

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: tvrgin@outlook.com

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

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

Let Your Prayer Come from a Humble Heart

When we pray, our words should be calm, modest and disciplined. Let us reflect that we are standing before God. We should please Him both by our bodily posture and the manner of our speech. It is characteristic of the vulgar to shout and make a noise, not those who are modest. On the contrary, they should employ a quiet tone in their prayer.

Moreover, in the course of His teaching, the Lord instructed us to pray in secret. Hidden and secluded places, even our own rooms, give witness to our belief that God is present everywhere; that He sees and hears all; that in the fullness of His majesty, He penetrates hidden and secret places. This is the teaching of Jeremiah: Am I God when I am near, and not God when I am far away? Can anyone hide in a dark corner without my seeing Him? Do I not fill heaven and earth? Another passage of Scrip-

ture says: The eyes of the Lord are everywhere, observing both good and wicked men.

The same modesty and discipline should characterize our liturgical prayer as well. When we gather to celebrate the divine mysteries with God's priest, we should not express our prayer in unruly words; the petition that should be made to God with moderation is not to be shouted out noisily and verbosely. For God hears our heart not our voice. He sees our thoughts; He is not to be shouted at. The Lord showed us this when He asked: Why do you think evil in your hearts? The Book of Revelation testifies to this also: And all the churches shall know that I am the one who searches the heart and the desires.

St. Cyprian of Carthage

FIRST SUNDAY OF THE GREAT FAST SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY MEMORY OF THE HOLY PROPHETS



Icon of the Holy Images

**1st Sunday of the Great Fast
Forty Martyrs of Sebaste
Tone 1**

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 9 – March 15, AD2025

Vigil of Sunday

Saturday	4:00 p.m.	+Catherine Bulino req. by Stephen & Laura Mitchell*
Sunday	9:00 a.m.	Health and Blessing of the Parishioners* (Livestream) Sunday Vespers of the Great Fast
Monday	9:00 a.m.	No Divine Service Today*
Tuesday	9:00 a.m.	1st Lenten Hour*
Wednesday	6:00 p.m.	Liturgy of the Pre-sanctified Gifts*
Thursday	9:00 a.m.	3rd Lenten Hour*
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.	+Michael Kovich req. by Marie Wanchick
----------	-----------	---

*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:

Spaghetti Dinner, Sunday, March 16, 2025

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

Meditation: Do you want to see God and the heavenly court of angels who serve him day and night? Nathaniel was hungry for God, but was skeptical when his friend, Philip told him he had found the Messiah. What blocked Nathaniel from seeing the Messiah? Familiarity and contempt! Nathaniel wanted nothing to do with someone who came from a "no good" town like Nazareth! Aren't we often like Nathaniel? We reject what we do not like, find fault with, or disdain. Philip took the wiser strategy of inviting his friend to "come and see" Jesus and find out for himself whether he really was the Messiah. Clever arguments rarely win people to the gospel, but an encounter with the person of Jesus Christ can transform one's life forever. Nathaniel found in Jesus more than he could have hoped and dreamed. Jesus, who knows our hearts better than we do, revealed to Nathaniel the innermost thoughts and desire of his heart -- to know God personally and to be united with him forever. What is the significance of Jesus' revelation of seeing Nathaniel under the fig tree? The fig tree was a symbol of God's blessing and peace. It provided shade from the midday sun and a cool place to retreat and pray. It is very likely that Nathaniel had meditated "under the fig tree" on the Messianic prophecies and prayed for their fulfillment in his time. Perhaps he dozed off for a midday nap and dreamed of God's kingdom like Jacob did when he saw a vision of the ladder which united earth with heaven. Nathaniel accepted Jesus as Messiah and Lord because Jesus spoke to the need of his innermost being -- the desire to know God personally and to be united with him in his glory.

What does Jesus mean when he says "you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man"? One of the most remarkable revelations recorded in the bible is the dream of Jacob (see Genesis 28:12-17). God had opened a door for Jacob that brought him and his people into a new relationship with the living God. In Jacob's dream God revealed his angelic host and showed him the throne of heaven and promised Jacob that he and descendants would dwell with the living God. Who are the angels and why do they intervene between heaven and earth? Augustine, the great 4th century bishop and teacher, tells us the angels are God's servants and messengers. "They are the mighty ones who do his word, hearkening to the voice of his word" (Psalm 103:20). The scriptures tell us that the angels belong to Christ and were created for and through him (Col. 1:16). The Letter to the Hebrews speaks of the role of the angels in God's plan of salvation (see chapter one): "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation?" (Hebrews 1:14) The angels are not only messengers but protectors as well. "For he will give his angels charge of you to guard you in all your ways" (Psalm 91:11). We are not alone in our struggle against sin and evil in the world. The armies of heaven fight for and with us.

Jesus' response to Nathaniel's new faith is the promise that he himself will be the "ladder which unites earth with heaven". Jesus proclaims that he himself is the fulfillment of this promise to the Patriarch Jacob. Jesus is the true ladder or stairway to heaven. In Jesus' incarnation, the divine Son of God taking on human flesh for our sake, we see the union of heaven and earth-- God making his dwelling with us and bringing us into the heavenly reality of his kingdom. Jesus' death on the Cross and his Resurrection opens the way for each of us to come into a new relationship with God as his sons and daughters. The Lord Jesus opens the way for each of us to "ascend to heaven" and to bring "heaven to earth" in the daily circumstances of our lives. God's kingdom is present in those who seek him and who do his will. Through the gift of faith God opens a door for us to the heavenly reality of his kingdom. Do you see and believe the heavenly reality with the "eyes of faith"?

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?

WISDOM! BE ATTENTIVE

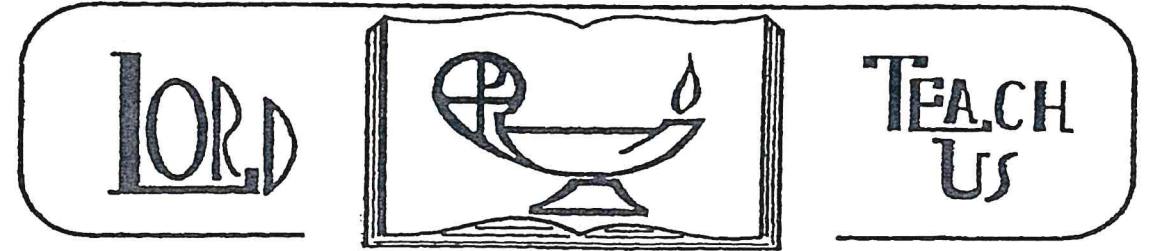
We bow before Your sacred image, O gracious Lord, and beg forgiveness for our offenses, O Christ our God; for You, of Your own will, deigned to ascend the Cross in Your human nature to deliver from bondage to the enemy those whom You created. Wherefore we gratefully cry out to You: "Through Your coming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

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

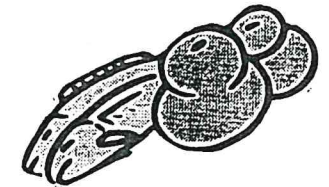
prophet of truth, but His own disciples call him the Son of God. He raises the dead and cures all manner of disease. A man of stature, somewhat tall and comely, with a very reverent countenance, such as beholders may love and fear. His hair is of the color of a chestnut full ripe, plain to His ears, 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 reproof, 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."

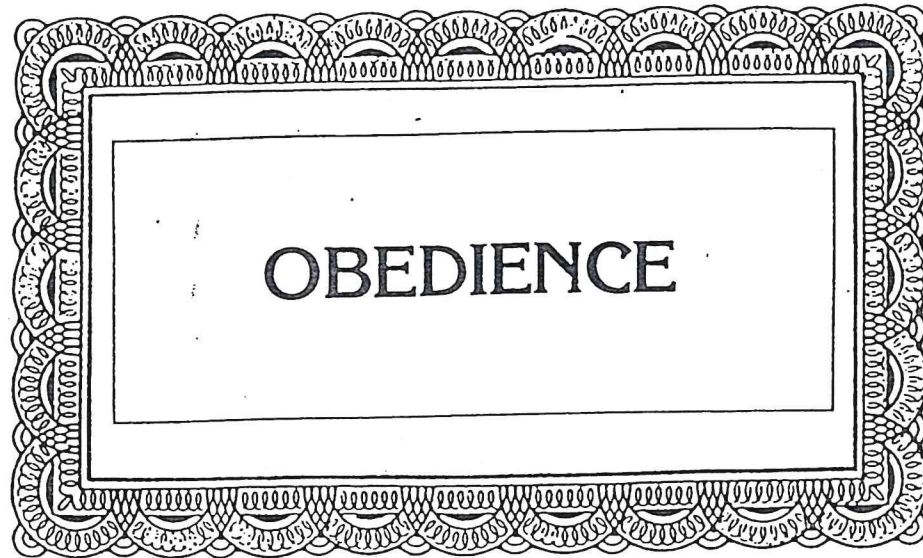
So ends this early day description of Christ our Saviour. Then the next time you pray before an icon of Christ, or look upon a painting of the Saviour, check the physical attributes, one by one, against the mental picture you have developed. You will find that most artists use these guidelines in their 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



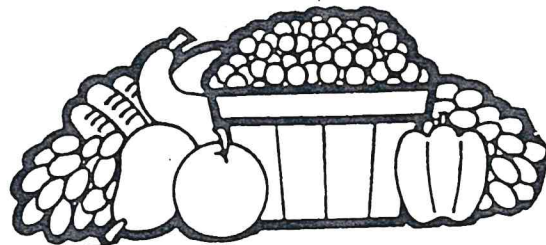
IS FREQUENT COMMUNION NECESSARY ???



"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 Quinsext 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?