



# Saints Peter & Paul Byzantine Catholic Church



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### YOU CAN WATCH US ON:

<https://www.facebook.com/SSPeterPaulBraddock/> or

on our web-page: <https://stspeterpaulbcc.com/on-line/>

### YOU CAN SEND YOUR CONTRIBUTION TO PARISH OFFICE

ADMINISTRATOR: FATHER VITALII STASHKEVYCH

PARISH OFFICE: 4200 HOMESTEAD DUQUESNE RD,

MUNHALL, PA, 15120

TELEPHONE: 412-461-1712

Sunday, September 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Tone 6

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### SCHEDULE OF DIVINE SERVICES FOR THIS WEEK: (COULD BE CHANGED)

Sunday	09/05/2021	11:00 am	<i>15<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost</i>	+Robert Angel <i>By Gerard &amp; Betty Fialkovich</i> <i>(On-Line)</i>
Tuesday	09/07/2021	06:30 pm	<i>Liturgy for Birth of The Theotokos</i>	+John Bellock <i>By The Drabik Family</i> <i>(On-line)</i>
Sunday	09/12/2021	11:00 am	<i>Sunday before Exaltation</i>	+Daniel Horton <i>By Mary &amp; Dan Joscak</i> <i>(On-Line)</i>

**On SEPTEMBER 26<sup>th</sup> 2021 we are going to celebrate  
125 Years of the establishment  
of Sts Peter and Paul in Braddock.**

**Most Reverend William C. Skurla at 3:00 P.M. will  
celebrate Divine Liturgy. All details will be announced.**



### DIVINE SERVICES ATTENDANCE

Liturgy on Sunday, August 29<sup>th</sup> was 36.

### LIVE STREAM VIEWING

Liturgy on Sunday, August 29<sup>th</sup> was 195.

### SICK AND SHUT-INS

*Please remember in your prayers our parishioners who are sick,  
homebound, hospitalized, living in nursing facilities, or need  
your prayers for their personal intentions:*



*Andrew Cencarik, Don Downey, Anna D. Fialkovich, Mark Fialkovich, Benjamin Kaefer, Jr., John Kopay, Jr., Sylvia Kopay, Mary Anne Ference Mistick, Richard Paloscko, Nancy Pcolar, Bob Newton, Rebecca McCullough, Will McCullough, Marie Churley, Joanne Skinta, John Gegick and Those serving in the Armed Forces, Gerry Petticca and Family, Paul Peek, Emily Cox, Margaret Torbich, Mary Pat H, Gale Joscak, Mary Ann Badar, Robert Crowley, Rose Petruska, Gary Fall, Andrew Torbich, Mark Crowley, Mason Stern, Shawna Lynn Beluscak, Ronald Dusetzina, Virginia Mehalik-Woods, Gio Savko, Connie Leary.*

**\*\*If you have a family member in the hospital or other facilities, and would like us to remember them in prayer, contact Father Vitalii and we will be glad to publish their name in the bulletin – even if they are not a parishioner of Saints Peter & Paul Parish.**

### SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

09/11 COLEEN FEDOR  
09/12 MARIE BUMBA  
09/12 ANNA FIALKOVICH  
09/12 RICHARD PALOCSKO  
09/13 ANDREW NOVOTNY  
09/18 NANCY LEPSCH

### SEPTEMBER WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

09/05 JOSEPH & MARLENE TORBICH  
09/08 GERARD & BETTY JEAN FIALKOVICH  
09/08 RONALD & CONSTANCE SCHAMBURA  
09/15 FR. VITALII & MARY STASHKEVYCH

### IMPORTANT UPDATES

**Beginning January 31, 2021 all MONTHLY donations are going to cover our expenses for our 125 years celebration on September 26<sup>th</sup> 2021. Collected so far \$4,091.00**

### MARK YOUR CALENDAR

An assembly for all four eparchies in the Metropolia is being planned (in-person event). This event will be held on November 5-6, 2021 at the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist in Munhall, PA. More specific information will be sent out in the near future.

On September 5 <sup>th</sup> 2021	On September 12 <sup>th</sup> 2021	On September 19 <sup>th</sup> 2021	On September 26 <sup>th</sup> 2021
Team B	Team C	Team D	Team A

## **LITURGY REQUESTS FOR 2022**

It is a beautiful part of our Byzantine Catholic tradition to have the Divine Liturgy celebrated for the repose of the soul of a departed one, or for the health and personal intentions of an individual. The Liturgy request calendar book for 2022 is now in. **IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO REQUEST A SPECIFIC DATE, PLEASE DO SO NOW.** Please know that we will work to provide the dates requested, but we cannot guarantee it. The dates are assigned on a first come first served basis and are reserved upon receipt of the offering. To make your request, please fill out your request and drop it in the collection basket or send it to Parish Office.

## CATHOLIC TEACHING, THE SACRAMENTAL CELEBRATION OF THE PASCHAL MYSTERY

*CELEBRATING THE CHURCH'S LITURGY* II. III. *When is the Liturgy Celebrated?*

*Liturgical seasons*

"Holy Mother Church believes that she should celebrate the saving work of her divine Spouse in a sacred commemoration on certain days throughout the course of the year. Once each week, on the day which she has called the Lord's Day, she keeps the memory of the Lord's resurrection. She also celebrates it once every year, together with his blessed Passion, at Easter, that most solemn of all feasts. In the course of the year, moreover, she unfolds the whole mystery of Christ .... Thus recalling the mysteries of the redemption, she opens up to the faithful the riches of her Lord's powers and merits, so that these are in some way made present in every age; the faithful lay hold of them and are filled with saving grace."

From the time of the Mosaic law, the People of God have observed fixed feasts, beginning with Passover, to commemorate the astonishing actions of the Savior God, to give him thanks for them, to perpetuate their remembrance, and to teach new generations to conform their conduct to them. In the age of the Church, between the Passover of Christ already accomplished once for all, and its consummation in the kingdom of God, the liturgy celebrated on fixed days bears the imprint of the newness of the mystery of Christ.

When the Church celebrates the mystery of Christ, there is a word that marks her prayer: "Today!" - a word echoing the prayer her Lord taught her and the call of the Holy Spirit. This "today" of the living God which man is called to enter is "the hour" of Jesus' Passover, which reaches across and underlies all history:

Life extends over all beings and fills them with unlimited light; the Orient of orients pervades the universe, and he who was "before the daystar" and before the heavenly bodies, immortal and vast, the great Christ, shines over all beings more brightly than the sun. Therefore a day of long, eternal light is ushered in for us who believe in him, a day which is never blotted out: the mystical Passover.

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH)

**THANK YOU!!!**

*We would like to give thanks to all our faithful for all preparation and customizing and cleaning of Sts Peter & Paul. Thank you and God bless all of you.*



## 87<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL PILGRIMAGE SCHEDULE

### SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 5



9:30 am	Confessions
9:30 am	Matins (TBD)
11:00 am	Divine Liturgy for Vocations
1:30 pm	Children's Procession
2:30 pm	Bereavement Session
4:30 pm	Hierarchical Divine Liturgy
7:00 pm	Parastas

*Services will be live streamed on website: [www.sistersofstbasil.org](http://www.sistersofstbasil.org)*

## CHAPTER VII - CURRENT REQUIREMENTS AND TASKS

*Current tasks for theology*

97. The interpretation of sources is a vital task for theology; but another still more delicate and demanding task is the understanding of revealed truth, or the articulation of the intellectus fidei. The intellectus fidei, as I have noted, demands the contribution of a philosophy of being which first of all would enable dogmatic theology to perform its functions appropriately. The dogmatic pragmatism of the early years of this century, which viewed the truths of faith as nothing more than rules of conduct, has already been refuted and rejected; 114 but the temptation always remains of understanding these truths in purely functional terms. This leads only to an approach which is inadequate, reductive and superficial at the level of speculation. A Christology, for example, which proceeded solely "from below", as is said nowadays, or an ecclesiology developed solely on the model of civil society, would be hard pressed to avoid the danger of such reductionism.

If the intellectus fidei wishes to integrate all the wealth of the theological tradition, it must turn to the philosophy of being, which should be able to propose anew the problem of being—and this in harmony with the demands and insights of the entire philosophical tradition, including philosophy of more recent times, without lapsing into sterile repetition of antiquated formulas. Set within the Christian metaphysical tradition, the philosophy of being is a dynamic philosophy which views reality in its ontological, causal and communicative structures. It is strong and enduring because it is based upon the very act of being itself, which allows a full and comprehensive openness to reality as a whole, surpassing every limit in order to reach the One who brings all things to fulfilment. 115 In theology, which draws its principles from Revelation as a new source of knowledge, this perspective is confirmed by the intimate relationship which exists between faith and metaphysical reasoning.

*To be continued... FIDES ET RATIO OF THE SUPREME PONTIFF, JOHN PAUL II*

## PARISH MEMBERSHIP

We welcome anyone to become a parishioner of Sts Peter and Paul Byzantine Catholic Church. Only those who are registered are considered members of the Parish. When one registers to become a parish member, they assume the responsibility of rendering stewardship of time, talent and treasure to this parish family. Worship at this parish is always expected. Registration is done only by the pastor.

## UPDATES

Joan Skinta is at Woodhaven Care Ceeter, Room 107, 2400 McGinley Rd., Monroeville Pa 15146

Rose Petruska is at Magnolia Place, 100 Bella Court, Saxonburg, PA 16056

## **CHURCH HISTORY; Fifth Century; The Monophysites**

The Definition of the Council of Chalcedon was not accepted by the extreme disciples of Saint Cyril of Alexandria, nor by those who later came to be associated with them. These Christians were called by the Chalcedonians Monophysites, because of their insistence on Saint Cyril's phrase "one nature of the Word of God Incarnate" ("one nature" in Greek is "mia physis"). Hence they rejected the Chalcedonian Definition, which speaks of Christ being "in two natures."

The supporters of Chalcedon claimed and still claim that the Chalcedonian Definition is fully in accord with the thought of Saint Cyril, who did not insist on the Monophysites' hallmark phrase "one nature of the Word of God Incarnate" in his letters to Nestorius, or at the Council of Ephesus, or in the Formulary of Peace. And from other things he wrote, it is clear that when he used this problematic phrase, his actual meaning was "one hypostasis of the Word of God Incarnate," which is just what Chalcedon proclaimed and defended.



### **WE WELCOME YOU HOME!**

There are often people who have been raised as Byzantine Catholics and through the years have become separated from the Church. Perhaps, there has been someone in your family or your friends or your neighbors who was raised Byzantine Catholic, but no longer actively participates in a Parish. Please invite your friends or who used to be a member of our parish to come and enjoy again our parish family. Together we can accomplish everything. Sharing with one another always increases joy and diminishes sorrow! With faith, hope, and love as we continue our journey together.



### **COVID OBLIGATIONS – RESTRICTIONS LIFTED**

We have all known and felt the impact of COVID-19 in so many ways as individuals and families, among friends and at work. It has been a time of hardship and struggle, of separation and isolation. It has also had an impact on our lives of faith. Now, as life returns to normalcy in so many ways, it is also time for us to return to Sunday Divine Liturgy. In our Archeparchy, we will reinstate the obligation to attend the Divine Liturgy in person on Sundays and Holy Days beginning on Sunday, August 15, 2021, the feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos, the Mother of God. As your Archbishop, I had dispensed you from this obligation in the Spring of 2020 as the developing coronavirus pandemic required people not to assemble in group settings. Now, with the impact of the pandemic considerably reduced, it is again possible for the faithful to assemble for the Liturgy.

This obligation, as is always the case, does not apply to those who are seriously ill, have a serious health risk, as well as, those who have significant fear or anxiety of being in a part of large group at this time. Likewise, the obligation does not apply to those who care for those who cannot attend the Divine Liturgy in person. Those excused from participation in the Divine Liturgy are encouraged to spend time in prayer, meditating on the Death and Resurrection of the Lord, reading the Sacred Scriptures, and uniting themselves to Christ in his worship of the Father of us all. Those who are legitimately excused are also encouraged to listen to the radio broadcast of the Divine Liturgy, or to participate through one of the computer or face book live stream offerings from one of our churches. The spacing restrictions and special communion practices are also discontinued as of August 15, 2021.

## **15<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

*Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?* If we were attentive to how the Church, revealing to us the mystery of our salvation, gradually shows us in the Sunday Gospel readings the way of resurrection for the human soul, then we also noticed that starting from Easter until today there were several cycles. One of these cycles convinced us that the Lord is our Savior, that He is All-powerful. And further we were shown the dispositions, the states of mind which should be in the soul of every Christian, in order to perceive that power which the Lord has given to us, establishing our salvation in the plan of eternal life. These Gospel readings opened to us the feeling of humility and devotion to God, in understanding the Word of God as acting in our life. And then these cycles changed into others, and we came to a cycle which revealed that all this which God gives us can be accomplished, but only within the limits of the Church. Like the boat in which the Apostles were sailing, it preserved the Apostles. And this boat was like the laws in which lived and lives the Church, which protects those who are in the boat from all the troubles that occur outside of it.

The Sunday Gospel readings were convincing us more and more that Christian life is possible only within the Church, under the definite laws of the Church, along with the Divine Eucharist, which is the Tree of Life of the New Testament. So after having brought us to this understanding, the Church begins to show us, explains to us what the life is which surrounds us.

If we will remember, the Gospel before last told us about a certain young man who approached Christ. And this young man asked Christ: what shall I do to receive the Kingdom of Heaven? He was like a materialist. He fulfilled everything prescribed by the Law. He himself said, I have fulfilled the commandments. But he fulfilled them as a tradition, as an obligation. And the Lord saw this and said: Then reject everything that you have. In other words, reject the hope you have put in your riches. The young man froze. He could not understand how it is possible to reject this power, the power of the world.

Following that, the last Gospel reading spoke about the workers in the vineyard. This vineyard represents in a parable our whole world. The Lord owns this vineyard. And the workers in the vineyard are only servants, who receive everything necessary for their maintenance. And in the end, everything which the vineyard produces must be given back to their Lord.

And now today the Church points out: we have to fulfill the commandments, and we have to participate in the life around us. Why? Because God has sent us here so that through these circumstances, we would obtain that which is needed. But what is needed? At the creation of man, God gave him the commandments: love for God and neighbor. And these commandments we have to fulfill. The Lord, Who came on earth, came to save man. But how? By fulfilling the commandments of love for God and neighbor, and by giving strength to fulfill these commandments. And in fulfilling these commandments, we receive blessedness.

So let us fulfill it! "Which is the great commandment?" asked the lawyer. And the Lord answered: "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments".

### **STUFFED CABBAGE DINNER...AND MORE**

St. John Cathedral will be offering a Stuffed Cabbage Dinner on Saturday, September 11 and Sunday September 12 as take-out only. The dinner includes: Stuffed Cabbage, mashed potatoes, vegetables, roll & butter. Price is \$10.00 per dinner. Dinners can be picked up on Saturday, from 4 – 7 PM and on Sunday, from 10 AM – 1 PM. In addition, we are selling stuffed cabbage in 1/2 dozen and dozen packages. We would appreciate as many pre orders for either day for both dinners and individual stuffed cabbage and can be placed by calling 412-461-0944. Also available will be pints and quarts of haluski, kolache and baked goods.

# The Penitential Seasons of the Byzantine Liturgical year

- **Fasting** is an important **discipline** in the Christian East. Major portions of the Liturgical cycle are taken up by periods of fasting. In the Byzantine tradition observed by Greek Catholics or Byzantine Catholics (and Orthodox Christians) there are four major penitential seasons, these are:

- A. **Great Lent** also known as **the Great Fast** (40 days)
- B. **The Apostles Fast** also known as the **Peter and Paul Fast**. (Length varies from jurisdiction to jurisdiction)
- C. **The Nativity Fast** (pre-Christmas) also known as **The Philip Fast (Pylpywka)** (40 days).
- D. **The Dormition Fast** ( Two weeks)

- In addition to these periods of fasting Greek Catholics or Byzantine Catholics are to observe simple fasting on all Fridays throughout the year and strict fasting on the first day of the Great Fast and on Great Friday (Good Friday). The particular law of each jurisdiction is to be observed by the faithful regarding Fasting.



T	R	E	C	N	O	C	S	I	D
S	D	O	G	J	S	C	E	E	S
R	E	E	O	E	E	R	E	C	E
I	G	V	C	J	E	S	C	U	E
F	N	O	I	T	S	E	U	Q	S
O	N	L	S	G	M	G	D	S	I
D	I	A	O	O	I	N	D	O	R
G	M	W	D	R	N	A	A	U	A
T	R	A	E	H	D	H	S	L	H
R	U	O	B	H	G	I	E	N	P

Love one another.



PHARISEES  
 JESUS  
 SADDUCEES  
 DISCONCERT  
 QUESTION  
 LAW  
 MASTER  
 LORD  
 HEART  
 SOUL  
 SECOND  
 NEIGHBOUR

## **THE NATIVITY OF OUR MOST HOLY LADY THE MOTHER OF GOD AND EVER-VIRGIN MARY; COMMEMORATED ON SEPTEMBER 8**



The Nativity of Our Most Holy Lady Theotokos and Ever Virgin Mary: The Most Holy Virgin Mary was born at a time when people had reached such a degree of moral decay that it seemed altogether impossible to restore them. People often said that God must come into the world to restore faith and not permit the ruin of mankind.

The Son of God chose to take on human nature for the salvation of mankind, and chose as His Mother the All-Pure Virgin Mary, who alone was worthy to give birth to the Source of purity and holiness.

The Nativity of Our Most Holy Lady Theotokos and Ever Virgin Mary is celebrated by the Church as a day of universal joy. Within the context of the Old and the New Testaments, the Most Blessed Virgin Mary was born on this radiant day, having been chosen before the ages by Divine Providence to bring about the Mystery of the Incarnation of the Word of God. She is revealed as the Mother of the Savior of the World, Our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Most Holy Virgin Mary was born in the small city of Galilee, Nazareth. Her parents were Righteous Joachim of the tribe of the Prophet-King David, and Anna from the tribe of the First Priest Aaron. The couple was without child, since Saint Anna was barren.

Having reached old age, Joachim and Anna did not lose hope in God's mercy. They had strong faith that for God everything is possible, and that He would be able to overcome the barrenness of Anna even in her old age, as He had once overcome the barrenness of Sarah, spouse of the Patriarch Abraham. Saints Joachim and Anna vowed to dedicate the child which the Lord might give them, to the service of God in the Temple.

Childlessness was considered among the Hebrew nation as a Divine punishment for sin, and therefore the righteous Saints Joachim and Anna had to endure abuse from their own countrymen. On one of the feasts at the Temple in Jerusalem the elderly Joachim brought his sacrifice to offer to God, but the High Priest would not accept it, considering him to be unworthy since he was childless.

Saint Joachim in deep grief went into the wilderness, and there he prayed with tears to the Lord for a child. Saint Anna wept bitterly when she learned what had happened at the Jerusalem Temple. Never once did she complain against the Lord, but rather she prayed to ask God's mercy on her family.

The Lord fulfilled her petitions when the pious couple had attained to extreme old age and prepared themselves by virtuous life for a sublime calling: to be the parents of the Most Holy Virgin Mary, the future Mother of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Archangel Gabriel brought Joachim and Anna the joyous message that their prayers were heard by God, and of them would be born a most blessed daughter Mary, through Whom would come the Salvation of all the World.

The Most Holy Virgin Mary surpassed in purity and virtue not only all mankind, but also the angels. She was manifest as the living Temple of God, so the Church sings in its festal hymns: "the East Gate... bringing Christ into the world for the salvation of our souls" (2nd Stikhera on "Lord, I Have Cried", Tone 6).

The Nativity of the Theotokos marks the change of the times when the great and comforting promises of God for the salvation of the human race from slavery to the devil are about to be fulfilled. This event has brought to earth the grace of the Kingdom of God, a Kingdom of Truth, piety, virtue and everlasting life. The Theotokos is revealed to all of us by grace as a merciful Intercessor and Mother, to Whom we have recourse with filial devotion.

## **THE ROMAN EMPIRE DURING THE TIME OF JESUS**

The Roman Empire was the human political entity that God used to prepare the world for the birth of the Messiah and for the spread of the gospel.

At the end of the Old Testament, Israel had returned from exile, Jerusalem had been rebuilt, and the temple had been reconstructed and was functioning again. The world power was the Median (or Medo-Persian) Empire. In the 400 years between the testaments, the Greek Empire rose to prominence under Alexander and then splintered upon his death. Israel was persecuted by the Seleucids, one of the splinter kingdoms of the Greek Empire based in Syria. The Seleucid ruler, Antiochus IV Epiphanes ("manifest god") was especially brutal. He enforced Hellenization of the Jews and profaned the temple. His actions led to the Maccabean revolt in which Israel expelled the Greeks and gained their independence.

During the time of revolt, the Maccabees were supported by the up-and-coming Romans (1 Maccabees 8; 15:15–24). As the power of Rome grew, it became an empire and swallowed up Israel/Palestine. The Jews were allowed to maintain

their religious practices as long as they did not make trouble for Rome. Rome placed a series of puppet kings (the Herod family) and military governors (e.g., Pilate, Felix, Festus) over various provinces of Palestine.

Although Scripture prophesied centuries before that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2), Mary and Joseph were firmly established in Nazareth of Galilee (Luke 1:26). The Roman Empire moved them to the city where Christ was to be born. A decree of the Roman Emperor Augustus (Octavian) mandated that all should return to their home for registration so "So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child" (Luke 2:4–5). God used the decree of a pagan emperor to move Mary and Joseph into the place that had been prophesied. Certainly, Mary and Joseph could have chosen to go to Bethlehem on their own in order to fulfill the prophecy; however, the Roman emperor's decree that set everything in motion demonstrated that Mary and Joseph did not manipulate events to "set up their son" as a potential Messiah.

One of the priorities of the Roman Empire (perhaps the main priority) was peace, which it accomplished with an iron hand. The Pax Romana ("peace of Rome") guaranteed that people could live and travel within the Roman Empire in relative safety. Roads were constructed that made travel much easier, and a common language broke down communication barriers among various ethnic groups and provided something of a common culture. The apostle Paul traveled all over the Roman Empire on Roman roads and shared the gospel with diverse groups of Gentiles in the common Greek language. (The common trade language of the Roman Empire was Greek and was not replaced with Latin for several centuries.) Paul's Roman citizenship allowed him to move about the empire more freely and provided him with an additional measure of protection (see Acts 22:22–29). Not only Paul, but many Christians spread out all over the Roman Empire, taking the gospel with them.

It is commonly accepted that Rome was the primary persecutor of the church in the first century, but an examination of the evidence in the New Testament does not bear this out. Widespread persecution by the Romans did not occur until the time of Nero (the late 60s) and later emperors. The observable pattern in the New Testament is that Rome cared very little about Christians and only took action against them at the instigation of the Jewish authorities (see Acts 22:30). Rome often attempted to placate the Jewish authorities to keep the peace. The Roman governor Pilate wanted to release Jesus, but the Jewish authorities demanded His execution (Matthew 27:15–23). Likewise, Paul was most often opposed by his own countrymen who either took things into their own hands, stirred up the pagan populace, or appealed to the Roman authorities for help. This happened at Thessalonica (Acts 17:1–9) and at Corinth (Acts 18:12–17). The one time when Paul was arrested by the Roman authorities, he used his status as a Roman citizen to gain an apology upon his release (Acts 16:35–40).

When Paul was spotted in the Jerusalem temple, it was his countrymen who attacked him and the Roman authorities who arrested/rescued him (Acts 21:27–36). The Roman governor saved Paul from a plot by the Jews to kill him (Acts 23). Both Felix and Festus, Roman governors, are presented as being sympathetic to Paul but unwilling to release him because it would anger the Jewish leadership (Acts 24–26.) Ultimately, Paul appealed to Caesar, for he knew he could not get a fair trial in Jerusalem. In the final analysis, the Roman governor Festus and the Roman puppet king Agrippa agreed: "This man is doing nothing to deserve death or imprisonment" (Acts 26:21).

The Roman authorities demanded absolute allegiance to Rome first and foremost. Because of the Jews' longstanding "tradition" of monotheism, they were exempted from offering sacrifices to the emperor. Initially, Christians were considered members of a sect of Judaism and were given the same exemption. However, Jews began to more forcefully distance themselves from Christians, and Rome started to take a harder look at Christians. By the second century, Christians were persecuted as enemies of the state because of their refusal to honor the emperor as a deity. However, this persecution is not evident within the pages of the New Testament. In AD 70, the Roman general Titus (son of Emperor Vespasian) laid waste to Jerusalem and destroyed the temple in fulfillment of Jesus' pronouncement in Luke 21:6.

Three Roman emperors are mentioned by name in the New Testament. Augustus, already mentioned above in connection with the census that moved Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem for Jesus' birth. Tiberius, who was emperor when John the Baptist started his public ministry (Luke 3:1). And Claudius is mentioned as the emperor who expelled all Jews from Rome (Acts 18:1). The Roman historian Seutonius in his work The Lives of the Twelve Caesars says that the expulsion was the result of Jewish disputes over someone called Chrestus. Many scholars believe that this may be a reference to Christ. Most Roman authorities were uninterested and uninformed with the particulars of Jewish disputes (see Acts 25:18–20), so it is understandable that they might get the name wrong. Within a few years, the Jews had returned to Rome. In summary, the Roman Empire had a tremendous impact in the circumstances regarding Jesus' birth and crucifixion, and unintentionally provided the necessary infrastructure to allow the apostles to spread the gospel throughout the Mediterranean world.