

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, Sunday 8:00-8:30 AM,
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) IMMEDIATELY.**

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True Fasting

“Why do we fast, and you do not see it? afflict ourselves, and you take no note of it? Lo, on your fast day you carry out your own pursuits, and drive all your laborers. Yes, your fast ends in quarreling and fighting, striking with wicked claw. Would that today you might fast so as to make your voice heard on high! Is this the manner of fasting I wish, of keeping a day of penance: That a man bow his head like a reed, and lie in sackcloth and ashes? Do you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord?

This, rather, is the fasting that I wish: releasing those bound unjustly, untying the thongs of the yoke; Setting free the oppressed, breaking every yoke; Sharing your bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and the homeless; Clothing

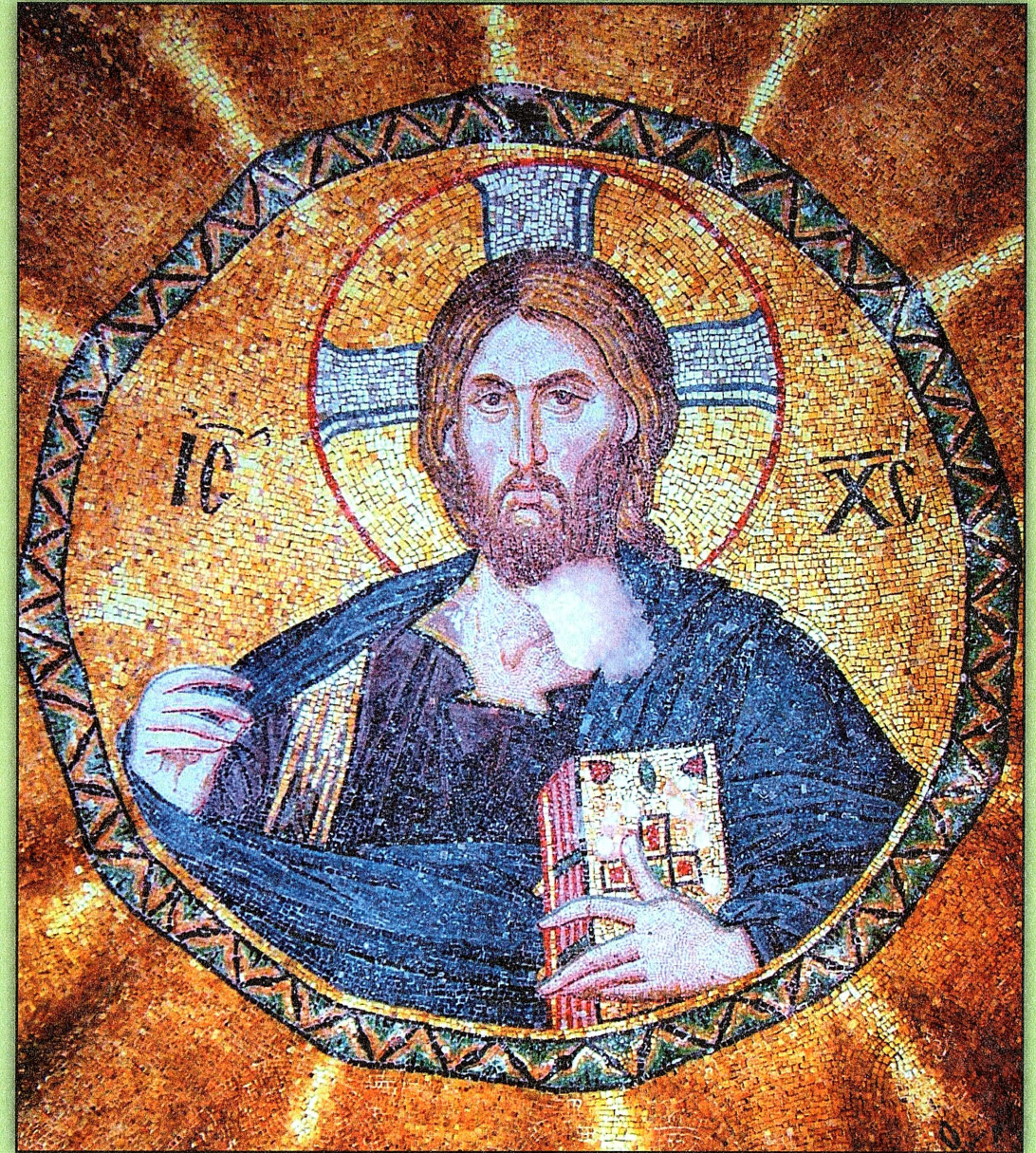
the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own.

Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your wound shall quickly be healed; Your vindication shall go before you, and the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer, you shall cry for help, and he will say: Here I am!

If you remove from your midst oppression, false accusation and malicious speech; If you bestow your bread on the hungry and satisfy the afflicted; Then light shall rise for you in the darkness, and the gloom shall become for you like midday.”

The Prophet Isaiah (58:3-9)

SUNDAY OF CHEESEFARE FORGIVENESS SUNDAY



Icon of Christ Pantocrator

Sunday of Cheese Fare
Forgiveness Sunday
Tone 4

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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February 14 – February 20, 2021
All Divine Services are livestreamed where noted

Saturday Vigil at SS Peter & Paul
4:00 p.m. + **John Kalochie** req. by Mary Pincharski & Robert

Sunday +**John Torola** req. by Tim & Linda Koller (at St. Mary)
10:00 a.m. **Health and Blessings of the Parishioners** (at SS Peter & Paul)
Livestreamed
5:30 p.m. Vespers of Forgiveness for the beginning of the Great Fast (Lent)

Monday
6:00 p.m. **Liturgy of Pre-Sanctified Gifts** at SS Peter & Paul

Tuesday
8:00 a.m. Typica

Wednesday
12 Noon. **Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts** at SS Peter & Paul

Thursday
8:00 a.m. **No Divine Service Today**

Friday
12 Noon **Liturgy of the Per-Sanctified Gifts** at St. Mary

Saturday **Saturday Vigil** (at SS Peter & Paul)
4:00 p.m. +**Robert Barton** req. by wife, Mary

Epistle Readers: 2/13 – Marie Wanchick; 2/14 – Jennifer Keer; 2/20 – Dolores Kramer; 2/21 – Beverly Kostishak; 2/27 – Angela Frank; 2/28 – Marie Wanchick

NB. Vespers will be celebrated every Sunday at 5:30 p.m. during the Great Fast to foster an increase in our prayer life in preparation for the celebration of the Resurrection of Christ (Pascha). In the past two years we offered a Lenten meal and discussion following vespers. Unfortunately, last year that tradition was curtailed due to the pandemic. Unfortunately, Covid 19 is still with us and the Lenten meal will not be part of the spiritual exercises this year, but we will survive the disease I'm sure.

Also, this year, the Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts will be celebrated at 12 Noon on Wednesdays and Fridays at SS Peter & Paul and St. Mary Churches respectively to all greater participation of our more senior members who have difficulty driving in dusk and early evening.

This year the alternate Service of Typica is introduced in place of the weekday Divine Liturgies according to our Eastern Tradition. You are aware of course, that every Divine Liturgy is a celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ as well as the Sacrifice on Calvary, which we are preparing for during this time of the Great Fast.

What, you may ask is the purpose of the Great Fast, or Lent as it is called in the Christian West? In practicing mortification of the body through less eating and more prayer and almsgiving we are preparing our immortal soul for our own bodily death and resurrection and in like fashion a spiritual death to sin and resurrection in holiness. In addition, if we followed the fasts and feasts of the Church, we would also derive physical benefits allowing us to live healthier lives. Spiritual and physical wellness goes hand in hand. But, alas, due to our weak fallen nature we take the path of least resistance choosing the easy way.

Lent is God's way of reminding us the way to heaven is the straight and narrow path, not the wide and easy path. Sacrifice is the key not convenience. So, with all that said, tomorrow, Pure Monday, we begin Lent with a day of Strict or Black Fast which is the elimination of meat, dairy products and eggs; and before you groan, it is not that difficult for one day. All who receive Holy Communion are bound to keep the fasting regulations. For reasons of health, as pastor, I may excuse or prescribe another form of fasting upon request and explanation of the medical reason for the request.

I pray the Holy Spirit blesses us with a beneficial and holy fasting period.

The Divine Liturgy
of Presanctified Gifts

Introduction

“Men will come from the east and west, and from north and south, and sit at table in the kingdom of God” Luke 13: 29.

In the gospels, Jesus often refers to the kingdom of heaven being a great banquet at which the righteous men and women of every generation are gathered together with the Messiah in the age to come. It is described as the “Marriage Supper of the Lamb” St. John records the words spoken to announce this marriage supper of Jesus the Lamb of God, with his Bride, the Church. “Alleluia, for the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him glory, for the marriage of the lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready....” Revelation 19: 6, 7.

For early Christians the celebration of the Divine Liturgy brought remembrance not only of the Mystical Supper and the cross, but notably of the Resurrection of Jesus and the meals shared with him after his victory. They did not forget that it was in the “breaking of the bread” Luke 24: 35, that is, in the celebration of the Eucharist, that the risen Christ revealed himself in one of his earliest appearances after the Resurrection. For these original believers, the Eucharist came to be seen as the forerunner of the “marriage supper” to finally take place in the kingdom of heaven, with Jesus revealed through the Holy Spirit in the consecration of bread and wine in the gathered presence of his Church.

The Fathers of the Church felt that such a celebration was out of place on the week days of the Great Fast, a time of sorrow and contrition, a time when we are “out of the kingdom,” just as Adam and Eve were when they were expelled from paradise for sin. But they also knew that Holy Communion with Christ through the Eucharist was the only real basis for a Christian spiritual life, and so they began to celebrate the Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts, reserving the consecrated bread and wine from the previous Sunday Divine Liturgy to be distributed during the week at the end of a day spent with fasting and preparation. In the imperial city it was celebrated each day for the duration of the Great Fast, but modern custom follows the example of Jerusalem monasteries where it is celebrated only on Wednesdays and Fridays and the first three days of Great Week.

The exclusive use of this celebration during the Great Fast, which dates to the fifth century has made it into a beautiful and moving expression of Byzantine Catholic spirituality

“Blessed are those invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he said to me, “these are the true words of God”” Revelation 19: 9.

The Divine Liturgy

of Presanctified Gifts

The Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts begins with the celebration of Great Vespers, although its opening doxology is *eucharistic*, as the priestly celebrant momentarily opens the Royal Doors of the Icon Screen to intone, "Blessed is the kingdom of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen."

Announcing as he does the actual presence of God's kingdom among us, he closes once again the doors, symbolizing how sin adversely affects our eternal destiny. He proceeds to the place before the Royal Doors and recites silently the prescribed *prayers of light* as the congregation responds and chants the traditional evening Psalm 103 of Vespers, "*Bless the Lord, O my soul!*" Chanting during the celebration of the Presanctified Divine Liturgy is specifically characteristic of the Great Fast with minor-keyed melodies being employed.

After the initial Vesper Psalm of Creation, the Great Litany of Peace is chanted. With the completion of this serial prayer, the

congregation begins to sing the 18th *Kathisma* of the Psalter consisting of Psalms 119 – 133. This *Kathisma* is divided into three stations and each is employed to correspond respectively with each of the three ordinary antiphonal hymns of the Divine Liturgy. These three antiphons are connected by the chanting of the Little Litany, "*Again and again, in peace let us pray to the Lord.*"

During the chanting of the First Antiphon which consists of verses from Psalms 119 – 123, the gospel book is placed to the right, and the *antimension* cloth is uncovered and unfolded to receive the golden offering plate as the officiating priest removes the consecrated Lamb from the tabernacle and places it upon the golden offering plate which he then covers with the star and the appropriate veil. While the Second Antiphon is being chanted, the celebrant takes the censer and, preceded by candle-bearers, incenses the altar table from its four sides. As the Third Antiphon is being sung, the priest solemnly carries the golden offering plate known in Greek as the *diskos*, with the sacred gifts around the

right side of the altar table, placing it on the table of preparation. He then pours wine and a few drops of water into the chalice and covers it with the appropriate veil. He then takes the large veil called the *aerion* and covers both the golden offering plate and chalice. Again the gifts are incensed, but during these ceremonies the priest says nothing since all the ritual prayers were said at the preparation for the Divine Liturgy at which the "Presanctified Gifts" were prepared and consecrated.

Returning to the altar table, the priest refolds the *antimension* which had been opened for the transfer of the consecrated Lamb from the tabernacle ciborium. After the third Little Litany is chanted, the congregation begins to sing the Lamp-lighting Psalm, 140, according to the tone of the week, with the appointed variable verses, while the priest performs the incensing of the whole church.

The customary Little Entrance is made with the censer (and when the gospel is read, the Little Entrance is made with the gospel book as well as the censer), and the congregation sings the beautiful and expressive evening hymn, "O Joyful Light," after which two appointed appropriate readings from the Old Testament are chanted by the cantor.

Didactic Part Of The Liturgy

The first lesson is taken from the Book of Genesis, and the second lesson comes from

the Book of Proverbs. A peculiar rite accompanies these readings, which remains from ancient times when the Great Fast was the appointed time of preparation of catechumens for the reception of holy baptism. During the prescribed readings from the Book of Genesis, a single burning candle is placed on top of the gospel book on the altar table, and before the reading of the second prescribed lesson from the Book of Proverbs, the priest takes the candle in his left hand and the censer in his right hand, and turning to the people, blesses with a sign of the cross, the kneeling congregation saying, "The light of Christ enlightens all." He then comes before the altar table and in silence makes three great prostrations as the congregation likewise kneels down and bows low to the ground three times.

The candle is the liturgical symbol of Christ, the Light of the world. It is placed atop the gospel book during the Old Testament readings to signify that all the prophecies are fulfilled in Christ. The Old Testament leads to the fulfillment of the knowledge of Jesus as Messiah, just as the Great Fast leads to baptismal illumination.

Solemn Incensing

After reading from the Book of Proverbs, five verses, beginning with Verse 2, are sung from Psalm 140, the evening Vesper psalm. "Let my pray ascend before you like incense..." While the priestly celebrant performs a solemn incensing of the four

sides of the altar table, he and the altar servers alternate with the congregation in kneeling and standing during this ceremony. While the priest and serving retinue kneels, the congregation stands and when the priest stands, the congregation alternately kneels. It is interesting to note here that Psalm 140 already sung in its usual place at Vespers before the Little Entrance, is repeated here, which gives some indication that these verses were probably sung during the distribution of Holy Communion in the early Church when the Presanctified Divine Liturgy had not yet been fully developed as we know it and celebrate it today, but consisted simply in the distribution of Communion at Vespers.

The singing of these verses serves as a most appropriate and magnificent penitential introduction to the second portion of the Presanctified Divine Liturgy, the Liturgy proper of the catechumens and of the faithful. At the conclusion of singing these four versicles from Psalm 140, one being sung at each of the four sides of the altar table, the priest then performs three great prostrations as the people likewise kneel and bow three times. If the Presanctified Divine Liturgy is being celebrated on celebratory (polyeleos) feasts or during Passion Week when there is a prescribed epistle and gospel lesson, at this point in the services a prokimenon is intoned which then introduces the New Testament reading.

Liturgy of the Catechumens

The second part of the Presanctified Service begins with the Liturgy of the Catechumens and consists of several litanies and prayers for the Church in general and for those who are preparing for baptism in particular. In the mid-portion of the Great Fast, on the Wednesday of the fourth week, special additional prayers are added for "...those who are ready for illumination..." Here again, it is evident that the original characteristic of the Great Forty Days' Fast was a preparation period for the reception of holy baptism. In most cases, however, today these litanies are omitted due to the practical reality of an absence of a prepared catechuminate.

Liturgy of the Faithful

Two prayers for the faithful are now recited in preparation for the Great Entrance with the consecrated Gifts. The priest incenses the front part of the altar table only, in contrast to the ordinary celebration of the Divine Liturgy, when the altar table is always incensed from all four sides, and then proceeds to incense three times the Presanctified Gifts at the table of preparation. At this time, the congregation sings the Cherubic Hymn prescribed specifically for the Divine Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts.

Now the powers of heaven
invisibly minister with

us, for behold the King of glory enters. Behold, the Mystical Victim, all accomplished is escorted in. Let us approach with faith and love, so that we may become partakers of eternal life. Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

The Great Entrance

The priestly celebrant then takes the veiled golden offering plate containing the consecrated Lamb in his right hand, held aloft at head level, and the chalice with wine and water in his left hand, held at breast level, and slowly but solemnly makes the Great Entrance from the table of preparation to the altar table in total silence in contrast to the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, where in a similar ceremony, the unconsecrated gifts are brought with great fanfare as prayers are offered aloud for the hierarchs, the civil authority and the Christian community at large. During this solemn moment of transfer, the faithful kneel with their heads bowed low.

The golden offering plate and the chalice are placed on the altar table on the opened antimimension by the priest. He then covers them both with the large veil. After both sacred vessels are covered, the celebrant comes before the altar table and recites the penitential prayer of St. Ephrem the Syrian accompanied by three profound prostrations to the floor.

This prayer of the Great Fast by one of the greatest spiritual fathers of the Church summarizes in a unique way all of the elements of contrition and repentance for all our human deficiencies. It is, likewise, a prayer in which both the soul and the body can jointly participate; and the whole man, soul and body, acknowledges his faults and is drawn to repentance. The prostrations, the outward signs of repentance and humility, of adoration and obedience in the sight of God, are the Great Fast spiritual exercises most excellent, and this is why the Church includes the prayer of St. Ephrem not only in the ceremonies of the Presanctified Divine Liturgy, but in all the services of this most sacred season with its numerous devotions. Its richness inspires us:

O Lord and Master of my life,
grant that I may not be infected
with the spirit of laziness,
inquisitiveness, ambition and vain
talking. *Prostration.*

Instead grant to me your servant
the spirit of purity and humility,
the spirit of patience and love.
Prostration.

Yes, O Lord and King, grant
that I may perceive my own
transgressions and not judge
my brother, for You are blessed
now and forever. Amen.
Prostration.

The Presanctified Divine Liturgy continues with the Litany of Supplication or as it is also known, the Intercessory Litany along with a prayer of preparing ourselves for the reception of Holy Communion which will be distributed following the chanting of the Lord's prayer which arouses in us a collective unity in charity and faithful response to God's first shown love. This prayer of Jesus to our heavenly Father is always our highest act of preparation for the reception of the Holy Eucharist, for in it we unite ourselves totally and entirely with the mind, the will, the desire and the life of Christ our Saviour.

Eucharistic Reception

The priestly celebrant prayerfully prepares to make the little elevation by reaching under the large veil which covers both offering plate and chalice. He takes the consecrated Lamb into his hands and raises it slightly above the offering plate saying, "Presanctified holy Gifts are for the holy!" The congregation responds, "One is holy, One is Lord..." The priest then removes the individual covering veils, the large veil and the star from the offering plate and chalice and places them to the side. The consecrated Lamb is then broken and fractured into four portions and placed in cross-fashion on the offering plate. The upper portion is transferred into the chalice. The priest then receives Communion, after which the Holy Eucharist is administered to the gathered faithful who approach in the ordinary

manner. The communion verse is "Taste and see how good the Lord is. Alleluia!"

The Divine Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts then continues with the Litany of Thanksgiving, the Amvon Prayer and the chanting of Psalm 33 along with the preaching of an appropriate homily if it had not been made earlier in the celebration. The Presanctified Divine Liturgy is then concluded with a final blessing and dismissal.

The prayer at the amvon recited at the Presanctified Divine Liturgy summarizes the significance of this evening Communion service for the Great Fast:

"Almighty Master, Who made all created things in wisdom and by your ineffable providence and great goodness brought us to these most precious days for the purification of our souls and bodies, for the controlling of our passions, and for hope in the Resurrection, who after forty days gave into the hands of your servant, Moses, the tablets of the law in divinely inscribed characters, enable us also, O Gracious One, to fight the good fight, to accomplish the course of the Fast, to preserve the fight inviolate, to crush under foot the heads of invisible serpents, to come out as victors over sin, and to reach, without condemnation and to adore the holy Resurrection. For blessed and glorified is your most honored and sublime name, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.