

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 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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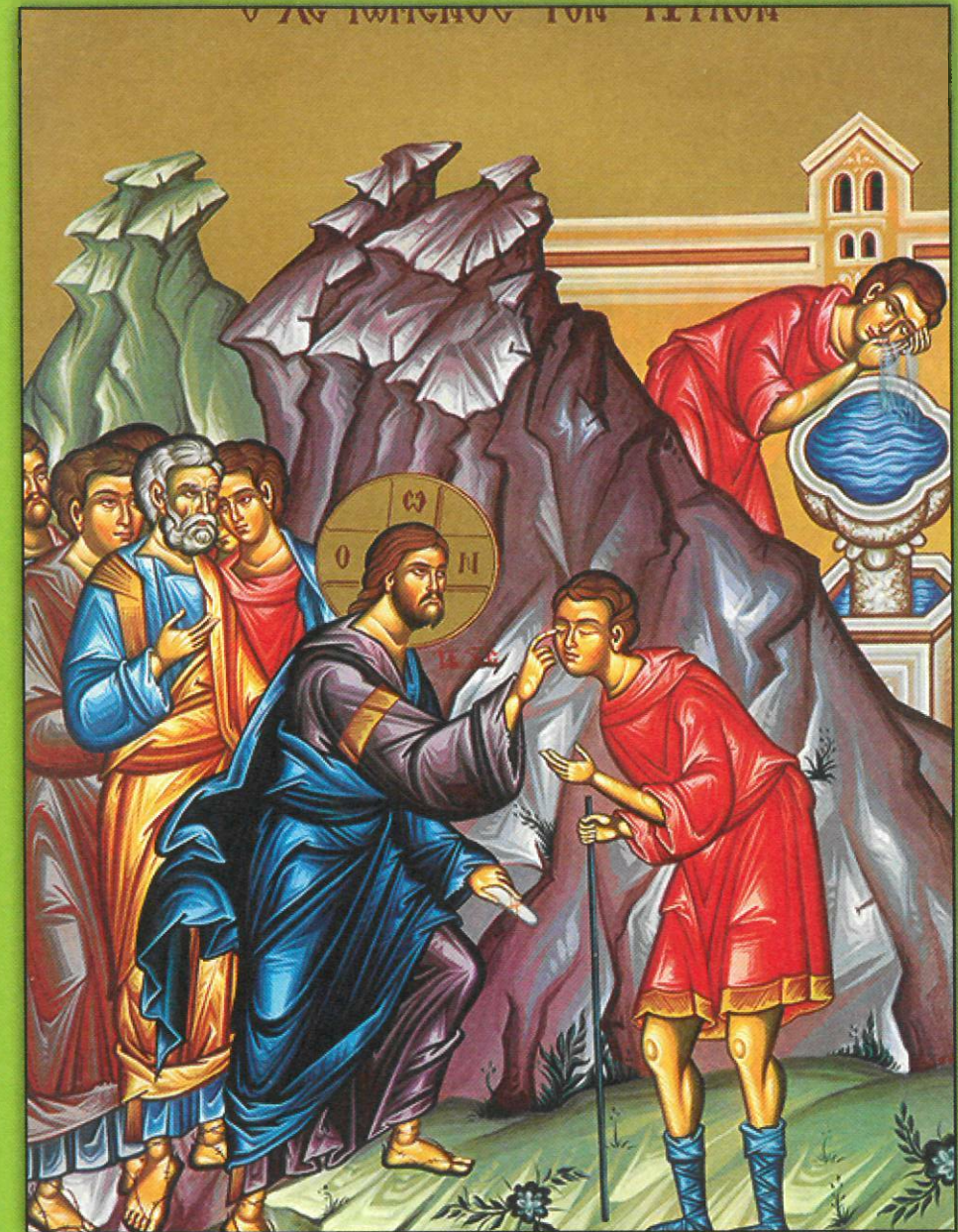
A Link to Baptism

The cure of the blind man also symbolizes mankind's means for its recovery from its blindness. It symbolizes the Sacrament of Baptism. Baptism is called holy enlightenment. Those who have been recently baptized are called the newly enlightened. This gospel from Saint John was read in the ancient Church on Holy Saturday when Catechumens were baptized. As this man is cured of his blindness when he washes in the waters of the pool of Siloam, as Jesus tells him to do, so are we brought out of darkness into a new life when we are baptized as Christ instructed us to be. Jesus restores His creation, mankind, with the potential to become what it was meant to be before the fall of Adam.

We also hear in the reading that after this man was cured many of those who knew him before did not recognize him. He is still the same man

but something has significantly changed about him. He is no longer blind. So when we are illuminated we are also new persons, though our outward appearance might be the same. To symbolize this newness a white garment is put on us to show the purity with which we start this new existence. We must, however, become different and unrecognizable in our inward and outward actions also. We must manifest our new existence to those around us through these actions. We must radiate this new found light to others by the way we live our lives. We must say to the world, "I am he who was blind but now my eyes are opened." Credit must be given to Him who has cured us of our darkness by living our lives according to the lessons of the illumination we have received and the continued guidance we get with the reception of the Holy Spirit.

SUNDAY OF THE MAN BORN BLIND



Icon of Christ and the Man born Blind

Sunday of the Man Born Blind
Festal Tone

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.

May 22 – May 28, 2022

All Divine Services are livestreamed where noted

Saturday Vigil of Sunday (at SS Peter & Paul)

4:00 p. m. + **Helen Platko** req. by Joanne & Mark Schultz

Sunday

8:00 a.m. + **Anna Becjer** req. by MM Edward Santi (at St. Mary)

10:00 a.m. **Health & Blessing of the Parishioners** (at SS. Peter & Paul)
livestreamed

Tuesday

8:00 a.m. **H&B Suzie & Steve Samargis – 35th Wedding Anniversary** from Family

Wednesday

8:00 a.m. + **Jeanette Lohin** req. by Mrs. Robert Wytovich

Thursday **Ascension of our Lord** (Obligation)

9:00 a.m. **H&B Parishioners** at St. Mary

6:00 p.m. + **Joseph Lohin** req. by Elaine L. Kunze (at SS Peter & Paul) livestreamed

Friday

8:00 a.m. + **John Holiga** req. by Walter Pewor

Saturday Vigil of Sunday (at SS Peter & Paul)

4:00 p.m. + **Joseph Lohin** req. by Elaine L. Kunze

Epistle Readers: 4/23 – Gail Burgess; 4/24 – Dolores Kramer 4/30 Marie Wanchick; – Laura Mitchell; 5/1 – Ellen Sinkovich; 5/7 – Paulette Murphy; 5/8 – Beverly Kostishak; 5/14 – Laura Mitchell; 5/15 – Jennifer Keer; 5/21 – Gail Burgess; 5/22 – Judy Kostura; 5/26 – Ellen Sinkovich; 5/28 – Dolores Kramer; 5/29 – Paulette Murphy. (If you cannot be present for any time, kindly contact another reader to cover for you).

Candle Offering:

Knowing If We Are Faithful

For if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. Faith in our heart leads to justification, confession on the lips to salvation. Scripture says, “No one who believes in him will be put to shame.” (Romans 10: 9-11)

I solemnly assure you, the man who hears my words and has faith in him who sent me possesses eternal life. He does not come under condemnation, but has passed from death to life. (John 5:24)

This means that if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old order has passed away; now all is new. (2 Corinthians 5: 17)

I repeat, it is owing to his favor that salvation is yours through faith. This is not your own doing; it is God's gift, neither is it a reward for anything you have accomplished, so let no one pride himself in it. (Ephesians 2: 8-10)

... and the life that I now live is not my own; Christ is living in me. I still have my human life, but it is a life of faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I will not treat God's gracious gift as pointless. (Galatians 2: 20,21)

Those who belong to Christ have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the spirit, let us follow the spirit's lead. Let us never be boastful, or challenging, or jealous toward one another. (Galatians 5:24-26)

Unfortunately, this glorious basilica was destroyed by the Persians in 614. It was once again rebuilt in the eighth century only to be destroyed once again by the infidels. In the twelfth century the Crusaders undertook the task of rebuilding the basilica, but before they were able to complete construction it was once more destroyed by the Saracens, never to be rebuilt again. The only thing that remains to the present time is a small octagonal chapel, covering the exact spot from which according to tradition, our Lord actually ascended into heaven.

Then we have the testimony of St. Cyril of Jerusalem (d. 386), who in his catechetical instructions quotes the Mount of Olives in witness of our Lord's Ascension, saying "From heaven, He descended to the earth in Bethlehem, but to heaven He ascended from the Mount of Olives. The Mount of Olives remains to this day, displaying to the eyes of the faithful Him, Who ascended on the cloud. This is the heavenly gate of His ascension" Then again, he refers to the Mount of Olives as to that "holy mountain from which Christ ascended to His Father."

The solemn observance of the Ascension feast is of great antiquity. St. Augustine (d. 430) does not hesitate to admit that the feast is of apostolic origin in his *Epistle to Januarius*. But in truth we do not have any historical evidence of its celebration as a separate feast until the end of the fourth century. Shortly thereafter, the it was observed by the

entire Church as a solemnity in the East as well as the West.

The celebration of the Resurrection originally lasted fifty days and ended on Pentecost Sunday. Since the Scriptures associate the descent of the Holy Spirit with the glorious Ascension of our Lord into heaven, up to the middle of the fourth century the mystery of the Ascension was commemorated on Pentecost. This is the reason why Church historian, Eusebius of Caesarea (d. 339), testifies that the holy and glorious Resurrection feast ended after "a period of seven weeks and is being sealed with the great festival of Pentecost on which, according to the Holy Scripture, the Ascension of our Saviour into heaven and the descent of the Holy Spirit upon men had taken place."

At the end of the fourth century, this feast began to be celebrated as a distinct festival separated from Pentecost. It was then that the Resurrection season was abbreviated to forty days as indicated in the Acts of the Apostles. According to the Acts of the Apostles, Jesus, after His glorious Resurrection, continued to appear to His disciples "for forty days, speaking to them about the kingdom of God" Acts of the Apostles 1: 3.

The remaining ten days prior to Pentecost were then dedicated to the expectation of the Holy Spirit "Together they devoted themselves to constant prayer" Acts of the Apostles 1: 14. Thus, about 380, the famous Spanish pilgrim to the Holy Land, Egeria, tells us that in Jerusalem the

Ascension was still commemorated on Pentecost Sunday afternoon with a solemn procession to the Mount of Olives, "to the place from which our Lord ascended into heaven." On that occasion some "passages of Scripture were read, hymns, interspersed by prayers, were chanted, and then the proper antiphons were also intoned", as recorded in *Dairy of a Pilgrimage*.

But in Bethlehem, according to the testimony of the same Egeria, they already celebrated the Ascension on the fortieth day after the Resurrection, that is, on the Thursday of the sixth week. There the feast was celebrated with solemn festivity preceded by a vigil. Thus at the end of the fourth century, it already began to be celebrated distinctly and eventually, it became one of the most solemn feasts of the liturgical calendar with its own vigil and post celebration period of eight days.

The oldest homilies for the feast, celebrated separately, were delivered by St. Gregory of Nyssa (d. 394) and St. John Chrysostom (d. 407). St. Gregory describes and names the day "upon which the Lord was taken up from us", *the Salvation*, suggesting that, by the Ascension into His heavenly glory, our Lord completed the work of our salvation. This is precisely the very descriptive way many peasant believers in Eastern Europe described popularly the feast day. St. John Chrysostom talks about the feast as well established and universally celebrated. Thus by the end of the fourth century or at the beginning of the fifth, *the*

Apostolic Constitutions laid down the following rule: "Count forty days from the first day of the Lord until the fifth day (Thursday) of the sixth week, and celebrate the feast of the Ascension of our Lord, since on that day He completed all the dispensations allotted to Him and all His work of salvation, and returned to God the Father Who sent Him, and is seated at the right hand of the Father."

The celebration of the Ascension feast was always connected with a procession. Thus in Jerusalem, as testified by the pilgrim Egeria, the faithful walked in procession to the top of the Mount of Olives. In Antioch, Syria, the people went in procession to the suburban church in Romanesia, where St. John Chrysostom delivered his famous sermon, *On the Ascension of our Lord*. In Constantinople, the faithful, according to testimony of Church historian, Socrates Scholasticus (d. 439), used to come together and celebrate the feast in the church of Elaea, just across the harbor of the city. Not only did they historically continue the tradition of the holyday, but enhanced its celebration as well.

The solemnity of the holyday was greatly increased by inspired hymnographers whose names are mostly unknown to us. The oldest hymn, "You were born, our God..." originally was chanted on Pentecost. But some time in the fifth century, when Ascension started to be celebrated distinctly, this hymn was transferred to Ascension celebration. The author of the troparion for the feast is not known, but the kontakion is generally

ascribed to the St. Romanus the Melodist. There are two Canons for the celebration of Matins; the first was composed by St. John Damascene (d. 749), the famous hymnographer of St. Sabbas Monastery near Jerusalem. The other is ascribed to the monk of the Studion Monastery in Constantinople, St. Joseph Studite (d. 832), who was persecuted for veneration of icons.

The liturgical hymns are inspired by Scripture and sermonology of the prominent Fathers of the Church. They describe in detail not only the Ascension and glorification of the Lord, with His human nature in heaven, but also our own glorification together with Jesus. By His glorious Ascension our Lord Jesus Christ completed the work of our redemption and reopened the gates of heaven to the whole human race, as attested by St. John Chrysostom: "And now we, who before were considered unfit to dwell even upon the earth, are being raised up to heaven, ascending with Christ to the heavenly kingdom."

Our Lord and Saviour, although ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father, nevertheless, does not forget us. He is, as He said He would, preparing "a place in his Father's house" for us John 14: 2, 3. And He promised to send us the Holy Spirit, Who enlightens and guides us to our heavenly abode prepared by Christ. Therefore the Church, through one of the festive Vesper verses invites us, "Come you, O faithful and let us climb the Mount of Olives and with the Apostles let us lift up our minds

and our hearts on high. Let us behold our Lord as He is taken up to heaven and let us cry out with joy and gratitude: Glory to your Ascension, O most merciful One."

Troparion

You ascended in glory, O Christ our God, granting joy to your disciples by the promise of the Holy Spirit, Whom You pledged to them by your blessing; for You are the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world.

Kontakion

When You fulfilled the plan of salvation for us, and united all things on earth to those in heaven, O Christ our God, You ascended in glory without leaving us, but remaining ever present with us; You proclaimed to those who love You: "I am with you and nobody will prevail against you."

Oldest Ascension Hymn

You were born, our God, in a manner of your own choosing. You appeared and suffered in the flesh as You willed. Through your Resurrection You conquered death and ascended into glory, fulfilling all things; You sent down the divine Spirit upon us, therefore in hymns we praise your divinity.



THE FEAST OF THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD

"We extol You, O Christ, the Giver of life, and we glorify your divine ascension in your most pure body to heaven" Exaltation at Matins.

The feast of the Ascension of our Lord is one of the twelve great feasts and is a solemn holy day. On that day we commemorate the completion of Christ's work of salvation, the glorious entry of our Lord in His human nature into heaven, as well as His pledge of our glorification with Him.

The feast of the Ascension is celebrated on the fortieth day after the Resurrection, since in the Scripture we read that Jesus, after His glorious Resurrection, continued to appear to His disciples for "forty days," talking to them about the "kingdom of God" Acts of the Apostles 1: 3. On the fortieth day our Lord took His disciples to the summit of the Mount of Olives, from where He ascended to His heavenly glory as predicted by the Prophet Zechariah: "On that day His feet shall rest upon the Mount of Olives, which is opposite Jerusalem to the east" Zechariah 14: 4.

After reminding the disciples not to leave Jerusalem until the coming of the Holy

Spirit, whom he promised to send, our Lord, "raised His hands and blessed them. As he blessed them, he parted from them and was taken up to heaven" Luke 24: 50, 51.

In the history of the early Church, we read that the disciples were looking on as Jesus Christ was lifted up but then "a cloud took him from their sight" Acts of the Apostles 1: 9. Thus the promise Jesus offered the Jews that they "shall see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before" John 6: 62, was literally fulfilled. Our Lord indeed was "taken up in glory" 1 Timothy 3: 16.

The testimony of Christ's glorious Ascension to heaven is not only found in Scripture but is also supported by other historical documents. According to the testimony of Eusebius of Caesarea (d. 339), in his *Life of Constantine*, St. Helena, the mother of the Emperor Constantine, "raised a stately structure on the Mount of Olives in memory of the ascension to heaven of Him, Who is the Saviour of mankind, by erecting a sacred temple on the very summit of the mountain."