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
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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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Journeying to Pascha

Jesus continues today his work of healing and exorcism, and that is appropriate for this time of Lent, because Lent is a time for healing and exorcism. It is a time for us to heal the wounds of our souls – self-inflicted wounds due to our complacency and laziness and self-indulgence. It is time to get rid of those demons of our own sinful habits and anything that keeps us away from God and from living that abundant life that Christ came to give us.

We start to make our way toward Jerusalem. At the end of today's Gospel already there is the prediction of the passion, the death and the resurrection of Christ, giving a little hint in the Gospel that the course of Lent is moving now towards Jerusalem. We have gone through several weeks now of spiritual preparations, Scripture texts, prayers and activities. Now our focus is starting to turn towards Jerusalem. That will be made more explicit in next Sunday's Gospel, but we are already getting a hint of it now.

There are only three weeks now until Easter, two weeks until Palm Sunday, when we are really liturgically accompanying Christ into the mystery of His Passion.

So it is coming soon, and we have to start turning towards Jerusalem. We have to get focused, we have to get recollected, we have to really revive our Lenten prayer and fasting so that we can make the rest of this journey and be fruitful and overcome the demons and find healing for the wounds of our souls – and go with Christ to his Passion and, through the mystery of His Cross, come to that great, transfiguring, glorious celebration of His Resurrection.

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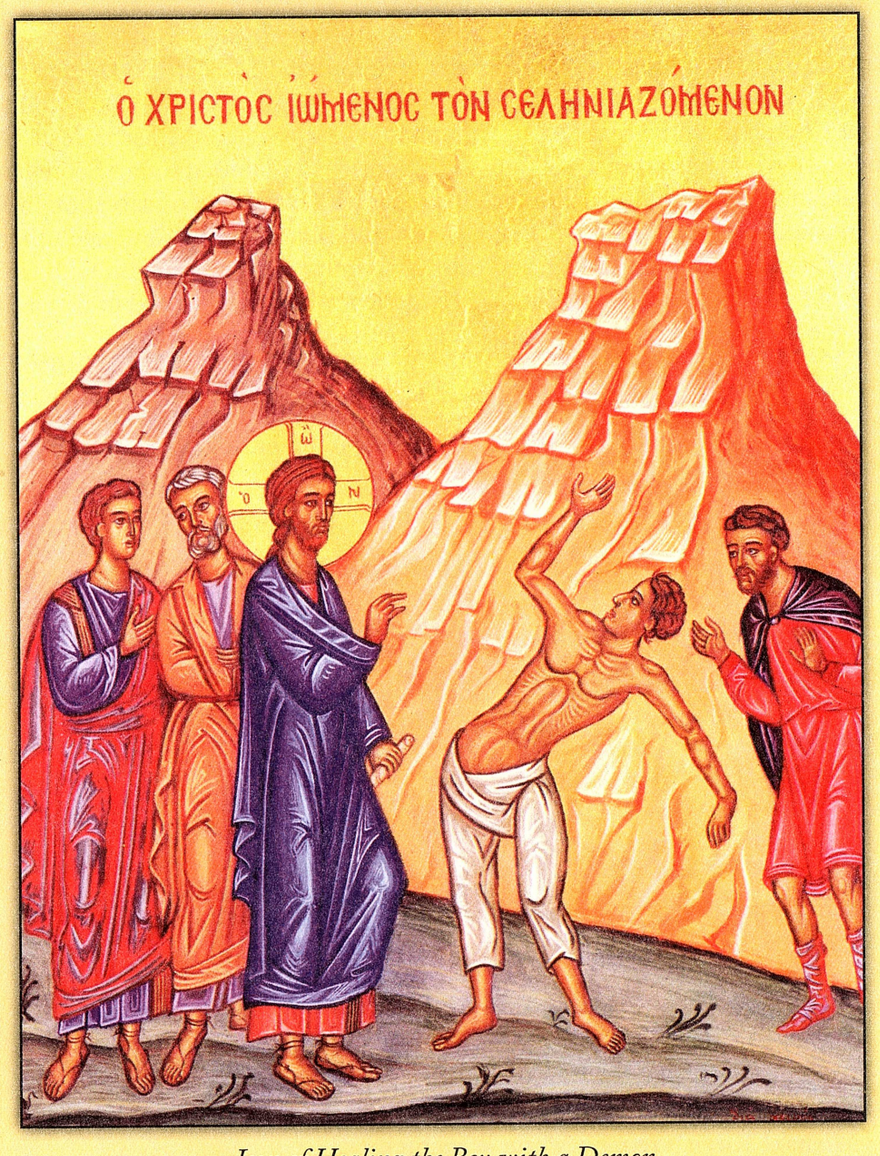
Fourth Sunday of the Great Fast
Sunday of St. John Climacus



Icon of Healing the Boy with a Demon

Volume 2021
Christ is among us!

Number 11
He is and will be!

Fourth Sunday of the Great Fast
Saint John Climacus
Tone 8

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.

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

Saturday Vigil at SS Peter & Paul
4:00 p.m. + **Joseph Lohin** req. by Elaine Lohin Kunze

Sunday
8:00 a.m. +**John Torola** req. by Fred & Cindy Selby (at St. Mary)
10:00 a.m. **Health and Blessings of the Parishioners** (at SS Peter & Paul) Livestreamed
Monday
8:00 a.m. **No Divine Services Today**
Tuesday
8:00 a.m. **No Divine Services Today**
Wednesday
6:00 p.m. **Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts** at SS Peter & Paul
Thursday
8:00 a.m. **1st Canonical Hour**
Friday
12 Noon **Liturgy of the Per-Sanctified Gifts** at St. Mary

Saturday **Saturday Vigil** (at SS Peter & Paul)
4:00 p.m. +**Michael Kovich** req. by Marie Wanchick

Epistle Readers: 3/13 – Dolores Kramer; 3/14 – Anna Keer; 3/20 – Marie Wanchick; 3/21 – Ellen Sinkovich; 3/27 – Marie Wanchick; 3/28 – Angela Frank.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF GREAT LENT

"I do believe! Help my lack of trust!" The healing of the possessed boy is one of the longest miracle stories in Mark's Gospel (only the expulsion of the demons in 5:1-20 is longer). It is also one of the more detailed stories, becoming a bit complicated in the repetition of some of those details (e.g., in v. 22 the father of the boy tells Jesus what he has *already* told him in v. 18; the crowd gathers twice within the same story in w. 15 and 25). Despite its length and detail, there is a very clear and simple message that Mark wishes to convey: Anything is possible to one who trusts (v. 23), and trust is deepened by prayer (v. 29)!

Although Jesus is the one who heals the boy (vv. 25-27), it is the father's profession of faith that Mark holds up for his readers to imitate. Even in the most desperate moments, when prayer and trust seem useless, Jesus invites his followers to go one step further and pray like the boy's father: "I do believe! Help my lack of trust!" (v. 24). Perhaps the alert reader of the Gospel will hear the echoes of Jesus' message all along (e.g., "Fear is useless; What is needed is trust" in 5:36; "Please, Lord, even the dogs under the table eat the family's leavings" in 7:28), calling for a persistent and ever more radical trust in him. The same theme will carry over into the following passages, in which the total trust of little children becomes the model of what is needed to take part in the kingdom of God (9:35-37 and 10:13-16).

9:30-32 The second (of three) predictions of death and resurrection. Jesus' disciples were not able to expel the demon from the young boy (9:18) because of the lack of belief among the people (9:19) and because of their own lack of prayerfulness (9:29). Is it surprising, then, that the disciples will fail to understand the meaning of Jesus' second prediction of his death and resurrection (vv. 31-32)

TONE 4 SAMOHLASEN

Taking light from the Teacher's light, you theologized about him who enlightened you. Beloved, you proclaimed the Word of God to all; the Son who proceeds from the Father and is revealed to all. The One who is equal in honor, co-enthroned with the Father and of one essence with Him.
Therefore, we cry out to you, who are the divine foundation of our faith.

Apostichon for Vespers for the feast of St. John the Theologian

WISDOM! BE ATTENTIVE

O John our father, God-bearer, hermit of the desert and angel in the flesh; you received heavenly gifts by your fasting, vigils, and prayers. You healed the sick and those coming to you with faith. Glory be to the One Who gives you strength; glory be to Him Who crowned you; glory be to the Lord Who heals all through your intercession Troparion, Fourth Sunday of the Great Fast.

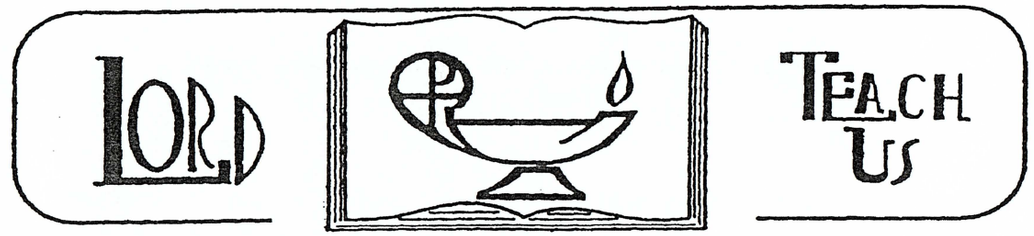
O John, our leader and father; the Lord has placed you on high as a true guiding star lighting the ends of the earth with the truth of your virtue Kontakion, Fourth Sunday of the Great Fast.

Let the faithful exult in glory; let them sing for joy and take their rest Prokimenon, Fourth Sunday of the Great Fast.

Having heard the Gospel of the Lord, O venerable Father John, you left this world, counting as nothing the riches and glory that it offered. Then you cried out to everyone: Love the Lord and you shall find eternal favor, for nothing is preferable to His love. And when He shall come in glory, you will find repose with all the saints. Through their prayers, O Christ, grant great mercy to our souls Vesper Hymn, Fourth Sunday of the Great Fast.

We now behold a new mother, greater than the wonders of old. For who has ever known a mother to bear a child without the help of man? Who has known a mother to hold within her arms the Source of all creation? It was God's own will to be born in this manner, and you, O most pure Virgin, carried Him as an infant in your arms. Because of this, you can approach God with the boldness of a mother. Therefore, we venerate you and ask you to always beseech Him to have mercy on us and save our souls Vesper Hymn, Fourth Sunday of the Great Fast.

Traversing the path of this life, I have been sorely wounded by the thievery of passions; lift me up, O Christ, I beseech You. My soul has been stripped by thieves; they have left me half dead along the path, wounded by the blows of my sins; now deign to heal me, O Lord. By my passions, O Christ our Saviour, I have been stripped of Your commandments; sensual pleasures have struck me down; pour out the oil of Your love upon me Matins Hymn, Fourth Sunday of the Great Fast.



God Is Our All

I will both lie down in peace, and sleep, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety **Psalms 4: 8.**

The fear of man is a cause o danger; but whoever puts his faith in the Lord will have a safe place on high **Proverbs 29: 25.**

But whoever listens to me will dwell safely and will be secure without fear of evil **Proverbs 1: 33.**

Sanctify them in truth; your word is truth **John 17: 17.**

May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do this **1 Thessalonians 5: 23, 24.**

I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces; I gathered to me men singers and women singers and delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments and that of all sorts. So I was great and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem, also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever my eyes desired I kept not from them; I withheld not my heart from any joy, for my heart rejoiced in all my labor and this was my portion of all my labor. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought and on the labor that I had labored to do, and beheld all was vanity and confusion to my spirit, and there was no profit under the sun **Ecclesiates 2: 8 – 11.**

Christ Is Able

I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep what I have committed to him
2 Timothy 1: 12.

Only when we fully trust someone will we commit ourselves to that person. Such complete trust is depicted in the following incident.

A crowd gazed in awe as a tight-rope walked inched his way across Niagara Falls. The people cheered when he accomplished the feat.

Then he came to a man and said, "Do you think I could carry someone across?" "Sure," the man replied.

"Let's go, then!" "No thanks!" the man exclaimed. So the tightrope walker asked another man, "What about you? Will you trust me?" "Yes, I will," he said. That man climbed onto his shoulders, and with the water roaring below they reached the other side.

Hidden in this encounter is a spiritual challenge each of us must inevitably face. Our sinfulness is a yawning chasm between us and our God, and we are unable to cross it. Only our Lord is able to bring us safely to the other side. But we must repent and trust in him with our lives. The apostle Paul confidently writes, "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep what I have committed to him until that Day" 2 Timothy 1: 12.

If you are trying to cross the chasm you have created between you and Christ, on your own, it is impossible to overcome that separation by yourself. Ask for a restoration of your trust in Christ, for He alone is able to deliver you to the embracing arms of God.

My hope is built on nothing less
than the blood of Jesus and his righteousness.
I dare not trust the sweetest frame
but wholly lean on Jesus' name.

Still Time

Mercy shall surround him who trusts in the Lord
Psalms 32: 10.

Parents think one of the scariest times of the school year is the first conference with the teacher. And one of the most upsetting phrases to hear is something like, "We're having some problems with your child."

In other words, that bright-eyed son or daughter – who asserted with incredible gusto that everything was going well and that the first few weeks of school were a success – is off to a terrible start.

Fortunately, many a student gets back on track after that first conference once he or she recognizes the problem – with the help of the parent, of course – and begins to take school more seriously.

Spiritually, all of us can benefit from a new start. Sometimes we become poor students and get lax in our commitment to follow the Lord. We get sidetracked by the enticing attractions of the world. We fail to do our homework of prayer, studying and meditating on God's revelation to us and coming to understand the liturgical life of the Body of Christ better. We see our friends doing something that looks like fun, and we join them – only to discover that what they are doing is destructive. That is when we need to stop and recommit ourselves to living for and in Jesus wholeheartedly.

Off to a bad start? Never forget and always remember, there is still time to get back on the right course.

What is the first step in getting back on the right track? What can we expect our heavenly Father to do in our lives when we turn back to him? *Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but kindness surrounds him who trusts in the Lord. Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you just; exult, all you upright of heart* Psalms 32: 10, 11.

It is never too late to make a fresh new start with our heavenly Father.

The Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete

The Great Canon is usually celebrated on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday of the First Week of the Great Fast and on Thursday, or Wednesday by anticipation, of the Fifth Week of the Great Fast. The author of the Canon, St. Andrew of Crete, was born in the seventh century in Damascus, Syria. In 679, as secretary in the Jerusalem patriarchate, he participated in the Sixth Ecumenical Council in Constantinople. Soon after the council, remaining in the imperial capital, he was ordained to the diaconate and served in the Great Church of the Holy Wisdom. During the reign of Justinian II, he was consecrated bishop and promoted to the archbishopric of Crete. He fell asleep in the Lord in the year 712. He was renowned in his time as a great preacher and composer of spiritual and religious poems, his greatest and most revered text is the Scripture based Penitential Prayer known in the Church today as the Great Canon.

The Great Canon stands at the commencement of the Great Fast as its inauguration, establishing the tone of repentance and conversion for the duration of the spiritual journey towards the holy Passover, the Resurrection of our Lord. Repentance is what we must undertake once we have seen clearly within ourselves and have recognized that we sinners indeed. Conversion is the act of turning around, of retracing one's steps, of coming to the heavenly Father just like the prodigal son. The Canon's penitential lamentations serve to shake our souls with the imponderable contradictions of despair and hope. The opening lamentations begin on a deeply personal note:

> How shall I begin to deplore the deeds of my miserable life? What beginning
> Shall I make, O Christ, to this lament?

One after another, with a unique beauty of language, St. Andrew interweaves the great Biblical themes: Adam and Eve, Paradise the Fall, Noah and the flood, Moses and the Promised Land, the sin of David, ultimately Christ and the Church; thereby revealing to us our own sinfulness in the deep connection of human drama of man's relationship with God.

The function and purpose of the Great Canon is to reveal to us our shortcoming sin and lead us to repentance and conversion. These two goals of the Great Fast are absolutely necessary for every believer and without them spiritual life is in vain. The hope, the lifeline that St. Andrew offers us all in the lamentations is that although we may embark with great determination on the struggle with sin and evil, we must not fear not be overwhelmed by falling back into sin. With each fall, we must be determined to begin again with courage and trust in God's grace. For each fall teaches us humility and helps us direct our steps on the path of repentance:

> Even though I have sinned, O Saviour, I know You love mankind, You
> chastise with clemency, and show compassion with ardor, You recognize
> the tearful and hasten as Father, to call the prodigal.

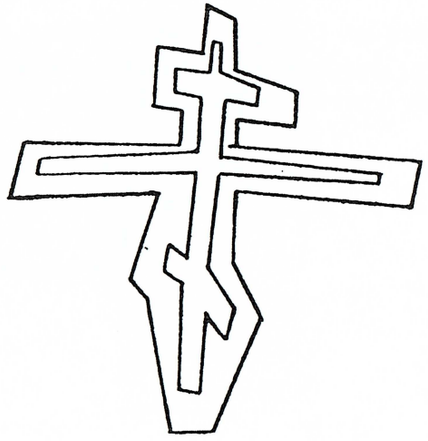
Persons who experience only one conversion in their life are very rare. This is the case with the thief upon the Cross and with St. Mary of Egypt who is constantly implored to pray for us throughout the Great Canon. For all of us, we must forever convert ourselves, we must begin each day anew.

In order for the Canon to play a purposeful role in our spiritual journey through the Great Fast, a knowledge of God's revelation to us in Scripture is implied along with an ability to share in meditations on its meaning. St. Andrew's poetry does not stand alone; throughout it is girded with the strength of Scripture. If today so many people find it dull and irrelevant, it is because their faith is no longer fed at the source of Holy Scripture. By re-entering the world as revealed by Scripture, we connect ourselves to the history of redemption for all mankind, and there is no better way into that world than through the liturgical life of the Church which not only communicates authentic biblical teaching but reveals Christ's way of life.

The journey through the Great Fast begins thus with a return to the beginning of all: the world of Creation, the Fall and our redemption, the world in which all things speak of God and reflect His glory, in which man finds the true dimension of life, and having found it, REPENTS.

For quality faith,

this is the stop sign



Inside Out

All these evil things come from within and defile a man
Mark 7: 23.

During one of his homilies in a parish while conducting a mission, a monastic priest filled a glass with water and placed it on a table in front of him. While he was speaking, he pounded his fist hard enough to make the water splash on to the table. He then explained, "You will come up against much trouble in life. But when you do, remember, only what is in you will spill out."

That is worth thinking about, is it not? When we are mistreated or misunderstood, how do we respond? With loving words, patience, and kindness, in a way that shows we might understand the poor behavior? Or are we inclined to retaliate in anger?

In the Epistle to the Ephesians, we see what a contrast there is between a person before he is brought to salutary baptism of Christ and what he is afterward (Ephesians 4: 17 – 32). When we live under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we witness it by the way we react to the jolting trials and temptations of life, which are always present. How we respond to trying, embarrassing situations that are suddenly thrust upon us, is a good indication of how much we have grown and advanced in grace.

It is possible to suppress frustration and anger and to appear undisturbed. But if our heart is full of the Saviour's love and we are genuinely committed to Christ, we will respond to the jostling of an unexpected trial with patience and kindness. Like a full glass of water, what is inside of us will spill over on the outside.

Lord, help me to flee from all sin and shame,
lest I disgrace your holy name;
and may I live that all may see
the Saviour's love revealed in me.

When trouble grows, your character shows.

When Life Is Cut Short

I have finished the work you have given me to do
John 17: 4.

A pious woman speaks of her husband dying of cancer at age 48 while still energetic in laboring for the Lord in their parish. Many have asked within themselves, "Why was he taken at such a young age when he was accomplishing so much for the Lord?"

For years this widow was unable to find a clear-cut answer to that pertinent question However, at the parish Bible Study group, she came upon some helpful perspectives in studying and meditating on the life and death of our Saviour. Before He died in his thirties, Jesus prayed to the Eternal Father: "I have finished the work which you have given me to do" John 17: 4.

She thus came to understand the perspective of our God that the value of life is computed not by its duration, but by its donation. It is the content of our living, not its length that counts. Except for the obvious necessity of the cross, Jesus could have continued performing amazing deeds of healing and teaching had He lived longer among us. But such deeds would not have enlarged his supreme donation, his life and death and subsequent Resurrection which provides our great salvation. The work that He completed was sufficient, was enough and is still bearing fruit by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

It is important for us to remember that one's harvest is not always reaped in this life. God's work through our lives will continue bearing fruit long after we are gone. Our legacy should certainly outlive us for the glory of our Creator.

That is a comforting and challenging thought. No matter what our life's duration, we have an opportunity to make a lasting and enduring donation.

Our life of service to our Lord
bears fruit long after we are gone;
So even if our life is cut short,
our work for Christ will carry on.

We do not need a long life to live a good life.