

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

Parish Office: (570) 544-2074

Website: [www.sspeterandpaulminersville.com](http://www.sspeterandpaulminersville.com)

Email: [tvrgin@outlook.com](mailto:tvrgin@outlook.com)

Served by: Very Reverend Gregory J. Noga, Pastor

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

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**CONFESSIONS:** SS. Peter & Paul: Saturday 1:00 - 2:00 p.m. and Sunday 8:00 - 8:30 a.m. 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)

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Mark J. Mahal - Funeral Director

### *The Story of the Origin of Jesus Christ, Son of David, and the Rest of the Names*

Matthew's genealogy is extraordinarily comprehensive in his theology of the roots of Jesus' story in the Old Testament. But that is only one part of the story of Jesus Christ. The story has a sequence as well; and the continuing sequence is what makes the genealogy "good news" for Matthew's audience and for us. Human being have been empowered to preserve, proclaim, and convey the salvation brought by Jesus Christ throughout history. The God who wrote the beginnings with crooked lines also writes the sequence with crooked lines, and some of those lines are our own lives and witness.

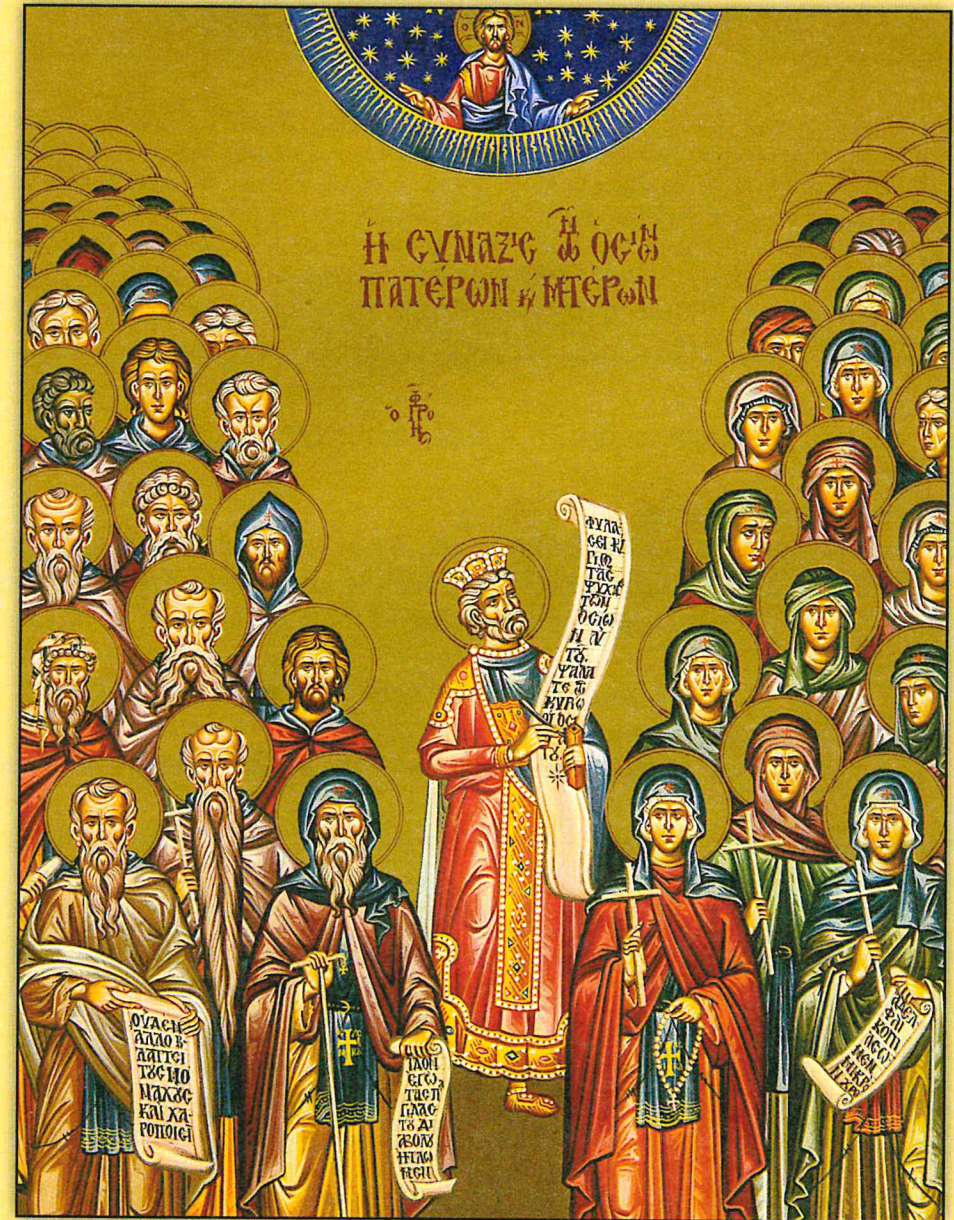
A God who did not hesitate to use the scheming as well as the noble, the impure as well as the pure, men to whom the world hearkened and women upon whom the world frowned - this God continues to work through the same melange. If it was a challenge to recognize in the last part of

Matthew's genealogy that totally unknown people were part of the story of Jesus Christ, it may be a greater challenge to recognize that the unknown characters of today are an essential part of the sequence. The proclamation of that genealogy in the Advent liturgy is designed to give us hope about our destiny and our importance.

By stressing the all-powerful grace of God, the genealogy presents its greatest challenge to those who will accept only an idealized Jesus Christ whose story they would write only with straight lines and whose portrait they would paint only in pastel colors. If we look at the whole story and the total picture, the Gospels teach us that Jesus' ministry was not thus; the history of the church teaches us that the sequence as not thus. God's grace can work even with people like us.

Father Raymond E. Brown, S.S.

## SUNDAY BEFORE THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD SUNDAY OF THE ANCESTORS



*Icon of the Holy Ancestors*



**Sunday before Nativity of Jesus Christ**  
**Tone 5**

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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**December 23 – December 30, 2023**

Vigil of Sunday before Christmas (at St. Mary)

Saturday 4:00 p.m. **+John Dukmen** req. by MM Edward Kubilus & Family

Sunday 9:00 a.m. Sunday before the Nativity of Jesus Christ (livestreamed)

**Health and Blessing of the Parishioners**

**Nativity of Jesus Christ** (Christmas)

Sunday 11:30 p.m. Compline

12:00 a.m. **Health and Blessing of the Parishioners** at SS Peter & Paul

Christmas Day 10:00 a.m. **Health and Blessings of the Parishioners** at St. Mary

Holy Day: **Synaxis of the Theotokos**

Tuesday 9:00 a.m. **+Lewis Tokarick, Sr.** req. by son, Bruce Tokarick (SS P&P)

4:00 p.m. **+Charles Sinko** req. by Mrs. Helen Bruso (at St. Mary)

Holy Day: **St. Stephen, Protomartyr**

Wednesday 9:00 a.m. **+Kathryn Simodejka** req. by Stephen Yuschock

Thursday 9:00 a.m. **+John Luchanin & +Caren Lucanin Reichhard** req. by Debra Luchanin

Friday 9:00 a.m. No Divine Liturgy Today

Saturday Vigil 4:00 p.m. **+Christopher Black** req. by MM ted Babilya (at St. Mary)

Sunday 9:00 a.m. Health & Blessing of the Parishioners (at SS Peter & Paul)

**Epistle Readers:** 12/3 – Judy Kostura; 12/6 – Marie Wanchick; 12/7 – Beverly Kostishak; 12/10 – Dolores Kramer; 12/17 – Judy Kostura; 12/24 – Ellen Sinkovich; 12/24 – Gail Burgess; 12/26 – Beverly Kostishak; 12/27 – Marie Wanchick; 12/31 – Judy Kostura; 1/1 – Jennifer Keer; 1/6 – Dolores Kramer; 1/7 – Judy Kostura; 1/14 – Jennifer Keer; 1/21 – Beverly Kostishak; 1/28 – Gail Burgess; 2/4 – Marie Wanchick.

**Candle Offering:** Icons of the Mother of God; Jesus Christ; Sacramental Table for **+Anna Leshko** req. by the Leshko Family

**Breakfast with Father**

Sunday, January 14, 2024 following the Divine Liturgy. ECF Class will participate in place of the regular class time. All are welcome to attend.

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**Sunday Before the Nativity of Our Lord**

*By St. Cyril of Jerusalem*

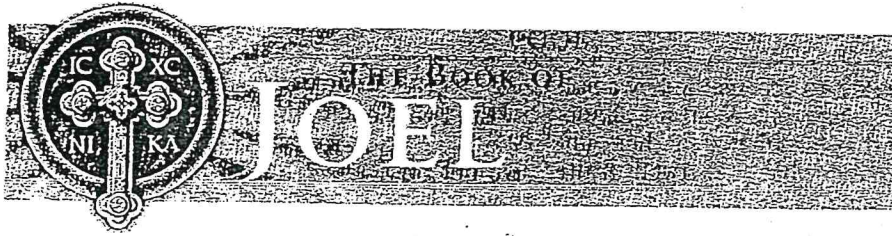
We do not preach only one coming of Christ, but a second as well, much more glorious than the first. The first coming was marked by patience; the second will bring the crown of a divine kingdom.

In general, whatever relates to our Lord Jesus Christ has two aspects. There is a birth from God before the ages, and a birth from a virgin at the fullness of time. There is a hidden coming, like that of rain on fleece, and a coming before all eyes, still in the future.

At the first coming He was wrapped in swaddling clothes in a manger. At His second coming He will be clothed in light as in a garment. In the first coming He endured the cross, despising the shame; in the second coming He will be in glory, escorted by an army of angels.

We look then beyond the first coming and await the second. At the first coming we said: Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. At the second we shall say it again; we shall go out with the angels to meet the Lord and cry out in adoration: Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.





## The Journey of the Nativity Fast

*I will instruct you in the way you should walk; give you counsel with my eye upon you*  
Psalms 32: 8.

**Author**—Traditionally the prophet Joel (commemorated October 19), son of Pethuel, of the tribe of Reuben. His is a common Jewish name, meaning “Yahweh is God.” Nothing is known of his life outside of his short prophecy.

**Date**—Any number of dates have been suggested for Joel’s life. Fathers such as St. Jerome and Isidore place Joel in the time of the prophets Isaiah and Hosea, about 740 BC. Tradition held Joel to be one of the earlier prophets; modern scholars are undecided about the matter, often placing him at about 450–400 BC, after the restoration of Israel from exile.

**Major Theme**—Ultimately, the Lord is victorious. Three major themes are prominent. (1) A call summoning the people of God to turn their sorrow into penitence (1:1—2:17). (2) The faithfulness of God to rise up on behalf of His people, restore their prosperity, and bring the nations to justice (2:18–27). (3) The coming of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity (3:1–5). Joel emphasizes the universal mission of the Spirit, anticipating the Day of Pentecost, when He is poured out on all flesh.

**Background**—It is likely the prophet Joel wrote in the face of a double disaster—the attack of military aggressors such as the Babylonians, and the onset of a plague of locusts. The prophet freely switches between the two calamities, likening them to each other. As the narrative proceeds, Joel employs two distinct prophetic genres: (1) he calls his people to contrition and repentance; and (2) he uses vivid apocalyptic imagery to convey deep spiritual truths. The contrast created by these two approaches prompted St. Jerome to comment, “Joel is clear at the beginning, but at the end more obscure.”

### Outline

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|--|---|
| I. Devastation in Israel (1:1–20)          | IV. The Outpouring of the Holy Spirit (3:1–5) |
| II. Call to Repentance (2:1–17)            | V. The Judgment of the Nations (4:1–17)       |
| III. The Deliverance of the Lord (2:18–27) | VI. The Prosperity of Zion (4:18–21)          |

This liturgical season is primarily about the coming of God among us, and only then in a secondary way about our asking, seeking, waiting and longing. There is hope, because we are unconditionally loved; whatever may be our failures, our tepidity, or our secret despair. The word “Come” is a bearer of profound mystery.

So hallowed and gracious is this time. The brilliant ravishing autumn foliage has for the most part vanished and the trees stand stark and bare. In early winter we delight gazing upon the sunset through the elaborate patterns of branches that portion the pink sky like the elegant tracery of a stained glass window. The trees, with their bare branches reach quietly toward the sky, look to the heavens, toward the dying sunset light, and seem to share in the pleading of our seasonal prayer, “Come, Lord Jesus, Come!”

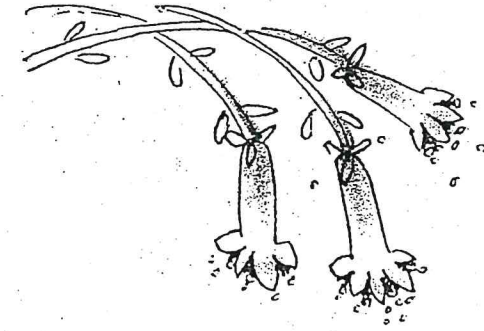
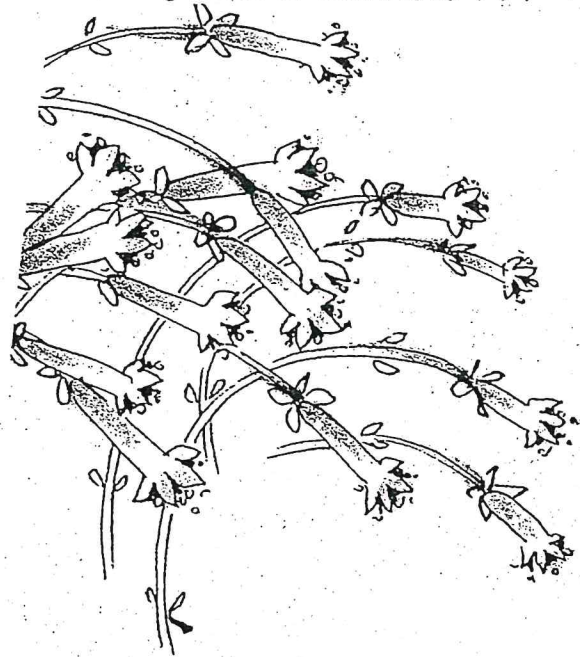
We know that early Christians, after the example of Joshua and Moses, traditionally prayed with their arms outstretched towards the heavens as is depicted in the icon, *Virgin Orans*. It is from heaven our Lord is expected to come again. We have lost and abandoned and forgotten this pattern of physical posture in prayer. The bare trees with their branches outstretched is a symbolic reminder for all believers, especially during this holy season that we, too, must gaze up at all times toward our God in unceasing prayer and reach with open arms toward him with deep yearning. Not only is it a sign of surrender of our own will to him in prayer, but more than a sign of our self-eager giving to the Lord of Life. It is an expression of the soul yearning for union with the eternal God, seeking oneness with the Creator.

For believers who themselves are in on a pilgrimage through life, this holy time intensifies and deepens the senses of our spiritual journey. We move with expectation toward an arrival, an encounter. The monk, secluded in his monastic desert, longs and prays expectantly for the blessed coming of the Saviour Lord and God. The ordinary believer elevates himself in the mystery of this fast moving world, to slow down, to contemplate and meditate on what astounding event is about to take place. In our homes there ought be something special about this preparation period beyond the silliness of shopping and running around endlessly. We ought always look to *Come all*



## “The Fruit of the Spirit Is Love and Peace”

There is no thinking person  
Who can stand untouched today  
And view the world around us  
Slowly drifting to decay  
Without feeling deep within him  
A silent, unnamed dread  
As he contemplates the future  
That lies frighteningly ahead . . .  
For, like watching storm clouds gather  
In a dark and threatening sky,  
Man knows that there is nothing  
He can formulate or try  
That will stop the storm from breaking  
In its fury and its force,  
Nor can he change or alter  
The storm's destructive course,  
But his anxious fears are lessened  
When he calls on God above,  
For he knows above the storm clouds  
Is the brightness of God's love . . .



So as the “clouds of chaos”  
Gather in man's muddled mind,  
And he searches for the answer  
He *alone* can never find,  
Let us recognize we're facing  
Problems man has never solved,  
And with all our daily efforts  
Life grows more and more involved,  
But our future will seem brighter  
And we'll meet with less resistance  
If we call upon our Father  
And seek Divine Assistance . . .  
For the spirit can unravel  
Many tangled, knotted threads  
That defy the skill and power  
Of the world's best hands and heads,  
And our plans for growth and progress,  
Of which we all have dreamed,  
Cannot survive materially  
Unless *our spirits* are redeemed . . .  
So may our prayer this Christmas  
Be that God may dwell again  
In human hearts throughout the world  
And bring *Good Will* to men.

## The Virtues of Men and Women

The perennial question about what it means to be a man or a woman and how the sexes relate to one another are of crucial concern to the Body of Christ. After all, human identity is grounded in the truth that *God created man in his image...male and female he created them* Genesis 1: 27. This is reflected often in the teachings of the Fathers of the Church who make references to spiritual fatherhood and motherhood, calling us to cultivate the manly virtues modeled by St. Joseph, the foster father of our Lord.

The virtues of authentic masculinity shine through together with the virtue of fatherhood. The vocation of St. Joseph's as protector and servant is made evident by his immediate response to God's command through the angel of the Lord. *When Joseph awoke he did as the angel of the Lord directed him and received her into his home as his wife* Matthew 1: 24; *Joseph got up and took the child and his mother and left that night for Egypt* Matthew 2: 14.

And there is good reason to highlight the genius of women. Much of the confusion and antagonism in contemporary society stems from a lack of appreciation of “feminine” values. A one-sided emphasis on stereotypically masculine qualities disparages characteristics like receptivity, compassion, and obedience, casting them aside as forms of weakness and passivity. The Church has sought to correct this error over time so there is more understanding and appreciation for the collaboration of men and women. While woman may be more immediately attuned to and live as the privileged sign of certain values, that which is called femininity, it is more than simply an attribute of the female sex. The word designates indeed the fundamental human capacity to live for the other and because of the other.

When the Birthgiver of God declared her *fiat*, her full and free consent to the Incarnation, she did so as an icon of the entire and whole Church. In answering his vocation, St. Joseph demonstrated a similar readiness of will to respond to our heavenly Father and give his life in service to love. Seeking to become mature and loving Christian men and women, today we are invited to contemplate and imitate the virtues of the Holy Family as we look forward with joy to celebrating the glorious feast of the Nativity of our Lord.



*you faithful, joyful and triumphant*, as we grow with the blessed time, giving an awareness of how beautifully the words of the hymnology of the Church expresses the rich meaning of the various feast days commemorated at this time. The endurance of the musical voice of the Body of Christ, sanctified by centuries of use, repeating as it does ancient truths, has in its own unique way of conveying something of the rich mystery which the Bride of Christ proclaims in liturgical prayer and song. We must never forget that the chant is not music or melody alone, but words to music, sung joyfully with inspiration because of the truth they convey, thus making the chant truly a vehicle of melodious prayer.

With their simplicity the songs of the Church express in their richness Scriptural truths from which they are inspired with serene beauty, and have a way of transforming our vocal sounds into acts of enduring praise and adoration to God, our Lord and Master with one heart, one mind and one voice. The Lord God Creator, for all his wonderful benefits to us is praised by every means, in speech and song, in word of poetry and adoration.

The Psalms constitute the fullness of antiphonal singing and praise. So we meditate on *In that day, of the Lord's coming, sweet wine will flow from the mountains, milk and honey from the hills, alleluia.*

This journey we take, this time we invest with our God is reason for a subtle invitation to climb the Lord's mountain. The journey is slow, gradual, ascending up the narrow mountain incline path. As with all uphill climbing there are certain hazards along the way, but also a joyful expectation of one day finally reaching the mountaintop, that is the sacred place where the Lord dwells. Our sacred season journey reminds us also of another journey: that of our earthly pilgrimage towards communion with our Maker, God, toward a rich plenitude of life with him. The very character of the Nativity Fast season is to instill in us a vision of our Christian life as a constant pilgrimage, as a dynamic ongoing movement toward a final, ongoing fulfilling encounter. We wish to reach our ultimate destination where we enter into possession of the only our hearts desire.

We certainly are in journey, a very real journey that takes us from the forces of darkness and sin into the light of certain hope and actual grace. At the beginning we may undertake the journey with feelings of fear and insecurity. Yet as we continue walking, traveling and growing into the realization that He who is the object of our destination is also our companion on the road. The landscape of the sinner's journey begins to change. We discover the joyful expectancy and patient waiting. We rejoice

THEM.

for ITS SINS

The RUIN of

AGAINST

the CITY was

the TRUE GOD.

a PUNISHMENT

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## Micah

MICAH was BETHLEHEM.  
a PROPHET who He PREDICTED  
LIVED in the JERUSALEM'S  
SMALL DOWNFALL and  
TOWN the DESTRUCTION  
of MORESHETH of the TEMPLE.  
NEAR Jerusalem This CAME TO  
in the TIME PASS WHEN  
of ISAIAH. the BABYLONIANS,  
He PROPHESED and LATER the  
that the MESSIAH ROMANS,  
would BE BORN in DESTROYED

with great joy for we find out and discover as once did the disciples on the way to Emmaus, that He has been at our side all along. Jesus, as our ultimate Judge is waiting for us at the final moment of the journey, but He, as Saviour and Messiah, is also with us now as we walk through the whole of it.

To truly discern the art of the holy and sacred journey, we must never lose sight of this divine presence, who facilitates the journey by driving away those negative elements in our lives as He swept away the negative influence of Herod after the birth of the Saviour. We are imparted necessary grace to facilitate the journey by overcoming despair, fear, insecurity, sinfulness, superficiality, pride, etc. During the long nights of our journey to Bethlehem, we can find comfort in the prayer of the Church from the Matins service of the Nativity of our Lord:

*To those who are caught in the night straying into the works of darkness, grant O Christ our God, your light and your blessing. Make the path easy for us, whereby we may ascend and so attain to glory.*

### PRAYER

It is customary to pray before any activity, especially before we travel. Please pray this short prayer with your family before departing for Church. With prayer, our journey will be safer and less stressful.

#### PRAYER BEFORE DEPARTING FOR CHURCH

O Lord our God, the True and Living Way, who traveled with Your servant Joseph; travel together with us as we make our way to Your Church and deliver all of us from agitation raised up against us. Grant us peace and strength, by Providence fulfilling all righteousness according to Your commandments, and that being filled with earthly and heavenly good things, You deign that we may return home again in peace. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.