

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

Website: [www.sspeterandpaulminersville.com](http://www.sspeterandpaulminersville.com)

Email: [tvrgjn@outlook.com](mailto:tvrgjn@outlook.com)

Served by: Very Reverend Gregory J. Noga, Pastor

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

\*\*\*\*\*

**CONFESSIONS:** SS. Peter & Paul: Sunday One half hour 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

### *A Sacrifice to God is a Contrite Spirit*

I acknowledge my transgression, says David. If I admit my fault, then you will pardon it. Let us never assume that if we live good lives we will be without sin; our lives should be praised only when we continue to beg for pardon. But men are hopeless creatures, and the less they concentrate on their own sins, the more interested they become in the sins of others. They seek to criticize, not to correct. Unable to excuse themselves, they are ready to accuse others. This was not the way that David showed us how to pray and make amends to God, when he said: I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me. He did not concentrate on others' sins; he turned his thoughts on himself. He did not merely stroke the surface, but he plunged inside and went deep down within himself. He did not spare himself, and therefore was not impudent in asking to be spared.

Do you want God to be appeased? Learn what you are to do that God may be pleased with you. Consider the psalm again: If you wanted sacrifice,

I would indeed have given it; in burnt offerings you will take no delight. Are you then to be without sacrifice? Are you to offer nothing? Will you please God without an offering? Consider what you read in the same psalm: If you wanted sacrifice, I would indeed have given it; in burnt offerings you will take no delight. But continue to listen, and say with David: A sacrifice to God is a contrite spirit; God does not despise a contrite and humble heart. Cast aside your former offerings, for now you have found out what you are to offer. In the days of your fathers you would have made offerings of cattle – these were the sacrifices. If you wanted sacrifice, I would indeed have given it. These then, Lord, you do not want, and yet you do want sacrifice.

A sacrifice to God is a contrite spirit; God does not despise a contrite and humble heart. You now have the offering you are to make.

*St. Augustine of Hippo*

## CHEESEFARE SUNDAY



*Icon of Christ the Teacher*

**Cheese-fare Sunday**  
**Tone 8**

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.

.....

**March 2 – March 8, AD2025**

**Vigil of Sunday**

Saturday 4:00 p.m. **+Joseph E. Leshko** req. by **Mary Ann Lubinsky \***  
Sunday 9:00 a.m. **Health and Blessing of the Parishioners\***  
(Livestream)

Monday 6:00 p.m. **Liturgy of the Pre-sanctified Gifts\***  
Tuesday 9:00 a.m. **No Divine Liturgy \***  
Wednesday 6:00 p.m. **Liturgy of the Pre-sanctified Gifts\***  
Thursday 9:00 a.m. **H&B Christopher Tokarick** req. by **Bruce Tokarick \***  
Friday 3:00 p.m. **Liturgy of the Pre-sanctified Gifts\***

**Vigil Liturgy**

Saturday 4:00 p.m. **+Catherine Bulino** req. by **Stephen & Laura Mitchell\***

\*St. Mary  
\*SS Peter & Paul

**Epistle Readers:** 3/2 – Laura Mitchell; 3/9 – Marie Wanchick; 3/16 – Judy Kostura; 3/23 – Gail Burgess; 3/25 – Paulette Murphy; 3/30 – Dolores Kramer.

**Breakfast with Father: Today, Sunday, March 2, 2025.**

This will be the last Breakfast until after Pascha.

**Pastoral Note:** The Annual Wedding Jubilarian Celebration has been scheduled for Sunday, October 26. This advanced notice is given for you to put on your calendar.

**Spaghetti Dinner, Sunday, March 16, 2025**

**For reservations/Orders, kindly call Dolores at 570-544-5398 by Tuesday, March 11.**

**Lookout for Pussy Willows** as the weather gets warmer the willows bud quite quickly. The palms have already been ordered.

**Anointing/Forgiveness Service** will be conducted following the Divine Liturgy which helps prepare for the Great Fast, wherein we ask each other's forgiveness for any wrongs we may have committed against our brothers and sisters.

**KEEP YOURSELVES IN THE LOVE OF GOD**

When the soul of a man departs out of the body, a great mystery is there accomplished. If it is under the guilt of sins, there come hands of devils, and angels of the left hand, and powers of darkness take over that soul, and hold it fast on their side. No one ought to be surprised at this. If, while alive, and in this world, the man was subject and compliant to them, and made himself their bondman, how much more, when he departs out of this world, is he kept down and held fast by them. That this is the case, you ought to understand from what happens on the good side. God's holy servants even now have angels continually beside them, and holy spirits encompassing and protecting them; and when they depart out of the body, the bands of angels take over their souls to their own side, into the pure world, and so they bring them to the Lord; to whom be glory and might forever. Amen.

St. Macarius the Great. *Homily XXII, 1 B#67, p. 171*

At the time of writing the Vatican announced the Holy Father has a slight improvement in his condition. Kindly offer a prayer for his full recovery.

## The Sundays of the Great Fast



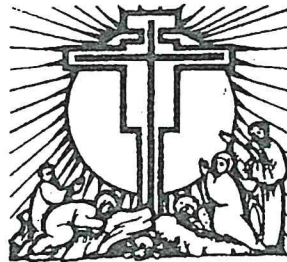
Each of the Sundays of the Great Fast has its own special theme. The first Sunday is called the Feast of the Triumph of Orthodoxy. It is a historical feast commemorating the return of the icons to the churches in the year 843 after the heresy of iconoclasm was overcome. The spiritual theme of the day is first of all the victory of the True Faith. "This is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith" (1 Jn 5:4). Secondly, the icons of the saints bear witness that man, "created in the image and likeness of God" Gen 1:26), becomes holy and godlike through the purification of himself as God's living image.

The Second Sunday of the Great Fast is the commemoration of St. Gregory Palamas. It was he (d.1359) who bore living witness that men can become divine through the grace of God in the Holy Spirit; and that even in this life, by prayer and fasting, human beings can become participants of the uncreated light of God's divine glory.

The Third Sunday of the Great Fast is that of the Veneration of the Cross. The cross stands in the midst of the church in the middle of the season of the Great Fast not merely to remind us of Christ's redemption and to keep before us the goal of heavenly effort, but also to be venerated as that reality by which man must live to be saved. "He who does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me" Matthew 10: 38. For in the Cross of Christ Crucified lies both "the power of God and the wisdom of God" for those being saved 1 Corinthians 1: 24.

The Fourth Sunday of the Great Fast is dedicated to St. John Climacus, the author of the work, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*. The abbot of St. Catherine Monastery on Mount Sinai in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, he stands as a witness to the violent effort needed for entrance into God's Kingdom (Matthew 10: 12 – 15). The spiritual struggle of the Christian life is real, "not against flesh and blood, but against...the rulers of the present darkness...the hosts of wickedness in heavenly places" Ephesians 6: 12. St. John encourages the faithful in their efforts for, according to the Lord, only "...he who endures to the end will be saved" Matthew 24: 13.

The Fifth Sunday recalls the memory of St. Mary of Egypt, the repentant harlot. Mary tells us, first of all, that no amount of sin and wickedness can keep a person from God if he truly repents. Christ himself has come "to call sinners to repentance" and to save them from their sins (Luke 5: 32). In addition, St. Mary tells us that it is never too late in life – or during this sacred season – to repent. Christ will gladly receive all who come to Him even at the eleventh hour of their lives. But their coming must be in serious and sincere repentance.



## The Great Fast

For many it is not possible to go to church daily during the Great Fast. What then is our participation during this sacred time? How can we spiritually profit through the Great Fast? We may spiritually benefit from this holy time by doing the following:

**FASTING** helps the faithful believer exercise more self-control and helps to prepare for the sacramental encounter with Christ in the Holy Eucharist. It is because Adam and Eve failed to fast in the Garden of Eden that sin was introduced into the world. Now it is possible to overcome that separation which was a result of their missing the mark. Christ fasted and taught us to fast. Blessed fasting is done in secret, self imposed, without ostentation. (Matthew 6: 16; Romans 14).

*Let us fast with a fast pleasing to the Lord. This the true fast: the casting off of evil, the bridling of the tongue, the cutting off of anger, the cessation of lust, evil talking, lies and cursing. The stopping of these is the fast true and acceptable* Vespers, Monday of first Week of Great Fast.

**PRAYER** should be increased and deepened during this holy period. The simplest way to do this is to add the prayer of St. Ephrem the Syrian to our private morning and evening devotions. Set certain hours of the day for short prayer. This can take place while operating a vehicle of travel, in between chores at the office, as you walk or negotiate the elevator in your place of work. It is important to remember that we are in this precious time which ought to be spiritually focused on its final goal: closer enriched contact with our God.

**SPIRITUAL READING** should preoccupy us and we might develop an interest in the official prayer of the Church in daily Vespers and Matins. Thus we can progress spiritually into the wealth of worship of the Great Fast. Reading may begin with the book of Genesis as a reminder and incentive to repair for our individual selves the separation made by the first sin. In reading the Psalms, we see true repentance, a thirst for communion with God. Then again, we might borrow a religious book such as the *Lives of the Saints*, the history of the Church or one of many books on Orthodox spirituality which take us from our daily life into a higher level of interest and feed us with ideas and facts that are usually absent from our practical and efficient world.

**CHANGE OF LIFE STYLE** ought to obviate also to slow down in our scheduling so that more emphasis is placed on the spiritual needs of our body and soul. We must attempt to return quietness, silence, contemplation and meditation to our way of life. Cut down to a minimum radio, television and social gatherings and concentrate on a living daily relationship with God, His Blessed Mother and all the saints, particularly our patron saint. We do not lessen the amount of worldly things because they are necessarily bad, but rather because we choose to invest more time in the values of the soul. It is impossible to do this without a change in lifestyle. We must concentrate and discipline ourselves as we

evaluate our life in the light of faith commitment to Christ. This does require a real effort and special discipline.

### Venerable Ephrem The Syrian

St. Ephrem was born in Syria of poor parents during the reign of St. Constantine the Great. He spent his young life rather tempestuously, but all at once a change took place in his soul and he began to burn with love for the Lord Jesus. He was a disciple of St. James Nisibis (January 13). From the enormous grace of God, wisdom flowed from his tongue as a brook of honeyed prayer and praise and ceaseless tears flowed from his eyes. Industrious as a bee, St. Ephrem continually either wrote or orally taught the monks in the monastery and the people in the town of Edessa. He dedicated himself to prayer and contemplation. Numerous are his books and beautiful and compelling are his prayers. The most famous is his prayer recited during the honorable Great Fast season which reads:

**O Lord and Master of my life,  
keep from me the spirit of indifference and discouragement,  
lust of power and idle chatter.  
Instead, grant to me, Your servant,  
the spirit of wholeness of being, humble-mindedness,  
patience and love.  
O Lord and King,  
grant me the grace to be aware of my own sins and  
not judge my brother;  
for You are blessed now and ever and forever.  
Amen.**

When they wanted to elevate him to episcopal dignity by force, he pretended to be out of his mind and began to race through the city of Edessa dragging his garment behind him. Seeing this, the people left him in peace. Ephrem was a contemporary and friend of St. Basil the Great. He is considered mainly to be an Apostle of Repentance. Even today his works soften many hearts hardened by sin and separation from God and return them to the love of Christ. He died in extreme old age in the year 378.

## ANCESTRAL SIN

In the Old Testament account of creation, God created mankind and established a place for him called Paradise. He also gave him a commandment regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil: "And the Lord God commanded Adam, saying, 'You may eat food from every tree in the garden; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you may not eat; for in whatever day you eat from it, you shall die by death'" (Gn 2:16, 17). In that Adam and Eve did not physically die the day they ate from the tree, the words "you shall die" indicate a spiritual death through separation from God.

Ancestral sin is the disobedience of Adam to God's command regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam willingly disobeyed this commandment and diverted himself, or fell, from God's path to perfection, thus separating himself from His Creator, the Source of life.

### WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE FALL?

1. This Fall of Adam caused mankind to become subject to mortality. While this is often seen mainly as a punishment, or penalty, the emphasis concerning God's judgments on Adam and Eve at the Fall is best understood in terms of His mercy. So, for example, concerning man's mortality (Gn 3:19), St. Gregory the Theologian states, "Yet here too He provides a benefit—namely death, which cuts off sin, so that evil may not be everlasting. Thus His punishment is changed into a mercy."

2. We who are of Adam's race are not guilty because of Adam's sin, but because of our own sin. However, because all of mankind fell away from the grace of God through Adam's disobedience, man now has a propensity, a disposition, an inclination towards sin, because just as death entered the world through sin, now sin enters through fear of death.

3. Mankind's strong propensity to commit sin reveals that in the Fall, the image of God in man (Gn 1:26, 27) is also fallen. However, the ancient Fathers emphasize that the divine image in man has not been totally corrupted or obliterated. Human nature remains inherently good after the Fall; mankind is not totally depraved. People are still capable of doing good, although bondage to death and the influences of the devil can dull their perception of what is good and lead them into all kinds of evil.

4. Adam's Fall not only brought mortality and sin into the world, but also sweat, toil, hunger, thirst, weariness, sorrow, pain, suffering, sickness, tribulations, tragedy and tears.

5. Even after the Fall, the intellectual, desiring and incensive (forceful or driving) aspects of the soul are natural and therefore neutral. They can be used in a good way, or in a bad, harmful way. For instance, desire is very good when one directs it towards God. But when desire is out of control, one may use it in very inappropriate ways, such as becoming gluttonous or desiring another person's spouse. The classic analogy is that these powers of the soul are like iron, which can be made into a plow to help grow food, or into a sword to be used to kill someone.

Christ, by His Death and Resurrection, conquered the devil and death, freeing mankind from the fear of death (Heb 2:14-15) and making possible a more complete communion between God and man than was ever possible before. This communion allows people to become "partakers of the divine nature" (2Pt 1:4), to transcend death and, ultimately, all the consequences of the Fall.