

Saints Peter & Paul St. Mary's (Dormition of the Mother of God)
 Byzantine Catholic Church Byzantine Catholic Church
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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)

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Icons Show the Human Face of God

In recent months my Sunday reflections have frequently focused on our Christian brothers and sisters of the East. Wishing as it were to embrace their rich tradition of faith in a single glance, today I would like to refer once again to the sense of mystery which is apparent in their icons. The East and the West vie with each other to put their art at the service of the faith.

But from the East, where icons had to be defended with bloodshed in the iconoclast crisis of the eighth and ninth centuries, comes a particular call jealously to preserve the religious nature of this art. It is based on the mystery of the Incarnation, in which God chose to assume a human face. In the last analysis, sacred art seeks to transmit something of the mystery of that face.

This is why the East firmly insists on the spiritual qualities which must characterize the artist,

to whom Simeon of Thessalonica, the great defender of Tradition, addresses this important exhortation: "Teach with words, write with letters, paint with colors, in conformity with Tradition; the painting is true, as is the writing of books; and the grace of God is present in them, because what is represented there is holy."

By contemplating icons in the whole context of liturgical and ecclesial life, the Christian community is called to grow in its experience of God, and to become more and more a living icon of the communion of life between the Three Divine Persons.

Pope John Paul II

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FIRST SUNDAY OF THE GREAT FAST
 SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY



Icon of the Holy Images

Volume 2024
Christ is among us!

Number 8
He is and will be!

**1st Sunday of the Great Fast
Tone 5**

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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February 18 – February 24, AD2024

Vigil of Sunday at St. Mary

Saturday	4:00 p.m.	Special Intention req. by Marie Wanchick
Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Health and Blessing of the Parishioners* (livestreamed)
Monday	9:00 a.m.	
Tuesday	9:00 a.m.	
Wednesday	7:00 p.m.	Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts*
Thursday	9:00 a.m.	
Friday	12:00 p.m.	Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts*
Saturday	9:00 a.m.	+Andrew & Margaret Gershak req. by Estate*
Saturday Vigil	4:00 p.m.	+Edward J., +Sophia & +Edward, Jr. Demko req. by Theresa Wagner*
Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Health & Blessing of the Parishioners*

*St. Mary

*SS Peter & Paul

Epistle Readers: 2/4 – Jennifer Keer; 2/11 – Dolores Kramer; 2/18 – Judy Kostura; 2/25 – Jennifer Keer; 3/3 – Beverly Kostishak; 3/10 – Gail Burgess; 3/17 – Marie Wanchick; 3/24 – Paulette Murphy; 3/25 – Judy Kostura; 3/26 – Ellen Sinkovich; 3/27 – Laura Mitchell; 3/28 – Paulette Murphy; 3/29 – Dolores Kramer; 3/30 – Marie Wanchick; 3/31 – Laura Mitchell.

Candle Offering: Candles before the Icons of the Mother of God and Jesus Christ and the Sacramental Table are offered for **H&B George Sinkovich**

Breakfast with Father

Today the 1st Sunday of the Great Fast following the Divine Liturgy we will celebrate Lenten Vespers followed by a bible study with a light lunch in the church dining hall.

The Bible Study and Lenten Meal will take place on the Five Sundays of the Great Fast. The Monthly breakfast will resume following the Holy Resurrection.

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LENT 1:

When faith is about seeing

Philip seems to have had some influence in the Johannine community. Only John singles him out for specific actions and words (see also 6:5- 7; 12:20-26; 14:8-9). Philip behaves like an ideal disciple, responding quickly to Jesus and having privileged access to him. He is so well prepared that two words from Jesus, "Follow me," are enough for him to become one of his disciples. Yet Philip's first reaction is to get back to his hometown—and to recruit Nathanael. Philip testifies openly about Jesus: "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus, son of Joseph from Nazareth." Who are the "we"? Philip might be referring to Peter, Andrew, and himself. Or is it the "we" of the Johannine community? As a matter of fact, Philip's statement anticipates the community's Easter conviction that Jesus fulfills the Law and the Prophets. The spiritual journey in which the disciples get involved is not only their private journey but also that of a community which keeps deepening its theological understanding of Jesus. We all know about the witty reply from Nathanael, "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" Philip's reply repeats Jesus' call to the first disciples: "Come and see." Human agency can also play a significant role in awakening someone to Jesus' call and in making it possible for one to see God through the actions and the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. What are the "greater things" I have seen through my faith in Jesus?

Prayer Starter: To know you, Lord Jesus, true man and true God, is eternal life. Blessed are you, and blessed be God forever.

even in this case, must be established by bearing in mind the historical context deriving from the tradition of Israel, expressed and influenced by Daniel's prophecy which gives rise to the formulation of a messianic concept (Daniel 7: 13, 14).

"Son of Man" in this context does not signify merely a common man belonging to the human race; it refers rather, to a personage who will receive from God a universal dominion, transcending history, in the eschatological era. On the lips of Jesus and in the gospel texts, the expression is therefore fraught with a full meaning that embraces the divine and human, heaven and earth, history and eschatology, as Jesus Himself gives us to understand when testifying before Caiaphas that He is the Son of God, He emphatically predicts, "From now on you will set the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power" and "coming on the clouds of heaven" Matthew 26: 64.

The power and glory of God is therefore immanent in the Son of Man. We are once again face to face with the unique Man-God, true man and true God. This reflection brings us back continually to Him so that we may believe and that believing, we may pray and adore.



A TRICK

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

—St. Matthew 6:24

It is said that some African tribes snare monkeys by inserting sweets in gourds through small openings. The little beasts grasp the coveted sweets and will not let go, so they are easily taken. The devil plays a similar trick on those whom he tempts successfully. They let themselves be caught by sin because they like some pleasure, comrade, or possession, and will not let go.

Symbol of Suffering Humanity

"Behold the man!" John 19: 5. We recall these words of Pilate when he presented Jesus to the High Priests and guards, after having had Him scourged and before pronouncing the definitive sentence of death on a cross. Jesus, covered with wounds, crowned with thorns, clothed in purple, mocked and smitten by the soldiers, and already close to death, is the symbol of suffering humanity.

"Behold the man!" This expression contains in a certain sense the whole truth about Christ, true man; about Him Who is like us in all things except sin; about Him Who is united in a certain way with every human person. They called Him the "friend of tax collectors and sinners."

Precisely as a victim for sin He entered into solidarity with all mankind including "sinners" even to death on a cross. Precisely in this condition of victim to which Jesus is reduced, there stands out a final aspect of His humanity which must be accepted and profoundly meditated on in the light of the mystery of His self-emptying or *kenosis*.

According to St. Paul, He "though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness, and found human in appearance, he humbled himself becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross" Philippians 2: 6 - 8. Thus, we are introduced to the mystery of Christ's self emptying. To express this mystery the Apostle uses first of all the words "emptied himself" and that refers especially to the reality of the Incarnation, "The Word became flesh" John 1:14. God the Son assumed human nature, humanity, and became true man, while remaining God! The truth about Christ as man must always be considered in relation to God the Son.

This permanent reference itself is indicated by St. Paul's text, "He emptied himself" does not in any way mean that He ceased to be God; that would be absurd! It means rather, as the Apostle perceptively expresses it, that "He did not deem equality with God something to be grasped," but "though he was in the form of God" as the true

Son of God, He assumed a human nature deprived of glory, subject to suffering and death, in which he could live in obedience to the Father, even to the ultimate sacrifice. In this context, His becoming like man, involved a voluntary renunciation, which extended even to the privileges He could have enjoyed as man. In fact, He assumes "the form of a slave." He does not wish to belong to the categories of the powerful; He wished to be as one Who serves: "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve" Mark 10: 45.

In fact, we see in the gospels that Christ's earthly life was marked from the beginning by poverty. This was clearly set out in the account of His birth, when the evangelist Luke observes that "there was no room for them in the inn" and that Jesus was born in a "stable and laid in a manger" Luke 2: 7.

From St. Matthew, we learn that already in the first months of His life He experienced the lot of a refugee (Matthew 2: 13 - 15). His hidden life at Nazareth was lived in extremely modest conditions; the head of the family was a carpenter (Matthew 13: 55) and Jesus Himself worked with His putative father (Mark 6:3). When He began His teaching ministry, His situation continued to be one of extreme poverty, as He Himself bears witness to in a certain way by referring to the precarious conditions of life imposed on His ministry of evangelization. "Foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head" Luke 9: 58.

From the very beginning Jesus' messianic mission encountered opposition and misunderstanding, despite the "signs" which He worked. He was under observation and persecuted by those who had power and influence over the people. Finally, He was accused, condemned, and put to death on a cross, the most infamous of all forms of capital punishment. It was applied only in the case of crimes of extreme gravity, especially to those who were not Roman citizens, and to slaves. For this reason also it can be said with the Apostle that Christ literally took "the form of a slave" Philippians 2: 7.

In this self emptying, which profoundly characterizes the truth about Christ, true man, we can say that it re-establishes the truth of universal man; it re-establishes it and restores it.

In fact, when we read that the Son "did not regard equality with God something to be grasped" we cannot but see in the words an illusion to the first and original

temptation to which Adam and Eve yielded in the beginning: "You will become, that is, you will be like God, knowing good and evil" Genesis 3: 5. They yielded to the temptation to be "like God" even though they were only creatures. He Who is God the Son "did not regard equality with God something to be grasped" In becoming man, "He emptied himself," and by that choice He restored all human beings, however poor and deprived, to their original dignity.

To express this mystery of Christ's self emptying, St. Paul also uses another phrase: "He humbled himself." He used this expression in the context of the reality of the redemption. In fact, he writes that Jesus Christ "humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross" Philippians 2: 8. Here Christ's self emptying is described in its definitive dimension. From the human point of view, it is the dimension of the self-emptying by means of the Passion and ignominious death.

From the divine point of view it is the redemption effected by the merciful love of the Father through the Son Who freely obeyed out of love for the Father and for mankind to be saved. In that moment there was a new beginning of God's glory in human history, the glory of Christ, His Son made man. In fact, the Pauline text says, "Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name" Philippians 2:9.

St. Athanasius, commenting on this text of the Letter to the Philippians, says: "This expression, has exalted him, does not imply that the nature of the Word was exalted; the latter has been and always will be equal to God. It indicates however, the exaltation of human nature. These words, therefore were uttered only after the Incarnation of the Word, so that it would be clear that terms such as "humbled" and "exalted" refer solely to the human dimension. In fact, only what is humble can be "exalted" St. Athanasius, Against the Arians.

The world of human nature, all humanity, humiliated in the painful condition to which it has been reduced by sin, finds the source of its new glory in the exaltation of Christ the Man. Jesus generally referred to Himself as the "Son of Man" Mark 2: 10; Matthew 8:20; Luke 9: 22; John 8: 28.

This expression, according to the meaning of the common language of the time, could also indicate that He is true man just like all other human beings, and undoubtedly it refers to His real humanity. However, the strictly biblical meaning,