

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
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Saint Clair, PA 17970

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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: 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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Triumph of the True Faith

In one of the old churches of Istanbul, Turkey (formerly Constantinople), the local people had the habit of coming in and bowing to the back wall of the spacious church. No one knew why people did this, since the sanctuary was at the other end of the church. When the old church was renovated it was discovered that concealed beneath the centuries-old layers of drab plaster and paint was a beautiful icon of the Mother of God. Further investigation into the matter confirmed that the people had a local custom of revering the sacred icon - even after it had been covered over with plaster by the non-Christian people who had custody of the church for many years.

Perhaps it is that the radiance of the Holy Images of Christ, His Blessed Mother and all

the saints cannot lay concealed even under layers of plaster and centuries of persecution! On this day the Church celebrates the restoration of icons (first instituted in 842 AD) and the end of the Iconoclastic Heresy which raged for many years in the early church.

Once blessed, an icon becomes a sacred object and a meeting place between God and man. Each icon is a "window into Heaven" and a reflection of the radiant light that emanates from God. Therefore, when we pray before an icon of Christ it is as though we are standing before the Lord Himself. The same can be said of the holy images of all the saints. Let us remember, too, that we are also living icons of Christ and our light must shine upon others!

FIRST SUNDAY OF THE GREAT FAST SUNDAY OF HOLY IMAGES



Icon of the Commemoration of the Restoration of Holy Images

**1st Sunday of the Great Fast
Tone 8**

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 6 – March 12, 2022
All Divine Services are livestreamed where noted**

- Saturday Vigil of Sunday (at SS Peter & Paul)
4:00 p. m. + **Nicholas Kostishak** req. by MM Daniel Carestia
- Sunday
8:00 a.m. + **Joseph Gerchak** req. by The Clauser Family (at St. Mary)
10:00 a.m. **Health and Blessing of the Parishioners** (at SS. Peter & Paul)
Livestreamed
5:30 p.m. **Lenten Vespers**
- Tuesday
8:00 a.m. **1st Lenten Canonical Hour**
- Wednesday
6:00 p.m. **Liturgy of the pre-Sanctified Gifts**
- Thursday
8:00 a.m. **3rd Lenten Canonical Hour**
- Friday
12 Noon. **Liturgy of the pre-Sanctified Gifts** (at St. Mary)
- Saturday
9:00 a.m. **2nd +All Souls Liturgy**
4:00 p.m. Vigil of Sunday (at SS Peter & Paul)
+ **Mary Nagg** req. by Kenneth & Barbara Kennor & Family

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; Christ the Teacher; and the Sacramental Table are offered for the Memory of Martha Wasser & son, William. Offered by Randy & Dorothy Hatter.

On the Sundays of the Holy Season of the Great Fast (Lent) Vespers will be celebrated at 5:30 p.m. followed by a Strict Lenten meal and enrichment program. The topic of discussion is the Synod on Synodality as proclaimed by Pope Francis. There are questions for discussion which we will discuss.



The **War in Ukraine** has caused untold devastation and hardship on the people including the death of children, not to mention the trauma inflicted upon their young lives. As followers of Jesus Christ, the Ukrainian people are our brothers and sisters and need our prayers and humanitarian assistance. Therefore, over the next two weeks a collection will be taken and sent to our Chancery. The monies collected will be sent where it is needed. Please give according to your means.

Our church will be open all day on Tuesday beginning with Lenten Prayer, affording you the opportunity make a sacrifice of your time to pray for the wars end and the safety of the people. Prayer and fasting, Jesus told us, is the only way to eliminate evil.



Prayer of St. Ephrem

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

Love or Infatuation???

Infatuation leaps into bloom; love takes root slowly and grows with time. Infatuation is accompanied by a sense of uncertainty. You are stimulated and thrilled, but not really happy or fulfilled. You are miserable when he is absent. You cannot wait until you see him again. Love begins with a feeling of security because it is an act of the will, a commitment to be devoted, loyal and faithful. You verbalize it, you express it, you exchange it and then you live it with undying devotion. You are warm with a sense of his nearness even if he is far away. Miles do not separate you. You want him near, but near or far, you know his arms will be there for you, so you can wait.

Infatuation says, "We must get married right away. I cannot risk losing you." Love says, "Do not rush into anything. You are sure of one another. You can plan your future with confidence because you trust each other." Infatuation has an element of sexual excitement. If you are honest, you will discover that it is difficult to enjoy one another unless you know it will end in intimacy. Love is the maturation of friendship. You must be friends before you can be lovers in marriage. Infatuation lacks confidence. When he is away you wonder if he is with another girl because you are so unsure of yourself. Sometimes you even check on him to make certain. Love means trust. You may fall into infatuation, but you will never fall in love. Infatuation may lead you to do things for which you can be very sorry, but love never will lead you on this path. Love leads you up; it makes you look up and it makes you think up and it makes you feel up. It makes you a better person than you were before because it fulfills and completes you.

Thank God for love; pray to Christ God to deliver you from infatuation!

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.

Did You Know That ...

- ...you should never look back because there is too much tendency to go the way you're looking?
- ...only those who risk going too far will ever know how far they can go?
- ...a ship in a safe harbor is safe, but that is not what a ship was built for?
- ...a successful man is one who can build a firm foundation with the bricks that others throw at him?
- ...when your confidence goes up, your competence goes up at the same time?
- ...success seems to be largely a matter of hanging on after others have let go?
- ...never apologize for showing feeling; when you do, you apologize for the truth?
- ...you were born an original; do not die a copy?
- ...the fragrance always stays in the hand that gives the rose?
- ...you cannot climb the ladder of success with your hands in your pockets?
- ...when it comes to getting things done, we need fewer architects and more bricklayers?
- ...nothing makes you more tolerant of a neighbor's loud party than being there?
- ...God gave us one mouth and two ears so we would spend twice as much time listening as talking?
- ...a kiss is a lovely trick designed by God to stop speech when words become superfluous?
- ...you should not do what you would undo if caught?
- ...as long as you keep a person down, some part of you has to be down there to hold him down and it means you cannot soar as you otherwise might?



Good Works

To such a person one might say, "You have faith and I have works, is that it?" Show me your faith without works and I will show you the faith that underlies my works James 2: 18.

Do you want proof, you ignoramus, that without works faith is dead? Was not our father Abraham justified by his works when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? There you see proof that faith was both assisting his works and implemented by his works. You also see how the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as justice" for this he received the title, "God's friend." You must perceive that a person is justified by his works and not by faith alone. Rahab the harlot will illustrate the point. Was she not justified by her works when she harbored the messengers and sent them out by a different route? Be assured then, that faith without works is dead as a body without breath James 2: 20 - 26.

I heard a voice from heaven say to me: "Write this down: Happy are the dead who died in the Lord!" The Spirit added, "Yes they shall find rest from their labors, for their good works accompany them" Revelation 14: 13.

Tell those who are rich in this world's goods not to be proud, and not to rely on so uncertain a thing as wealth. Let them trust in God who provides us richly with all things for our use. Charge them to do good, to be rich in good works and generous, sharing what they have. Thus they will build a secure foundation for the future, for receiving that life which is life indeed 1 Timothy 6: 17 - 19.

Our Heavenly Father Leads Us

Lord, our God, You led Your people safely through the desert. Protect us in these hours of testing and struggle. We desire that this season of the Great Fast be appealing in Your sight and that our souls not rebel, but be transformed by Your generous grace. May this holy time lead us to salvation and joyous celebration of the Resurrection of Your Son and our Saviour. Through the fasting and struggle with the evil one Your Son endured in the desert for forty days and forty nights, we ask to be fortified and also the blessing of success.

ask You for strength to be successful. Make me weak in Your sight to learn humble obedience.

ask for health to something great. If it is Your will, grant me illness to do something better.

ask for wealth to make me happy. Grant me poverty of spirit to make me wise.

ask for power that men might esteem me. Grant me weakness that I might recognize how much I need You.

ask for a companion not to live alone. Give me a heart and love for my fellow man.

ask for all that can make life joyous. Give me life that I might rejoice in all created things.

I want to receive nothing of the foolishness for which I so often ask, yet everything that I hope for. Almost despite myself, may my prayers that never heard voice be heard. Permit Your Holy Spirit to groan in me. Of all men, then, I am the most blessed and fulfilled. Glory be to You, O my God and Father!

Sunday of the True Faith

The first Sunday of the Great Fast is a holy day which was first celebrated on March 11, 843. Then the Byzantine Empress Theodora helped restore the rightful use of icons or holy images in our holy Constantinopolitan Church. How fortunate we are to be communicants of this ancient, venerable and most pure universal Church.

Rededicate yourself, along with your entire family today to the labor of serving God and His Church and to keeping the flame of our Byzantine tradition burning brightly in a world that needs the salutary truths which we have to offer. Learn more about our Church and be faithful to it. Lead by your example others to live and associate themselves with it. We have a tremendously rich heritage from God to share with others. Let us not keep our treasure a great secret!

This first Sunday of the Great Fast celebrated the victory of those in the ninth century who finally persevering triumphed over evil-doers who smashed icons and removed them from our churches under the pretext God is a purely spiritual being and cannot be physically depicted. Saint John Damascene explained that since Christ appeared in the flesh as a tangible human being, we not only can, but have a right to depict Him in His salutary works in iconography.

As a result of the seventh Ecumenical Council, the restoration of icons took place. It became such a worrisome event that for years, only in AD 843, could the Church safely say God had triumphed over sinners in this matter. On the first Sunday of the Great Fast, this victory of faith is celebrated; this victory of the truth is remembered. Icons are the only authentic Christian art form or expression. They are different because they do not attempt to depict or express the actual physical appearance of Christ, the Mother of God, or a saint or spiritual event, but the immortal value of the soul the invisible and difficult to define spiritual dimension of the person or sacred event.

Today over the entire world, our blessed Church rejoices in the correctness of its worship and truth of its faith. Today we proudly proclaim we are true worshippers who sing the true praises of the Holy Trinity. We announce in our celebrations that there is no variance or deviance between the theory of our faith and its daily living practice, which genuinely believe and uphold all that Christ teaches through His Body, our blessed Church. We celebrate because the grace of the Holy Spirit has kept us faithful. Our Byzantine Catholic Church is like a mighty ship that for two thousand years has been steering on an unerring course from limited earth to boundless heaven, leading humanity to eternal salvation. Storms have tossed and buffeted the barque of Christ, His Church; enemies have sought to destroy us but our ship of faith continues to sail to its destined port of heaven in a straight undeviating course. Today we also pray that it may always be so!

During This Sacred Season

During this holy season of the Great Fast, we should be doing all we can to unite ourselves intimately with the Saviour. As we look closely into His life and salutary death for us, we see there streams of love pouring out to each one of us individually. All that He taught, all that He did for us was done out of love and it reaches to the depth of our soul.

Everything we do for Him should also be responsive in the same spirit. He issues us an invitation. Can we be indifferent? Can we afford to ignore Him? Can we go it alone? Where will this lead us?

The Saviour wishes and desires to be a part of our day to day living. Should we choose to close our doors on Him, or should we joyfully and expectantly open them and permit Him entrance? Should He be the unseen guest in our homes and the Source of grace for our daily living?

This season of the Great Fast will be successful if we answer these questions and make a serious commitment to the Saviour to be faithful to Him. "...the love of Christ impels us" 2 Corinthians 5: 14.

Were The Roman Faults Ours?

Once the great Roman Empire was more powerful than any nation of our time. No nation could stand up against Roman legions. Yet that great empire sank to dismal failure. Why?

The historian, Edward Gibbon in "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," gives these five reasons:

- 1) The rapid increase of divorce; the undermining of the home which is the basis of human society.
- 2) Higher and higher taxes and the spending of public moneys for free bread and improved circus entertainments.
- 3) The mad craze for pleasure; sports becoming every year more and more exciting provocative, and more brutal.
- 4) The building of gigantic armaments when the real enemy was within: the decadence of the people.
- 5) The decay of religion and moral values which faded into mere form, losing touch with and alienated from life, and becoming impotent to warn and guide the people.

Just pause and think of the conditions now existing in the United States. On all levels there is an abandonment of objective moral values while everyone does whatever they wish on the basis of situation ethics. Are we following in the footsteps of the graceless Romans? There is no one who is willing to take a stand and expose the depravation for what it is. Will our nation, great and powerful as it once was, continue to go down in moral failure? Upon each of us rests the responsibility of making our country strong and stable. Are we part of the problem or are we eager to become the solution?