shoes for his feet,**

to complete all and bring us back to the thought of the Messianic Great Supper-Banquet, a feast of the best is prepared with music and celebratory singing.

Is this not a genuine echo of our heavenly Father and the angels about which Christ previously spoke? The Old Testament presents God often in the guise of a Good Shepherd so that every Jew who heard the parable understood the application. There is no lack of consideration for the just, but God's eagerness to pardon the sinner and the great joy among the angels in heaven over even one repentant soul is bound to arouse nobility of soul in all who hear the words of the Lord.

With sudden and deep contrast to the loving enthusiasm of the Father, we witness the unfeeling coldness of the other son, so we recall the Pharisaic complaint about God's joy in pardoning the repentant sinner. There is no longer a note of severity and renunciation but one of confidence in the astonishing kindness of God towards frail human nature, a mercy that even anticipates the repentance of the sinner and pursues him in order to render him worthy of pardon.

That father no doubt daily prayed for the return of his flesh and blood, for the forgiveness of his rebellion. The overwhelming joy in the heart of the father when His grace wins back the heart of a rehabilitated sinner is beautiful to behold. There is little need to further explain the love, mercy and forgiveness of our heavenly Father after listening carefully to this parable. Just as the bitter opposition of the Scribes and Pharisees prejudiced them against the Lord, this parable is offered in answer to their complaints against the familiar friendliness our Lord insists in using to draw sinners to himself. Here we see the true description of God's regard for the truly just: "Son you are always with me and all that I have is yours."

It was long customary to regard this parable as an allegory of the Jews depicted by the elder son and the gentiles sinners, but the younger son does not represent the sinner; he IS the sinner. Some again regard the elder son as representing the real just people, others as the hypocritical just, the Pharisees.

It might also be said that even the faithful and loyal friends of God do not always realize the unplumbed depths of God's mercy. But it would be false to the parable to see the Pharisees in the elder brother; our Lord was far from admitting that they served God faithfully. Today let us accept God's first and constantly shown mercy; let us pursue it for ourselves. Let us, like the prodigal son, take advantage of the deep and abiding love our God has for each of us. Let us hasten then to the confessional in repentance!

# THE GREAT "I AM"

The apostle John states, "Jesus worked many other miracles for his disciples, and not all of them are written in this book. But these are written so that you will put your faith in Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God. If you have faith in him, you will have true life" (John 20:30–31).

We can see that John's aim is two-fold. On one hand, he seeks to demonstrate that Jesus is "the Messiah, the Son of God." On the other, he wants people to know the true identity of Jesus, so that "you will have true life."

When God commanded Moses to lead Israel out of slavery in Egypt, Moses asked what God's name was. God replied, "tell them that the LORD, whose name is 'I Am,' has sent you" (Exodus 3:13–15). Jesus shows that he has been in God's plan from the beginning when he said: "even before Abraham was, I was, and I am" (John 8:58).

In John's Gospel, Jesus uses the term "I am" to connect himself to aspects of God's nature and to identify himself as the one who

- supplies all needs
- brings the knowledge about God to all people
- is the way for people to find God and become God's people
- promises that all who believe in him will have eternal life
- invites everyone to share in the common life as the new people of God