

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

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

Saints Peter & Paul Rectory: (570) 544-2074

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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

Bulletins are sponsored by

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Mark J. Mahal- Funeral Director

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.

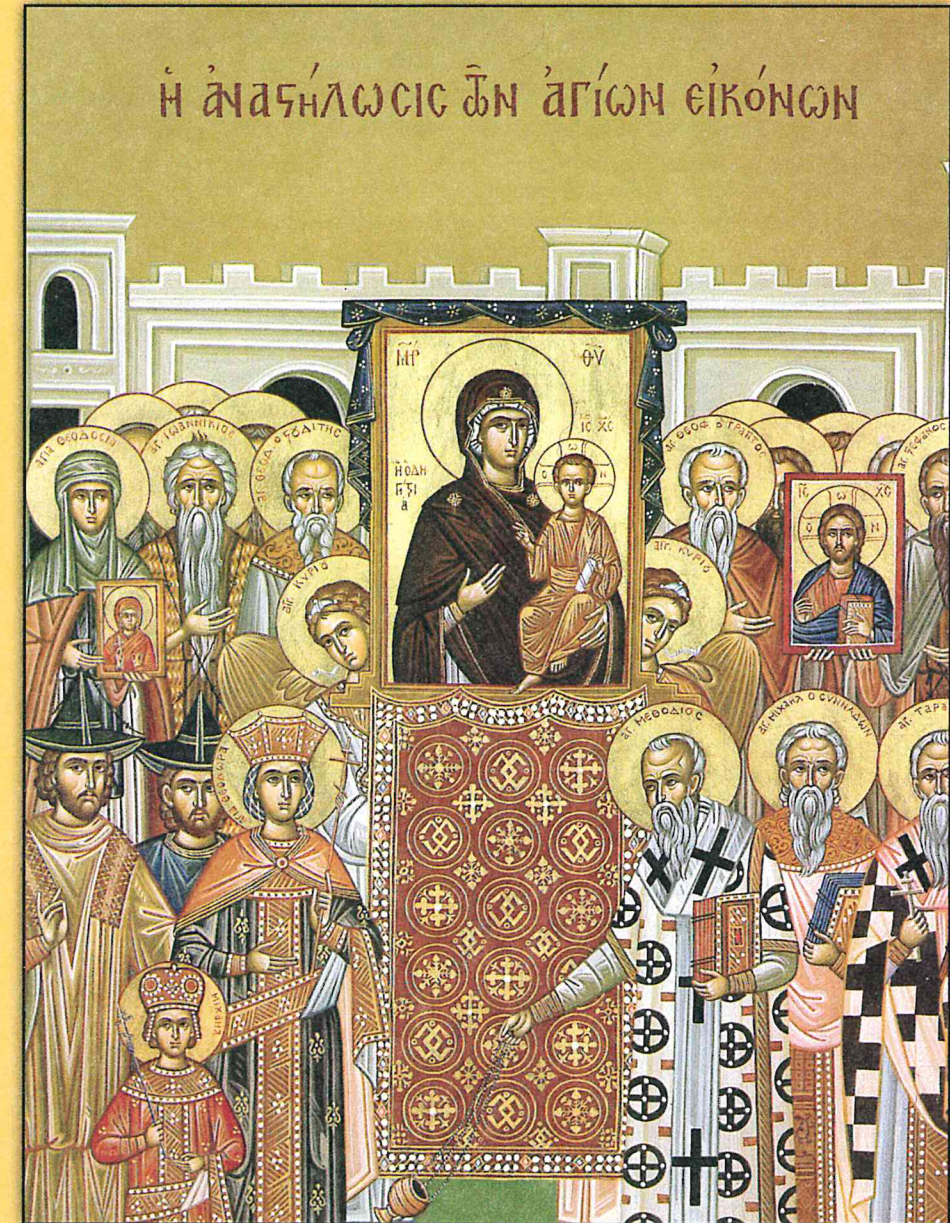
But from the East, where icons had to be defended with bloodshed in the iconoclast crisis of the eighth and ninth centuries, comes a particular call jealously to preserve the religious nature of this art. It is based on the mystery of the Incarnation, in which God chose to assume a human face. In the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

FIRST SUNDAY OF THE GREAT FAST SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY



Icon of the Holy Images

1st Sunday of the Great Fast
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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February 22 – February 28, 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.	No Service Today*
Tuesday	9:00 a.m.	No Service Today*
Wednesday	6:00 p.m.	Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts*
Thursday	9:00 a.m.	3 rd Lenten Hour*
Friday	4:00 p.m.	Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts*
Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Second +All Souls
Saturday Vigil	4:00 p.m.	Fr. Francis Gera req. by the Estate*

*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.

Readers for the Presanctified Gifts: 2/25 – Laura Mitchell (1st reading); Dolores Kramer (2nd reading)

Bible Study with Father today, February 22, following the Divine Liturgy. A Lenten Meal will be provided following the Bible Study. Bible Study will continue throughout the Great Fast on Sunday. Young adults are especially encouraged to join us. We live in an especially turbulent time where violence is becoming more pronounced. Only knowledge of Jesus Christ can alleviate what ails us and our country. Our focus will be the Gospel of St. Matthew.

Coffee Social: On Thursday, February 26, at 10:00 a.m., a Coffee Social will be held in our parish dining hall for all interested seniors for a time of fellowship. I am especially interested in learning about your experiences that led you to Christ.

Synodal Group: Meeting on Thursday, February 26, 7:00 p.m. in the rectory.

Candle Offering: Health and God's Blessings for **Marie Wanchick** offered by Dolores and Ron Kramer. This was offered last week, but was received after the bulletin was printed.

Spaghetti Dinner: The dinner realized \$1,628.48 which included donations. Sincere thanks and appreciation to all who participated the preparations and execution of the dinner. It is your generosity of time and talent that make fund-raising efforts successful.

Philip and Nathanael Follow Jesus

The best disciples chosen from the worst place. Chrysostom: Having then taken [Peter and the other disciple], Jesus next goes to the capture of the others and draws to him Philip and Nathanael. Now in the case of Nathanael this was not so amazing because the fame of Jesus had gone all over Syria. But it is truly remarkable concerning Peter, James and Philip, that they believed not only before the miracles, but that they did so being from Galilee, out of which "arises no prophet," nor "can any good thing come." The Galileans were somehow of a more boorish and dull disposition than others. But even in this Christ displayed his power. He selected his choicest disciples from a land that bore no fruit. homilies On the Gospel of John 20.1.2

Philip The thoughtful convert. Chrysostom: "To every thoughtful person there is a benefit"... and Christ implied more than this when he said, "He that seeks finds." This is why I no longer wonder how it was that Philip followed Christ. Andrew was persuaded when he heard from John, and Peter was persuaded when he heard from Andrew. But Philip, not having learned anything from anyone but Christ who said to him only this, "Follow me," immediately obeyed and did not go back. In fact, he even became a preacher to others. For he ran to Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets wrote." Do you see what a thoughtful mind he had, how assiduously he meditated on the writings of Moses, expecting the advent? For the expression "we have found" belongs always to those who are in some way seeking. Homilies on the Gospel of John 20.1.

WISDOM! BE ATTENTIVE

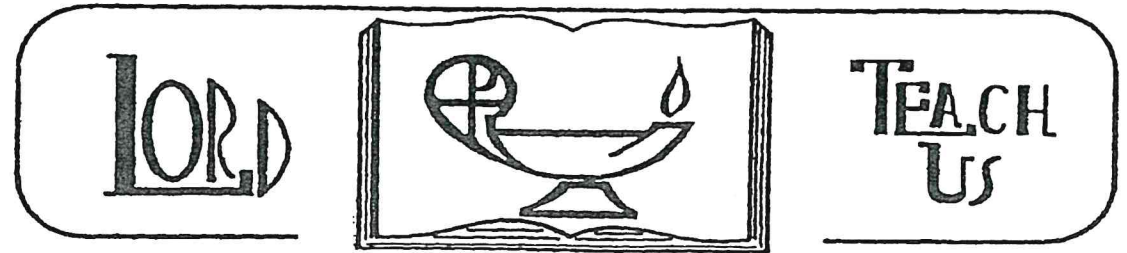
We bow before Your sacred image, O gracious Lord, and beg forgiveness for our offenses, O Christ our God; for You, of Your own will, deigned to ascend the Cross in Your human nature to deliver from bondage to the enemy those whom You created. Wherefore we gratefully cry out to You: "Through Your coming to save the world, O Saviour, You have filled all with joy". Troparion, Sunday of the Holy Images.

O Mother of God, through you in the Incarnation, the indescribable Word of God became describable, for through the divine goodness the Word spoken from eternity became an Image. May we who believe in salvation clothe ourselves with the same Image both in word and deed Kontakion, Sunday of the Holy Images.

Blessed are You and worthy of praise, O Lord God of our fathers, and glorious forever is Your Name. Prokimenon, Sunday of the Holy Images.

In you, O Woman, full of grace, the angelic choirs and the human race - all creation -rejoices. In you, O sanctified Temple, mystical Paradise and Glory of virgins, He Who is our God from before all ages became a child. For He made your womb into a throne and made it greater than the heavens. In you, O Woman full of grace, all creation rejoices. Praise be to you! Hymn Instead of "It is Truly Proper", Sunday of the Holy Images.

In truth, the Church of Christ is adorned with the finest ornament by the holy icons of Christ our Saviour, of the Holy Mother of God and of all the glorified saints. In keeping the icon of Christ which we praise and venerate, we do not risk being led astray. May those who do not believe this be put to confusion. For it is our kneeling before the incarnate Son and the veneration of His icon that is a glory for us Vesper Hymn, Sunday of the Holy Images.



Praying For Your Spouse

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in our inner being, so that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ. And to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us. To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen Ephesians 3: 14 – 21.

And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God Philippians 1: 9 – 11.

I have sought your face with all my heart; be gracious to me according to your promise Psalms 119: 58.

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express Romans 8: 26.

To prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up Ephesians 4: 12.

How About You???

Approximately three thousand years ago, our God inspired His prophet Hosea to observe, "Because there is no truth nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land, false swearing, lying, murder, stealing and committing adultery abound" Hosea 4: 1, 2. Now the Prophet must think, "O God, man did not change much and apparently learned so little in all this time."

We have it here around us in our society and unfortunately, we have it here among us. We as Byzantine Catholics, who have been chosen, who have been called, who have been elected, who have been predestined for heaven, who have been set aside by God to witness in the world for Him, have altogether too many times joined the enemy and find our own description among the words Hosea uttered so long ago.

If we do not sense a difference about us as God's chosen, if we do not live like we ourselves sense this difference, we are trifling with values that effect the destiny of our soul and those of our children.

Morality does not change. It is we who accept loose morals. It is we who overlook the seriousness of the world condition and do not become alarmed. Instead we join the detractors of Christ. We do not diminish our Lord, we diminish ourselves and place little value on our soul and its vocation.

Consequently, we do not act as Christians, as believers, those who have an image of Christ imprinted upon them through the sacramental Mysteries. Instead, we act like His worse enemies. How much more ill affect can we have on His salutary gospel than to claim to be His follower and yet live like His enemy? How many are scandalized because we profess Him with our lips, but crucify Him with our actions, our thoughts, even all the rest of our bodies?

Now is the time to make amends and serious turn-arounds in our daily living, particularly in our attitude. The sacred season of the Great Fast is a time for turning in the correct direction, for facing Christ and keeping our gaze on Him.

Long and Enduring Perspective

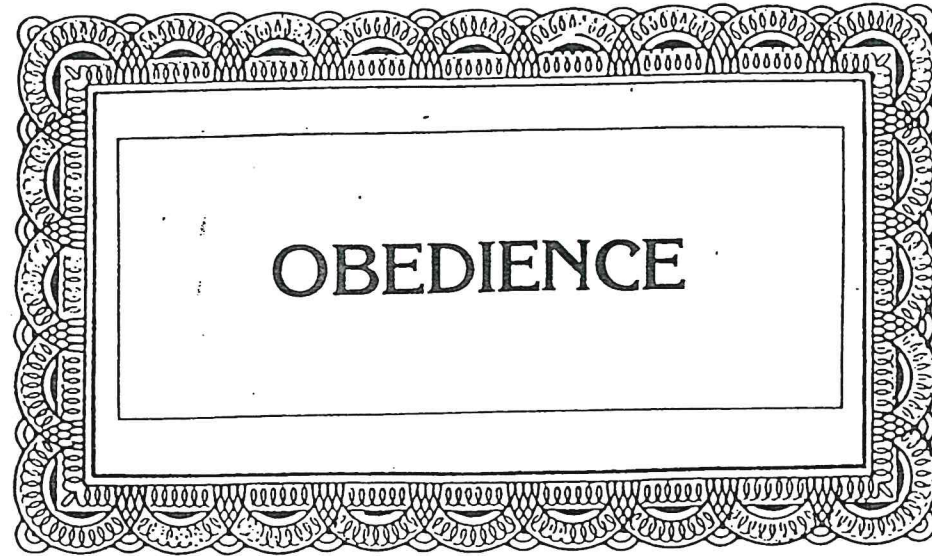
There is strength of quiet endurance as significant of courage as the most daring feats of prowess. A great writer calls our attention to one of the basic needs of our time. In the midst of social and spiritual problems when feelings run high and tempers are quick, it is easy to lose the long and broad perspective. This is the time that tests our stamina in social and spiritual relationships and our endurance in the face of all the irritating obstacles that seem to impede our progress to renewing ourselves in Christ. Our spiritual leadership must be clear thinking, steady, and forceful. We need those faithful souls who will "stand by" a positive Christ-like policy and never waver but see it through to successful completion.

This remains so very true of our task to save our souls. It is not always possible to give unremitting effort to complete some spiritual task. Too many start gloriously and end dismally. Here, again, the staying power of our faith commitment to Christ helps us carry on in the face of personal discouragement.

This same spirit of Christ characterizes a tremendous source of power in our parish. Those who flit from place to place will never be significant factors in the Kingdom of God. Others, who stand by with a steady continuity of loyalty and devotion are the real builders of the Byzantine Catholic Church. We have many such in our parish, whose long, steady, unflinching attendance and loyalty has brought us to our present spiritual strength in Christ. This is no "flash in the pan" kind of Christianity, but the steady flame that gives both light and power to the Church's program of salvation through the pull of long difficult years.

Why not offer a prayer of thanksgiving to our Lord for offering the necessary grace to be faithful and secondly, for the good souls who accepted that challenge of grace and labored and prayed in Christ to make our parish what it is today?

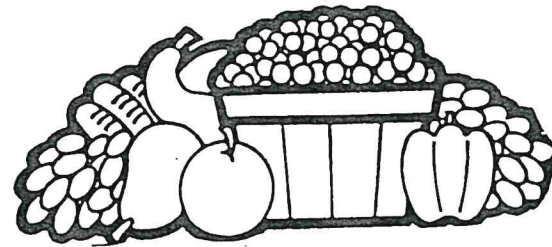
IS FREQUENT COMMUNION NECESSARY ???



"None of those who cry out, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of God but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven" (Mt 7:21).

Hear the word of the Lord. He calls us to obedience to the will of God. Please listen.

Lord Jesus, you have called each one of us to a special role in your Church. Help us to prove worthy of this vocation by our loving obedience.



From its very inception in ancient times, the consistent teaching of our blessed Church has been that the Eucharist must be received regularly, at every Divine Liturgy we are present. Our presence requires us to be spiritually prepared to receive the Body and Blood of Christ. Our Lord did say: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life" John 6: 54.

From these words the Body of Christ has always understood that if we are to have a vibrant spiritual life we must receive Communion often and always. So much an integral part of our faith response is the reception of the sacramental Mystery that the Quinsect Ecumenical Council stated anyone who was present for worship at the Divine Liturgy and did not receive Communion was to be excommunicated.

St. Basil always wrote that it is good and proper to receive Communion daily. He noted in his writings that within the confines of his diocese all believers received at least four times a week. St. John Chrysostom in his commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians says it is blasphemy not to receive communion whenever it is offered by the priestly celebrant to the faithful. Do you thereby blaspheme when you attend the Divine Liturgy? The text of the Divine Liturgy itself shows us it is intended for all the faithful to participate in the life-giving sacramental Mystery of the Eucharist. Every prayer at the Divine Liturgy is oriented towards preparing the faithful to worthily receive.

Many saints of the Church have written concerning the necessity of frequent and regular Communion. It stands to reason that in our modern day society Communion is most essential to ward off the tempting and sinful ways that separate us from our heavenly Father. We must always strive for reconciliation with Christ and for the perfection of our spiritual life. Frequent Communion enables us to achieve this goal. All the faithful present for the Divine Liturgy are expected by the Saviour to come forward and receive Communion during the Liturgy they worship at and offer with the priestly celebrant. Are you being faithful to Christ and to the rich spiritual patrimony of our blessed Church?

The True Image Of The Lord

You may study any icon, any painting or representation of Christ regardless of the iconographer or artist, and there is a strange common similarity. And if you are a perceptive person, demanding answers to questions, you ask why?

What pen picture of Jesus exists from which all artists must work? No one living today saw Jesus when He was alive. There were no cameras when He walked the earth, to record His image.

Why are so many icons and sketches of Jesus so much alike in facial detail, hair, expression? Why the similarity? It cannot all be by accident.

There was a frame of reference for all to consult and that was the image imprinted on the so-called Veronica's Veil while Christ was carrying His Cross. Then, in later time, we have the Shroud which enveloped His sacred body as He lay in the tomb and which contains an imprint of the sacred Body of Christ, particularly His facial features which so imitate an present icons.

One very vivid description of Christ was written by Publius Lentullus, a public official of Judea, in the reign of Tiberius Caesar of Rome and initially appeared in a report to the pagan emperor and later was found in the writings of the western Saint Anselm of Canterbury in the eleventh century. Ever since these have been guidelines for icon writers and painters. Here is the pagan official's description, abbreviated somewhat:

"There appeared in these our days a man of great virtue named Jesus Christ, who is yet living among us, and even among the Gentiles is accepted for a

prophet of truth, but His own disciples call him the Son of God. He raises the dead and cures all manner of disease. A man of stature, somewhat tall and comely, with a very reverent countenance, such as beholders may love and fear. His hair is of the color of a chestnut full ripe, plain to His ears, then downwards it is more oriented and curling and wavering about His shoulders. In the midst of His head is a seam or partition in His hair, after the manner of the Nazarites. The forehead is plain and very delicate; His face without spot or wrinkle, beautified with a lovely red. His nose and mouth are so formed as nothing can be reprehended. His beard is thick in color like His hair, not very long, but forked; His look is innocent and mature, His eyes gray, clear and quick.

"In reprovng, He is terrible, in admonishing, courteous and fair-spoken, pleasant in conversation, mixed with gravity. It cannot be remembered that any have seen Him laugh, but many have seen Him weep. In proportion of body, He is excellent; His hands and arms most delicate to behold. In speaking, very temperate, modest and wise. A man for His singular beauty, surpassing the children of men."

So ends this early day description of Christ our Saviour. Then the next time you pray before an icon of Christ, or look upon a painting of the Saviour, check the physical attributes, one by one, against the mental picture you have developed. You will find that most artists use these guidelines in their work and follow them religiously. Icon writers are just as faithful to the established norms for writing icons. They attempt to portray the spiritual qualities of the soul, not the actual physical attributes which characterize western art work.

But the most wonderful image of Christ is the one we perceive when we look at each other as faithful believers in God

"The man with two tunics should share with him who has none, and the one who has food should do the same." St. Luke 3:11

