

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's Cantor: Dr. Peter Yasenchak

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**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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Mark J. Mahal- Funeral Director

### *The Power of Christ's Blood*

If we wish to understand the power of Christ's blood, we should go back to the ancient account of its prefiguration in Egypt. Sacrifice a lamb without blemish, commanded Moses, and sprinkle its blood on your doors. If we were to ask him what he meant, and how the blood of an irrational beast could possibly save men endowed with reason, his answer would be that the saving power lies not in the blood itself, but in the fact that it is a sign of the Lord's blood. In those days, when the destroying angel saw the blood on the doors he did not dare to enter, so how much less will the devil approach now when he sees, not that figurative blood on the doors, but the true blood on the lips of believers, the doors of the temple of Christ.

If you desire further proof of the power of this blood, remember where it came from, how it ran down from the cross, flowing from the Master's side. The gospel records that when Christ was dead, but still hung on the cross, a soldier came and pierced His side with a lance and immediately there poured

out water and blood. Now the water was a symbol of Baptism and the blood, of the Holy Eucharist. The soldier pierced the Lord's side, he breached the wall of the sacred temple, and I have found the treasure and made it my own. So also with the lamb: the Jews sacrificed the victim and I have been saved by it.

There flowed from His side water and blood. Beloved, do not pass over this mystery without thought; it has yet another hidden meaning, which I will explain to you. I said that water and blood symbolized Baptism and the Holy Eucharist. From these two sacraments the Church is born: from Baptism, the cleansing water that gives rebirth and renewal through the Holy Spirit, and from the Holy Eucharist. Since the symbols of Baptism and the Eucharist flowed from His side, it was from His side that Christ fashioned the Church, as He had fashioned Eve from the side of Adam.

*St. John Chrysostom*

## THIRD SUNDAY OF THE GREAT FAST VENERATION OF THE HOLY CROSS



*Icon of the Veneration of the Holy Cross*

**2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of the Great Fast  
Tone 2**

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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**March 23 – March 29, AD2025**

**Vigil of Sunday**

Saturday 4:00 p.m. + **Michael Kovich** req. by Marie Wanchick\*  
Sunday 9:00 a.m. **Health and Blessing of the Parishioners\***  
(Livestream)

**Vigil of the Annunciation**

Monday 6:00 p.m. +**Andrew & +Margaret Gerchak** req. by Estate\*  
Tuesday 9:00 a.m. **Health and Blessings of the Parishioners\***  
Wednesday 6:00 p.m. **Liturgy of the Pre-sanctified Gifts\***  
Thursday 9:00 a.m. **No Lenten Service Today\***  
Friday 3:00 p.m. **Liturgy of the Pre-sanctified Gifts\***  
Saturday 9:00 a.m. +**All Souls Liturgy**

**Vigil Liturgy**

Saturday 4:00 p.m. **H&B Madeline Dinich** req. by Carol & Dave Dinich\*

\***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: Will resume after Pascha.**

**Pastoral Note:**

**Candle Offering**

The candles in front of the Icons of the Mother of God and Christ and on the Sacramental Table are offered by George and Ellen Sinkovich.

**The Lord is Healer**

Out of a small town in the northern region of Israel, Jesus came preaching a message of hope, restoration and healing. The common folks welcomed Him with open arms. Why shouldn't they? Traveling from one city to the next, Jesus touched their broken lives – one fractured person after another – restoring sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the mute, and strength to the lame. He cured all types of illness: fever, palsy, epilepsy, leprosy, hemorrhaging, and dropsy. He mended withered limbs, strengthening bent backs, and even attached the ear of an enemy. Multitudes followed Him, amazed at His power to heal; drawn, as well, to the compelling tenderness they experienced in His presence.

Yet Jesus addressed more than merely physical illness. Just as Isaiah prophesied, He released those who had been taken captive by evil. He set men and women and children and foreigners free from demons, mental illness and despair. Those plagued with evil spirits found Him always approachable, but the minions of darkness fled in terror at the sound of His voice.

Most profound was the diligence with which Jesus tended to the hearts of those whom He touched. Speaking a message of forgiveness, mercy and grace, He set at liberty those who were tortured and oppressed by guilt. Prostitutes, thieves, liars, alike found help in the presence of Jesus, healing in His words and hope in His saving grace.

It is our hope that the healing hands of Jesus reach through time and space and come in our midst, or if it is His will, and the right and appropriate moment, to transform us to our own created dignity, perfect in His sight, so that all which hinders us, all that delays our perfection in spirit and soul be encouraged by a return to perfection in our physical being. May the healing grace of Jesus Christ continue through the compassionate heart and faithful prayers of His faithful followers until the day He returns. "Let us never forget the reminder of the prophet Jeremiah, I will heal my people and will let them enjoy abundant peace and security." Jeremiah 33:6

## WISDOM! BE ATTENTIVE

*Save Your people, O Lord, and bless Your inheritance; grant victory to Your Church over her enemies, and protect Your people with Your Cross Troparion, Third Sunday of the Great Fast.*

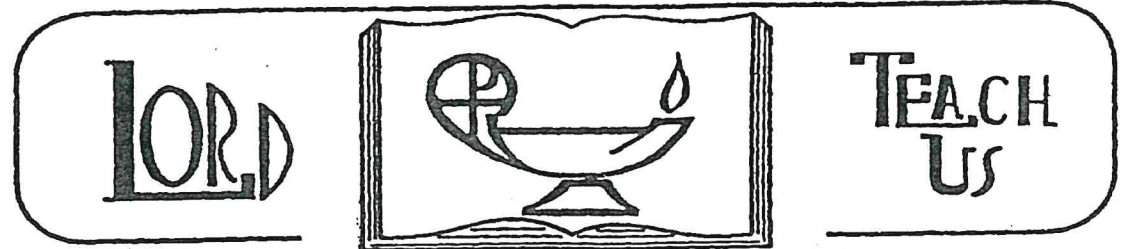
*No longer does the flaming sword guard the gates of Eden, for on them one finds the most glorious seal, the tree of the Cross. By it, the sorrow of death and the victory of the Abyss have been conquered, for You, O my Saviour, stood up and called out to those in the Abyss: "Enter again into paradise" Kontakion, Third Sunday of the Great Fast.*

*We bow to Your Cross, O Lord, and we praise Your holy Resurrection Hymn instead of "Holy God", Third Sunday of the Great Fast.*

*Rejoice, O live-giving Cross of the Lord, Paradise of the Church and new Tree of life, who bring us the joy of unending glory. Through you, the hosts of demons are driven back; in you, the angels in heaven rejoice; and for you, the assemblies of believers are now keeping the feast. O invincible weapon and impenetrable stronghold, pride of bishops and scepter of kings, grant that we may now contemplate the Passion of Christ, and His holy Resurrection Vesper Hymn, Third Sunday of the Great Fast.*

*Seeing You, the Creator of the universe, hanging naked on the Cross, all creation was shaken with fear; the sun hid its rays and the rocks split asunder; the earth trembled and the veil of the temple was torn in two; the dead arose from their tombs, and the powers on high were struck with awe and said: O, what wonder! Behold, the Judge undergoes judgment and freely endures His passion for the salvation and restoration of the world Vesper Hymn, Third Sunday of the Great Fast.*

*Come, let us all sing a new song to celebrate the defeat of hell; for coming from the tomb, Christ has broken the power of death and saved the world. Come, let us all draw in faith, not from the fountain of corruption, but from the source of light; let us venerate the Cross of Christ in Whom we are glorified. As we venerate the Cross, which Moses formerly prefigured with his hands, we put the spiritual Amalek to flight. O Christ, our Master, and we ourselves are saved. Matins Hymn, Third Sunday of the Great Fast.*



### Perfection

*This includes you who were once so far away from God. You were his enemies and hated him and were separated from him by your evil thoughts and actions, yet now he has brought you back as his friends. He has done this through the death on the cross of his own human body, and now as a result Christ has brought you into the very presence of God, and you are standing there before him with nothing left against you, nothing left that he could chide you for. So everywhere we go we talk about Christ to all who will listen, warning them and teaching them as well as we know how. We want to be able to present each one to God, perfect because of what Christ has done for each of them Colossians 1: 21 – 28.*

*For in Christ, there is all of God in a human body, so you have everything when you have Christ and you are filled with God through your union with Christ. He is the highest Ruler, with authority over every other power. When you came to Christ he set you free from your evil desires, not by a bodily operation of circumcision, but by a spiritual operation, the baptism of your souls Colossians 2: 9 – 11.*

*Most of all, let love guide your life, for then the whole church will stay together in perfect harmony Colossians 3: 14.*

*Epaphras, from you city, a servant of Christ Jesus, sends you his love. He is always earnestly praying for you, asking God to make you strong and perfect and to help you know his will in everything you do Colossians 4: 12.*

*Timothy my son, be strong with the strength Christ Jesus gives you 2 Timothy 2: 1.*

## SCRIPTURE QUOTATIONS AND CITATIONS

We are each asked to "pray and do penance" for our salvation. We turn to the scriptures, the word of God, to teach us and encourage us in our pursuit of God's promise to us all.

### *The need of penance*

"Beloved, if our consciences have nothing to charge us with, we can be sure that God is with us, and that we will receive at his hands whatever we ask. Why? Because we are keeping his commandments and doing what is pleasing in his sight." 1 Jn. 3:21-22.

Ps. 25:6-7	Lk. 3:7-9
Ps. 30:3-6	Mt. 4:17
Ps. 51:3-19	Rv. 2:5
Ps. 102:1-29	Rm. 2:2-16
Lk. 5:32	Rm. 6:1-23
Lk. 13:1-5	Ep. 5:25-26
Lk. 15:1-7	

### *Seek forgiveness for sins*

Lk. 15:21-24	2 Cor. 7:1-11
Mk. 1:4	2 Tm. 2:21-22
Ac. 2:37-39	Ep. 2:1-6
Ac. 3:19	Heb. 1:2
Ac. 26:20	Col. 1:19ff

### *God loves the penitent person*

Sir. 21:1-10	Is. 57:18-21
Ps. 32:1-2	Lk. 15:1-7
Is. 1:18-20	Lk. 19:1-10

### *The sacramental Mystery of Reconciliation*

Lk. 6:31-38	Jn. 20:21-23
Mt. 16:18-19	Ac. 2:28
Mt. 18:1-8	2 Cor. 5:18

### *Sorrow for sin and offences against God*

Wi. 11:23	Mk. 1:14-15
Ps. 4:4-5	2 Ch. 30:9
Lk. 18:13-14	

## TRUST ME

*Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me*  
John 14: 1.

All of his words and teachings can be distilled and reduced to two: *Trust me....* We cannot be troubled by the return of Christ. We cannot be anxious about things we cannot comprehend. Issues like the Last Judgment and the Antichrist are intended to remind and challenge and stretch us to accountability for our lifestyle. They are to enlarge our efforts in pursuing an authentic spiritual life, but not overwhelm and certainly not divide us. For the Christian, the return of Christ is not a riddle to be solved or a code to be broken, but rather for the true believer, a day to be eagerly anticipated.

Jesus Christ wants us to trust him implicitly. He does not want us to be troubled or preoccupied with nonsense, so He reassures us with his truth.

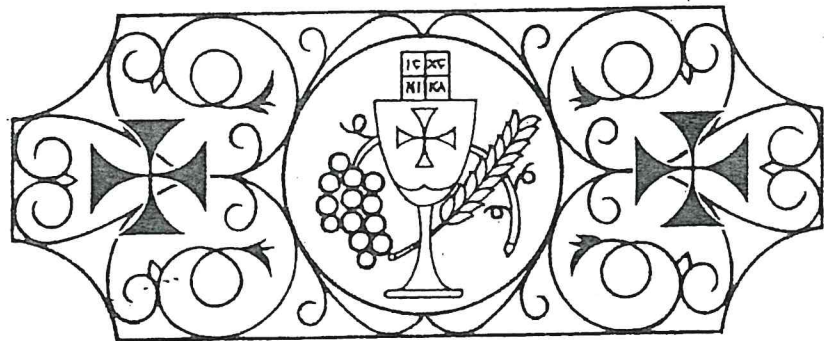
We do not even know when He will come for us. We do not know exactly how He will come for us. And we do not even know why He should come for us. It is true we all have our ideas and opinions but these count for nothing except to divert us from our path to salvation.

What we do have is faith and ability to respond to his first shown love. We have faith that He has ample space and a prepared place and at the right time, in his time, He will come so that we can be where He is because we belong to him.

Now let us do what we can and what is incumbent upon us to do, let him do what He does when He decides. He will do the coming and He will do the taking but presently it is up to us to do the trusting.

## The Old Country Priest says...

Jesus always tried to help his disciples understand the frailty He saw in them – their chronic bent to be enchanted every moment. Peter saw the proof of the divinity of Jesus in his transfiguration. He did not doubt after that who Jesus is. Yet when Jesus is arrested, Peter floundered and even denied he ever knew Jesus. He was in momentary awe of the miraculous but could not trust God for the future. This failing was also common in Israel's exodus from Egypt. The people would witness miracle upon miracle, and follow God with national repentance. But as soon as God seemed to hide for sometime, the grumbling and skepticism began.



## The nature of sin

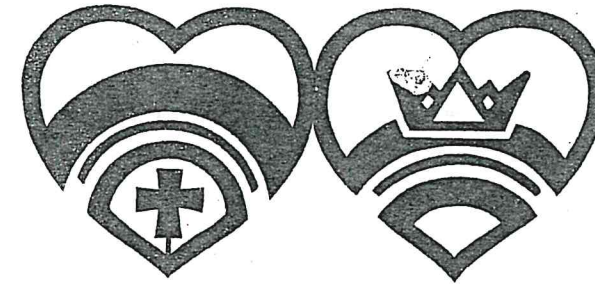
Sir. 10:13-15  
Rm. 5:12-14

Rm. 6:12-14; 20-23  
Ja. 1:12-15

### David's prayer for forgiveness

"I have sinned grievously in what I have done. But now, Lord, forgive the guilt of your servant, for I have been very foolish."

2 Sm. 24:10



### Prayer of repentance

"Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness;  
in the greatness of your compassion  
wipe out my offenses.

Thoroughly wash me from my guilt  
and of my sin cleanse me.

For I acknowledge my offense,  
and my sin is before me always;

Against you only have I sinned,  
and done what is evil in your sight, —

That you may be justified in your sentence,  
vindicated when you condemn."

— Ps. 51:3-6

Repentance is *metanoia* — which means a reversal of direction in life — putting off the old ways, putting on the new.

## He Speaks From The Cross

Crucifixion was a lonely, painful, gruesome, humiliating way to die. The method must have been designed in hell. It is not so much the design and result of the malfunction of a pagan cultural mind, but the purposeful mind of the devil himself. It killed...slowly and with fixed agony. In fact, it often prolonged life simply longer that pain could be felt and endured. Victims would simply go into shock and remain barely alive, breathing by unconscious will. At this point the executioners had an effective practice. They broke the legs of the condemned and swiftly caused them to die.

During these hours of excruciating suffering, Jesus made several statements and his words were brief. Certain physical aspects of crucifixion insured that no long speeches could be made. Breathing was most difficult. The crucified companions of the Lord quickly became silent, but the Lord had some important lessons to share. Most of us agree that a person's comments at the door of eternity deserve special attention, so how much more the final words of our Lord from the cross. Tonight we meditate on his appeal to the Father to forgive our ingratitude.

We have all heard an insult, like the wind. We are like a wave on the sea. When the wind blows, and swells the water, the ship is then endangered, the heart is in jeopardy and is tossed back and forth. When we are insulted we long for revenge. But if we have been avenged and so rejoice in the person's pain upon whom we visited retribution, we also suffer shipwreck. Why is this?

Because Christ is asleep in us. It means we have forgotten Christ. So we must rouse him; so we must rouse ourselves to his presence and cause. We must call Christ to mind and let him awaken in us. Because we forget when He was crucified, He said, "Father forgive them for they do not know what they do" Luke 23: 34. The one who resides in your soul, whom you have put asleep in your heart does not want revenge. Wake then and allow his grace to permeate your thinking mind. Remember him and his example, remember him through his word, for He commands us to remember him. Then when Christ is fully awake in us if we are fully awake to ourselves and to him, we will ask, "What kind of person am I who wants revenge? Who am I to threaten other people? I might die before I am avenged...therefore I will restrain my anger and return to a calm heart." For when commanded the sea, the waves settled, the storm subsided and peace was restored.

The cross tilted skyward and then slid into the worn hole in the rocky forehead called Golgotha, the place of the skull. The jolt sent fire through limbs just freshly pierced. Further agony followed as the soldiers drive wedges between stone and timber to keep the crucifix upright so that its victim might be visible to all who pass by and his crime remembered as a warning to anyone contemplating sedition against the state.

With his first breath our Lord exhaled words we find incredible in that setting and hard to believe when we hear them applied to us. And yet those words should not surprise us. Jesus always looked through forgiving eyes. Confronted with a lame man dropped through a ceiling by desperate but well-wishing friends, Jesus responds with forgiveness, the deepest and most enduring healing. Approached by a fellow companion on the cross whose heart is finally overwhelmed with contrition and repentance exhorts a helpless, humble plea, "Remember me..." Jesus answers with assured forgiveness. And this is so because Jesus is the incarnate forgiveness of our God. It is our heavenly Father expressing himself with an open and transparent heart. How could He not forgive and ask the Father to forgive those who unwittingly help him accomplish forgiveness?

Of all the scenes around the diorama of the cross, the one which inspires so much response is the offer of forgiveness. As we think about it, it seems it is in response to the mockery offered a dying man on the cross. What kind of people are these? The words thrown to him that day were meant to wound. And there is nothing more painful than words meant to hurt because they pile hurt upon hurt. Of course this is nothing new for any of us. All of us have had our share of words and wounds. We have felt the sting of a well-aimed gibe. A swift response that cuts down our ego is painful. Maybe we still feel, even after long time past, the pain of an ill thought response or a properly directed missile. Someone we love or respect slams us to the floor with a slur or a slip of the tongue. And there you lie, wounded and bleeding. Perhaps the words were intended to hurt, perhaps not but that does not matter so much because the wound is deep. Its pain sears us.

Do we see what Jesus does not do? He does not retaliate. He is big enough, strong enough sure enough of himself because he is the perfect man who is also our God. Did we notice what Jesus did do? He spoke on their behalf, in their defense. He realistically looks at his self-declared enemies and comes to defend their actions! He is Saviour to all without exception! Never have we seen such love. "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do."