

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

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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

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**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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### *You are Forgiven and Healed*

In Capernaum Jesus is surrounded by great numbers of people. As He preaches to the crowd, four friends of a paralyzed man lower him on his mat through the roof so that he can be close enough for Jesus to see him and cure him. Jesus responds to this act of faith, not by healing the man immediately, but by touching off the first of a series of controversial dialogues with the Scribes and Pharisees. When Jesus says, "Child, your sins are forgiven," He is as much as saying, "It is God whom you approach." In the Old Testament, only God is capable of forgiving sins; and it was expected that He would do so only at the end of time. It becomes clear why the Scribes murmur "he is blaspheming" and why Jesus brings it all out in the open. His claim to be able to forgive sins better reveals His identity as Son of God than do the miracles He performs.

Aware of the silent censure His forgiving word has caused in the crowd, Jesus proceeds to prove that "the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins on earth" by commanding the man to rise and walk in the sight of everyone. In concluding this miracle, Mark asks his readers to praise God for His presence in their midst as the forgiver-healer, just as the crowd did, even in the face of those who did not believe.

It is significant that Mark has chosen to present this miracle and teaching about Jesus' power to forgive sins so early in his Gospel drama. It shows that the need for the experience of God's forgiveness was as important to first-century Christians as it is today. Mark's readers praise God for saying clearly, and even today, "My sons, my daughters, I absolve you from your sins."

## SECOND SUNDAY OF THE GREAT FAST SUNDAY OF ST. GREGORY PALAMAS



*Icon of Healing the Paralytic*

**Second Sunday of the Great Fast  
Tone 6**

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 28– March 6, 2021  
All Divine Services are livestreamed where noted**

Saturday Vigil at SS Peter & Paul  
4:00 p.m. + Sr. Regina Adams, OSBM req. by Friends

Sunday  
8:00 a.m. +George J. Lutz req. by James Lutz (at St. Mary)  
10:00 a.m. **Health and Blessings of the Parishioners** (at SS Peter & Paul)  
Livestreamed  
5:30 p.m. Vespers of Second Week of the Great Fast

Monday  
8:00 a.m. **No Divine Services Today**

Tuesday  
8:00 a.m. **Third Canonical Hour of the Great Fast**

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

Thursday  
8:00 a.m. **Sixth Canonical Hour of the Great Fast**

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

Saturday  
9:00 a.m. +All-Souls Liturgy (at SS Peter & Paul)

Saturday **Saturday Vigil** (at SS Peter & Paul)  
4:00 p.m. +Sharon Kostura req. by Charles Kostura & Family

**Epistle Readers:** 2/27 – Angela Frank; 2/28 – Marie Wanchick; 3/6 – Gail Burgess; 3/7 – Jennifer Keer; 3/13 – Dolores Kramer; 3/14 – Anna Keer; 3/20 – Marie Wanchick; 3/21 – Ellen Sinkovich; 3/27 – Marie Wanchick; 3/28 – Angela Frank.

**SECOND SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT:  
Mark 2:1-12 – Take Up Your Bed and Walk**

It is tempting to fixate on the paralytic's immediate need and become uneasy at Jesus' initial response. Friends or family of the paralyzed man had gone to great trouble to carry and lower him through a roof in order have Jesus heal him. But after all that trouble, Jesus receives the man by simply telling him that his sins are forgiven.

As theologically remarkable as Jesus' forgiveness of the man's sins was to the Pharisees, his' mere forgiveness had to have been a terrible disappointment to the paralyzed man and his friends. Couldn't Jesus heal him? And if he could heal him, why not heal him first and then worry about his sins? Did Jesus really need to use this paralyzed man's condition as a way to humiliate his enemies?

But in healing his soul first, Jesus did address the paralyzed man's most immediate need. In forgiving his sins, the man was freed from a greater burden which far overshadows any earthly suffering and hangs over every soul.

But to prove that his forgiveness was not just empty words, Jesus' blessing didn't rest with the man's spiritual suffering. He asked: "Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk?'" Both are equally impossible for us, but nothing is impossible for God who holds the power to forgive sins as well as mend men's bones.

The teachers of the law were proven absolutely correct, even if their hearts were nowhere near God's heart. Indeed, no one can forgive sins except God alone. Jesus' physical healing of the crippled man put to rest who it was that was among them and with a mere command the power that flowed through him was a sure sign that God did in fact have authority over sin and death and both heaven and earth.

Here Jesus ultimately set a helpless man free from his physical suffering, but his first healing "Son, your sins are forgiven" are words that have set many free from the spiritual paralysis of sin.

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Congratulations, you have survived the second week of the Great Fast. How many blessings have you recognized from your sacrifices this past week?

## Method of Meditation

Our looking forward to prayer should be one of anticipated eagerness, a joy established in peace and tranquility of mind and will. This yearning with desire after the things of God and after God himself, can be manifested in spite of great repugnance and even disgust. Look at the Son of Man in the garden. "My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me" Matthew 26: 39.

So too with us at time of prayer. The act of our will should be above our feelings, no matter what these may be – disgust with life, irritability, hatred, despair, sickness and pain... It is on just such occasions as these when we experience a great loathing for our conversations with God that we should "be nothing solicitous; the Lord is near" Philippians 4: 6. The Lord is truly near those who call upon him in spirit and in truth, which is prayer. And prayer in its initial form is meditation which we should always consider.

Recall that meditation is only a means, that is thinking, to an end, that is doing. The doing is the prayer. How shall we set about it? By looking at our heavenly Father and then at ourselves. God is the one true Mirror in which all creation is accurately reflected. The Father has given us Jesus for this very purpose, to be our perfect model and reflection of heavenly glory. To this end we shall study his life, and incident of it, the prayer in the garden.

We compose ourselves for prayer and ask the help of the Holy Spirit. To keep our imagination from moving about, we bridle it like an impulsive horse. It may wander, but our will must direct its movements. It may travel as far as the garden and beyond it to the thicket of olive trees. "My Father" Matthew 26: 39. It is as man that the afflicted Saviour calls upon his heavenly Father. He is not the representative sinner, standing before the bar of God's eternal justice, loaded down with the sins of countless Adams and Caines, of innumerable Sodoms and Romes, of Neroes and Julian the Apostates without end, with secret sins more leprous than these, of multitudes upon multitudes. In the sight of the Father He is the iniquity of the world from its creation in the beginning to its destruction in the end. What wonder that He recoils and trembles at the crushing, permeating foulness. What wonder that the rivers of blood, whipped into mad torrents by the hammering pulsations of a heart diluted with divine love and human fear, rise higher and even higher until they break

response must include listening to the Word of God as it comes to us through the Church and thus grow in knowledge and love of what God reveals to us through Scripture and Tradition in his Body, the Church. For this reason, we can see the vital importance of evangelization or proclaiming and witnessing to Christ, along with systematic instruction in the truths of faith. As our faith and thus the personal adherence to Christ, grows, we begin living partially here and now the blessed life we shall experience fully and totally and completely in heaven.

It is not always easy to be a person of faith in a skeptical age. Today there is a newly militant atheism underfoot which claims that faith, far from shedding the light of truth on God and the human condition, is a dangerous, pre-scientific distortion and the root of serious problems such as terrorism! Attacks on faith, of course, are nothing new. We face these challenges confidently as believers. We see faith as an ally, not an enemy, of reason. Though faith is above reason, it enlightens reason in important ways: by helping us grasp supernatural truths that faith teaches and by clarifying what reason can know on its own. We are reminded there can never be a contradiction between faith and science because both originate in God himself who gives to us the light both of reason and of faith.

Faith, of course, is intensely personal, but it is not one's private possession because it is an extension of what emanates from the inner life of the Church, what belongs to the essence of the Body of Christ. Enlightened by faith ourselves, we embrace the faith of the Church of Christ, because it is the truth of the Lord. Therefore, when we profess our faith, we say "I believe..." in company with fellow communicants of the Body of Christ, the Church. It is in fact the Church that believes and thus by the grace of the Holy Spirit precedes, engenders and nourishes the faith of each Christian.

We receive the gift of faith through the Church and it is nourished in and through the community of believers. From childhood we learn formulas of faith. These are time-honored accurate expressions of what the Church believes and teaches, developed under the influence and guidance of the Holy Spirit. The most common summary of faith is the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, but we believe not in formulas themselves, but in the divine realities they express and lead us to experience.

It is important for us to know and understand these formulas as sure guides in our lives of faith. The Church is a community of believers with a long uninterrupted history. We are sinners and saints made up of people of every nation, tongue and culture. Yet, we still confess "one Lord, one faith, one baptism" to the glory of God and the salvation of our souls Ephesians 4: 5. Never should a day pass without our thanking Father, Son and Holy Spirit for our faith and asking for its increase in our souls.

## Faith Response

In daily living we take many things on faith, on the word of another, especially if that person is deemed to be reliable and trustworthy. Faith in God is both similar to and profoundly different from ordinary human faith. Minimally, divine faith means we accept as true what God has revealed. In doing this, we acknowledge God's goodness and authority. After all, He is not just reliable, but all-knowing, all-powerful and all-loving. But faith in God is much deeper than the faith we accord to other human beings. The faith we invest in God is a proper response to God who has revealed himself to us. We respond to our heavenly Father with the obedience of faith, which means full surrender of ourselves to God and the acceptance of his truth, insofar as it is guaranteed by the One who is Truth himself.

This is a great deal more than finding out a bit of useful information and taking it to be true. Rather, when we respond in faith to God we are bound in loving obedience to him and to all He reveals. Faith is God's gift to us by which we are enabled to acknowledge and remain in his presence and to follow his commandments. Thus St. Paul speaks of "...the obedience of faith" Romans 16: 26.

There are many examples of men and women of faith to inspire us. The preeminent example of faith is, of course, the Birthgiver of God. Her whole life can be summed up by the words, "Let it be done to me according to your word" Luke 1: 38. In addition to the saints, there are other examples: so many people we know today in the life of Christ's Body, the Church, certainly exemplify the intrepid and persistent spirit of faith-filled obedience to the mission God has in mind for each of us.

Faith is both a gift from God and a fully human response necessary for salvation. It must be full and complete; partial response with limitations cannot be accorded or dignified with the description of faith lived life. Faith is an infused virtue which simply means our God freely imparts faith as a supernatural gift to enlighten our mind and will; it is to be distinguished from acquired virtue which, in the workings of God's grace, we attain by persistent practice or repetition of good deeds. In Christ and through the Holy Spirit, the eternal Father places the gift of faith into us. Faith is "...the assurance of things hoped for," and such "hope does not disappoint us because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given us" Hebrews 11: 1; Romans 5: 5.

But infusion, we must appreciate is not osmosis! The seeds of faith planted at baptism must grow through our fully graced and fully human assent to God and to all He reveals. Our

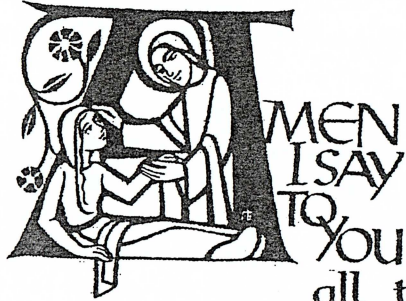
all bounds and saturate the hard, sin-crushed earth with the expiating laver of the God-Man.

It is for you, it is for you who in justice should suffer this agony of body and mind and spirit, but you cannot. You can sin, but God himself, He prostrate in agony and pain, the bleeding one even in his alienation and sweat droplets, who must repair the separation by assuming our sinfulness, for only He alone can. The remorse, the shame, the contrition above all, the incessant love in his heart and soul, gratitude and reality sweep over him so that our soul in purifying movements of accepted grace, in repentance and adoration, can be united once again with him.

Enlightened by the life-giving Spirit and strengthened by the vigor that flows into our hearts through the out-pouring and purifying quality of his blood, which fast weakens the Lamb about to be sacrificed as it is prepared for the slaughter. We raise our heads to heaven, our resolution is made. We shall pray regardless how hard it may be to concentrate. "My Father, if it shall be possible. Let this chalice pass, into our hands so that we may participate by cooperating with the grace He has won for us to be reconciled and stay in that spiritual relationship with him. With your help, dear Lord, we shall drain your agony in the garden to the dregs, together with Christ Jesus, our Saviour and Messiah, we shall pray and unite our heart-felt thoughts in unity before the throne of our heavenly Father.

We must be definite. If we mean what we have just promised the Father, we shall begin now, today, to make to God our share in the redemption of man. We must make up by our efforts in cooperation with his grace what is lacking in the passion of the Cross. What is lacking yet is our individual cooperation, our individual response to all He has done for us. Therefore we must avoid mere generalities and frame a resolution that will strike home effectively today. The thought that God wished us to realize the truth He desired is to be fruitful in good works and is simply this: Our sufferings, patiently borne for our neighbor's sake, give more glory to God and work us greater spiritual benefit than those same sufferings endured for ourselves, as a a penance for sin. To put this truth into practice, we generously resolve, out of love for God and other souls, to offer for our neighbor mortifications that afflict us in our lives, mortifications, not of our own choosing but which our heavenly Father permits us to encounter and overcome. These are sent in charitable correction, in loving reproof, public humiliations, unkind words, disrespect thrown at us by friends and enemies, passionate indispositions, uncongenial compassions.

By mediating in this manner, day after day, and bravely determining to keep our resolutions, even though we fail time and again in our effort, we cannot but advance in perfection. In proportion as we are really sincere and wholehearted in our desire to please God, shall we be given light to see our defects, grace to overcome them successfully one by one. Our failings are not hindrances to holiness; they are positive helps if we employ them to our advantage. Nothing, then, can deter us from advancing in holiness except a lack of good will towards our Creator God.



all things whatever  
you ask for in prayer,  
believe that you shall  
receive, and they shall  
come to you

A home for the aged, the ill and retired should be thought of as a powerhouse of prayer because those resident there spend much time in prayer.

Here you are, day after day, in his holy presence, warming his heart, pleasing in his sight; his dear ones; his daughters and sons, his dandelions grown gray in the fields of his will, his love, his service.

Once you glowed, green and golden, amid the grasses everywhere; but now silent and still before him but alert, not idle, fruitful still. For your petitions, soft and insistent rise up to him like pollen wafted by the wind.

How could He resist such sweet appeals from his faithful friends and followers. All the loving words that you spoke, all the eager hands that reached out to others, all the courageous steps that you took for his sake, in his Name, redound now in waves of peace and joy in his embrace of thanksgiving.

And you wait for him as he waits for you, to sit at the banquet and to receive the crown prepared for you from all eternity.

## The Kiss

Judas Iscariot - the mere name is loathed by the world even today because of what it represents. A divided allegiance sealed his destiny. Though one of Christ's chosen twelve, his concern was in what he could gain from their relationship, not what he could give and share.

Political ambition and his love of power, position and money were his motivation. If he was now the treasurer of the apostolic band, no doubt he was being prepared to rise to the exalted position of treasurer of a new empire. In the end his desires cost him everything, friends, his Saviour, the wrongly received silver coins, his life, his very soul and heaven itself.

Though Jesus called Judas His friend to the very end, He declared: "It would have been good for that man if he had never been born" Matthew 26:50; Mark 14: 21. His life proved that even the most highly revered religious position cannot save a man's soul if it is not there for the reason and sake of Christ. No wonder St. John Chrysostom writes in *On The Priesthood* that the road to hell is paved with priest's skulls!

Are you pursuing God for all the wrong reasons? Have you been involved in the Church of Christ without involving yourself intimately with Christ? Are you teetering on the edge of selling Jesus for the paltry sum of the world's pleasures?

Beyond baptism, it is never too late to commit your life totally to Jesus Christ and have a genuine relationship with Him. This is only possible if you many times daily demonstrate anew the soul's eager desire to be an ardent and zealous disciple and make a serious effort to live that desire in fact. Salvation is but a prayer away; simply overcome in repentance your shortcomings and begin to seriously live a renewed penitential life.

Having sincerely recognized the kiss of Judas is potentially on everyone's lips, it is humble, committed faith alone that does not permit it to manifest itself on ours

## WISDOM! BE ATTENTIVE

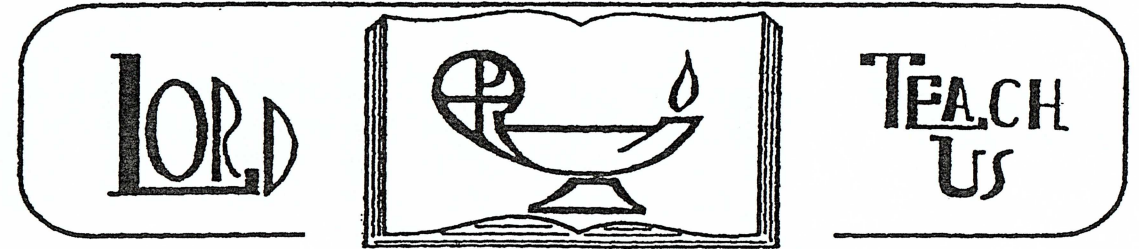
Today the time of earthly deeds is revealed, for judgment is at hand. Let us be found fasting, and let us bring tears of supplication, begging mercy and crying out: "My sins are more numerous than grains of sand at the sea, but forgive me, O Creator of all, that I may receive the crown which does not perish" Kontakion, Second Sunday of the Great Fast.

I have loved the fleeting pleasures of the earth and have thrown away eternal blessings, O Christ Jesus. You alone love mankind, and You do not cut sinners off without hope, pouring out mercy upon those who repent. O Jesus, do not turn from me now as I repent, but see in me the thief who was saved by his confession, the tax collector who was cleansed by mercy, and the prodigal who resolved to weep, for in all of these You have instilled a pattern of repentance. When You see me from afar repenting and running to You as Father, come out with warm and tender mercy. If You wish, You can forgive the sins by which I have polluted myself after baptism and my promise to lead a blameless life: but forgive us, O Creator of all, that we may receive the crown that does not perish Matins Hymn, Second Sunday of the Great Fast.

We do not glorify three gods, but only one divinity. In truth, we honor three Persons: the Father unbegotten, the Son begotten from the Father, and the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father, the Trinity of one God, and in faith we glorify each with the name of God Matins Hymn, Second Sunday of the Great Fast.

With what lips shall we mortals praise this holy bishop? He is the teacher of the Church and the herald of divine light, the one who is immersed in the Trinity, for the most beautiful adornment of holy monks, renowned for his divine contemplation and the brightness of his virtues; the pride and glory of Thessalonica; and the holy Demetrius, whose relics flow with holy oil, shares with you the kingdom of heaven Matins Hymn, Second Sunday of the Great Fast.

O light of the true faith, teacher and support of the Church, adornment of monks and invincible rampart of theologians, O holy Gregory the Wonderworker, the glory of Thessalonica and herald of grace, intercede with God for the salvation of our souls Troparion of St. Gregory Palamas.



### Promises To The Penitent

The good men perish; the godly die before their time and no one seems to care or wonder why. No one seems to realize that God is taking them away from evil days ahead. For the godly who die shall rest in peace. Peace, peace, to them both near and far, for I will heal them all Isaiah 57: 1.

The future splendor of this temple shall be greater than the splendor of the first one! For I have plenty of silver and gold to do it! And here I will give them peace says the Lord. Haggai 2: 8, 9.

The purpose of these laws is to give you law and peace Malachi 2: 5.

For the Scriptures declare that rivers of living water shall flow from the inmost being of anyone who believes in me John 7: 38.

I am leaving you with a gift, peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is not fragile like the peace the world gives. So do not be troubled or afraid John 14: 27.

I have told you all this so that you will have peace of heart and mind John 16: 33.

Would he overpower me with his greatness? No he would listen with sympathy Job 23:6.

Until I finally admitted all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide them. I said to myself, I will confess them to the Lord. And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone. Now I say that each believer should confess his sins to God when he is aware of them, while there is time to be forgiven. Judgment will not touch him if he does Psalms 32: 5, 6.