

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

Email: tvrgjn@outlook.com

Served by: Very Reverend Gregory J. Noga, Pastor

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

CONFESSIONS: Sts. Peter & Paul: Saturday 2:45-3:30 PM

St. Mary's: Saturday 1:00 – 1:30 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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The Ladder of Divine Ascent

Saint John Climacus (which means, of the ladder) was a sixth-century saint who entered the Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai at age sixteen and dedicated his life to God. Over the course of his years at the monastery he developed a reputation for wisdom, selfdiscipline and an intense desire to grow in holiness.

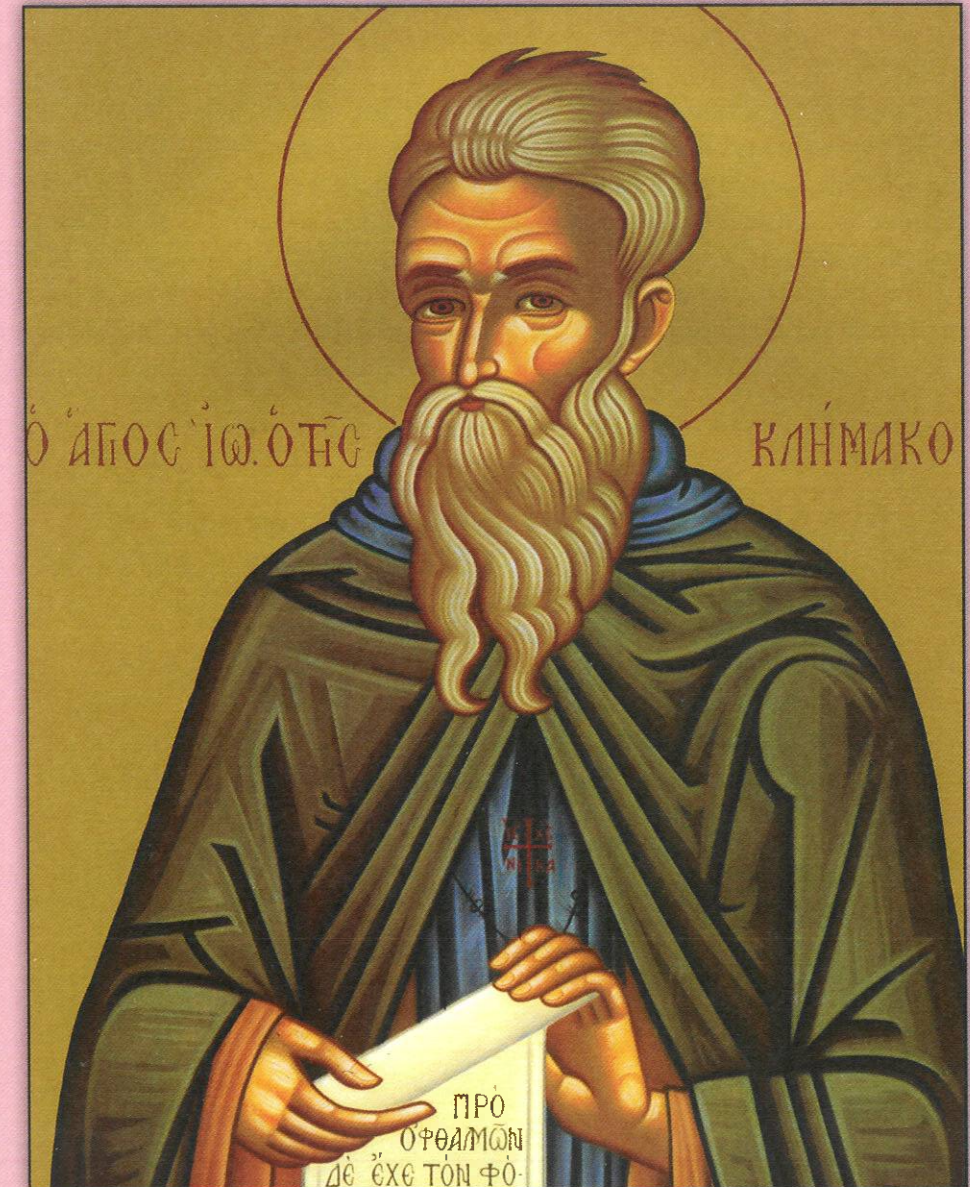
He lived for seventy years at the monastery and eventually became hegumen (abbot). Although Saint John loved his monastery, he preferred solitude and spent many years in the wilderness living the life of a hermit. Even so, he was sought out by many pilgrims who traveled to Mount Sinai in search of this hermit saint and his wisdom.

Saint John is perhaps best known for his

authorship of a book entitled The Ladder of Divine Ascent. Even today, this thirty-chapter book is considered to be one of the most significant spiritual writings of Christian literature. Each of the thirty chapters represents one rung on a symbolic spiritual ladder of perfection leading from earth up to heaven. Thus, each chapter presents the reader with another spiritual exercise through which the highest point of earthly perfection may be reached before being consummated in heaven.

When he died, it was said of him that "his body ascended the heights of Mount Sinai, but his soul ascended the heights of heaven." By his example and through his prayers, may our sights remain high and heavenward as we continue on our Lenten journey.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF THE GREAT FAST SUNDAY OF JOHN CLIMACUS



Icon of Saint John Climacus

Volume 2022
Christ is among us!

Number 12
He is and will be!

4th Sunday of the Great Fast
St. John Climacus
Tone3

Welcome to the parish communities of SS. Peter and Paul and St. Mary Byzantine Catholic Churches of Minersville and Saint Clair, 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 27 – April 2, 2022
All Divine Services are livestreamed where noted

Saturday Vigil of Sunday (at SS Peter & Paul)
4:00 p. m. + **Jeanette Lohin** req. by Regina Sinko

Sunday
8:00 a.m. +**Andrew & +Margaret Gerchak** req. by Estate (at St. Mary)
10:00 a.m. **Health and Blessing of the Parishioners** (at SS. Peter & Paul)
Livestreamed

Tuesday
8:00 a.m. **6th Lenten Canonical Hour**

Wednesday
6:00 p.m. **Liturgy of the pre-Sanctified Gifts**

Thursday
8:00 a.m. **9th Lenten Canonical Hour**

Friday
12:00 p.m. **Pre- Sanctified Liturgy** (at St. Mary)

Saturday Vigil of Sunday (at SS Peter & Paul)
4:00 p.m. +**Ronald Samilko** req. by Ron & Dolores Kramer

Epistle Readers: 3/5 – Laura Mitchell; 3/6 – Gail Burgess; 3/12 a.m. – Ellen Sinkovich; 3/12 p.m. – Marie Wanchick; 3/13 – Jennifer Keer; 3/19 a.m. – Laura Mitchell; 3/19 p.m. Laura Mitchell 3/20 – Anna Keer; 3/25 – Ellen Sinkovich; 3/26 – Gail Burgess; 3/27 – Marie Wanchick; 4/2 – Gail Burgess; 4/3 – Dolores Kramer.

Candles in front of the Mother of God; Offered by Anna May Adley for Peace in the World

On Sunday, April 3, following the Divine Liturgy, we will have an open meeting regarding the Synod on Synodality as requested by His Holiness, Pope Francis.

It is an exercise of listening to you, the parishioners, young and mature alike, as to what you think the Church can do to help you in your spiritual lives to come closer to Christ. Is He the center of your life, or not, and if not, why not? What excites you about Jesus, His Church? How can you make attendance a priority? These are just proposed questions to enable you to articulate what you may be feeling or thinking. Come join us. Refreshments will be served.

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9:22*If You Can! All Things Are Possible to Him Who Believes*

THE INFIRM FAITH OF THE BOY'S FATHER.

CHRYSOSTOM: The Scripture indicates that this man was extremely weak in faith, as is evident at four points: from Christ's saying that "All things are possible to him that believes;" from the saying of the man himself as he approached, "Help me in my unbelief;" from Christ's commanding the devil to "enter no more into him;" and from the man's saying again to Christ, "If you can." THE GOSPEL OF ST. MATTHEW, HOMILY 57.3. **9:24 I Believe; Help My Unbelief**

PRAY TO BELIEVE, BELIEVE TO PRAY.

AUGUSTINE: Where faith fails, prayer perishes. For who prays for that in which he does not believe?... So then in order that we may pray, let us believe, and let us pray that this same faith by which we pray may not falter. SERMONS ON THE NEW TESTAMENT LESSONS 65.I.

WISDOM! BE ATTENTIVE

Today is the fountain-head of our salvation and the revelation of an eternal mystery; the Son of God becomes a Virgin's Son, and Gabriel announces this grace. Therefore, let us exclaim with him to the Mother of God: "Hail, O Woman full of grace, the Lord is with you!" Troparion, Feast of the Annunciation of the Mother of God.

O Mother of God, we, your servants, sing a hymn of thanks to you, a hymn of triumph to a valiant leader, for you have delivered us from peril that we may cry out to you: "Hail, Bride and Maiden ever-pure!" Kontakion, Feast of the Annunciation of the Mother of God.

Day after day, announce the salvation of our God Prokimenon, Feast of the Annunciation of the Mother of God.

Gabriel came to you, O Maiden, and disclosed God's plan which was from all eternity. He joyfully offered you his greetings and cried out: "Hail, O land without human seed! Hail, O bush, untouched by fire! Hail, O depth no human eye can fathom! Hail, O bridge that leads up to heaven! Hail, O fleece receiving the heavenly manna! Hail, O dissolution of the curse! Hail, O Maiden who returned Adam to grace! The Lord is with you." Vesper Hymn, Feast of the Annunciation of the Mother of God.

Today Gabriel made the announcement to the Woman full of grace and said: "Hail, O Bride and Maiden ever pure! Do not be disturbed by my appearance, do not be dismayed; I am an archangel. The serpent deceived Eve in the days of old; now I bring you glad tidings: You shall give birth to the Lord, O Pure One, and you shall remain a virgin" Vesper Hymn, Feast of the Annunciation of the Mother of God.

Today is the announcement of joy, today is the virginal festivity, today heaven is joined to earth, Adam is renewed, Eve is released from sorrow, the dwelling place, our own substance, has become God's temple, a portion of it is deified. What a marvel! The way of condescension is incomprehensible, and the manner of conception ineffable. An angel is a minister of the marvel; a virginal womb receives the Son; the Holy Spirit is sent; the Father on high is well pleased. The plan has been made by agreement, by which and through which we have been saved. Intercede with Him for the salvation of our souls Vesper Hymn, Feast of the Annunciation of the Mother of God.

THE ANNUNCIATION

Each year, on March 25, our blessed Church celebrates the feast of the Annunciation of the Lord. It is a solemn feast, celebrating the moment when the second divine Person of the most Holy Trinity assumed our human nature in the womb of the Virgin Mary. It is the feast which celebrates what we profess when we say in the Nicene Creed, "and became man."

The name of the feast is derived from the fact that the Archangel Gabriel announced to the ever Virgin Mary that she would become the Mother of God. The Church memorializes this moment of time because it is central to our salvation. On this feast day, the moment of the Incarnation is celebrated and our Church teaches us that the virgin birth is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy (Isaiah 7:14), and that it is as well the fulfillment of the longings and aspirations of all men of good will for salvation which are found in all religious professions and philosophies in human history.

Only our God can save the world. Man alone cannot do it because it is man himself who needs redemption and must be saved. Therefore, according to the Church, the virgin birth is necessary not at all because of a false idolization of virginity as such or because of a sinful repulsion to normal human sexuality. Nor is it necessary as some would contend, to give added weight to the

moral teachings of Christ. The virgin birth is understood as a necessity because the One Who is born must not be merely a man like all others needing salvation. The Saviour of the world cannot merely be one of the race of Adam, born of the flesh like all others. He must be "not of this world" in order to save the world.

He Whom the Mother of God conceives in her womb by the grace of the Holy Spirit is the divine Son of God taking on our humanity in order to be able to elevate us and save us from our sinful selves. It is the teaching of the Church that Jesus is not simply a "mere" man like all other men. He is indeed, without question a real man, a whole and perfectly complete man with a human mind, body, and soul. But He is the man which the Son of God has become. Thus the Church always confesses that the ever Virgin Mary should properly be addressed and recognized as the Birth-giver of God. For the One born of Mary is indeed, as our blessed Church sings at the feast of the Nativity of our Lord, "...He Whom from all eternity is God."

The primary reason the Church celebrates this feast day is because it is the beginning of our salvation; the age-old promise of our Heavenly Father to Adam and Eve in paradise is being finally fulfilled and brought to fruition. Jesus of Nazareth is God, or more accurately, the divine Son of God in human flesh. We solemnize this holy day

because the Church wishes to enunciate the truth about the Saviour in our lives.

At the Annunciation or "announcement", He Who was of the Father's love begotten before the visible world was created, loses nothing of His divinity, but assumes and takes on our humanity and becomes truly human. This stupendous act on the part of our Heavenly Father is done so that the second Person of the Holy Trinity could as man suffer and die for us, save us from our sins and reconcile us once again with God.

This union of God and man in Jesus Christ is a mystery, something which we cannot fully grasp and understand. It has been a problem to some from the earliest ages of the Church. The first Ecumenical Council, held in Nicea in 325 A.D. condemned the heresy of Arius and declared the traditional faith that Jesus Christ is truly God and truly man. The Council of Ephesus in 431, condemned the heresy of Nestorius who denied that Mary is the Mother of God (*Theotokos*), while insisting rather simply that she is the mother of Christ (*Christotokos*). In succeeding centuries controversies about the Incarnation broke out anew. In 451, the Council of Chalcedon confirmed the teaching of Nicea and stated, "In Christ there are two natures, united, incontrovertible, inseparable."

In trying to understand and explain this union of natures in the one person of Jesus Christ, some writers continue to distort the mystery to make it fit into the limited finite human mind. The second Ecumenical Council at Constantinople declared for our spiritual understanding, "He who was crucified in the flesh, our

Lord Jesus Christ, is true God, Lord of glory, and one of the Holy Trinity."

The date of the feast is precisely nine months prior to the feast of the Nativity of our Lord. It is therefore the holyday of the unborn Christ, Who, through the long months prior to His Nativity, grew and developed in Mary's womb, as do all human babies in their mothers' bodies.

He Who is conceived in the womb of the Mother of God on this feast day grew up in obedience to His parents; He increased in wisdom and stature (Luke 2:51,52); He had a normal family life with brethren (Mark 2:31-34); who according to the Church were not children born of the ever-Virgin Mary, but were either cousins or children of the foster father, St. Joseph who was a widower at the time he married Mary.

As a man, Jesus experienced all normal and natural human experiences such as growth and development, ignorance and learning, hunger, thirst, fatigue, sorrow, pain, and disappointment. He also knew human temptation, suffering and death. He assumed all these things "for us men and for our salvation."

"Since, therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same nature, that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage. For surely, it was not with angels that he is concerned but with the descendants of Abraham. Therefore he had to be made like his brethren in every respect...to make expiation for the sins

of the people. For because he himself has suffered and been tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted" (Hebrews 2:9-18).

In the ever-Virgin's womb on this feast is conceived the Christ Who would enter the word becoming like all men in all things except sin. "He committed no sin; no guile was found on his lips. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he trusted to Him (God the Father), who judges justly" (1 Peter 2:22;

Hebrews 4:15).

He did all things that man fails to do, being in everything the most perfect response to the divine initiative of God toward creation. As the perfect Man, He is the new and final Adam. He recapitulated the life of Adam and the entire human race, bringing man and his world back to God the Father and allowing for a new beginning of life free from the power of sin, the devil, and death.

