

A message from the Cemetery Committee: As we prepare the cemetery for spring we are asking for all winter/Christmas decorations to be removed from the premises. Please do not place these items behind the shed, as we do not have rubbish removal from the cemetery. Thank you for your cooperation, Alexia & the Cemetery Committee.

The nature of Christian love from the First Epistle of St. Clement to the Corinthians

There must be no time lost in putting an end to this state of affairs. We must fall on our knees before the Master and implore Him with tears graciously to pardon us, and bring us back again into the honorable and virtuous way of brothers who love one another. For that is the gateway of righteousness, the open gate to life.

Love binds us fast to God. Love casts a veil over sins innumerable. There are no limits to love's endurance, no end to its patience. Love is without servility, as it is without arrogance. Love knows no divisions, promotes no discord; all the works of love are done in perfect fellowship. It was in love that all God's chosen saints were made perfect; for without love nothing is pleasing to Him. It was in love that the Lord drew us to Himself; because of the love He bore us, our Lord Jesus Christ, at the will of God, gave His blood for us – His flesh for our flesh, His life for our lives.

See then, dear friends, what a great and wondrous thing love is. Its perfection is beyond all words.... Let us beg and implore of His mercy that we may be purged of all earthly preferences for this man or that, and be found faultless in love.

Rector's Letter

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34–35).

“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are my friends if you do whatever I command you” (John 15:13–14).

We hear these words from the Lord during Holy Week, in the midst of the Twelve Gospel Readings of Matins of Great and Holy Friday. They are part of his last address to his disciples at the table in the Upper Room, before he is seized in the Garden of Gethsemane. What is so powerful about this “new commandment” is not “love.” There is nothing unique about a commandment to love one another: just about every religion says the same. It is “that you love one another *as I have loved you*.” Our Lord Jesus Christ sets himself as the true standard for what it means to love. And in the second passage, he defines love even more clearly: “to lay down one's life for his friends.” As we hear these words on our knees, honoring our Lord's long-suffering for us, we begin to understand what love truly means and what it costs.

This is what Great Lent is meant to be for us, also. It is not an obligation, or a punishment, or a fitness regime. It is a chance to share in common acts of loving self-sacrifice: in some small way loving one another as Christ has loved us. If we freely do what he commanded us, then we become our Lord's friends — what a bold thought! And if we are his friends, then truly he has laid down his life for us, to free us from the power of death.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Joshua S. Moshier

We have been publishing all our newsletters in electronic form on our website for about two years now. **If you would prefer to receive the newsletter electronically** instead of by mail, please let us know. The simplest way is to email Fr. Joshua, frjmosher@sspeterpaul.org, and include the email address you would like to use. Then you will receive a link each month to the newsletter as a PDF, which can be read using Adobe Reader.

Around the Parish

In the last weeks of Great Lent, **we thank the following who have provided suppers after the Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts:** the Moshers on Mar. 4, the Trustees on Mar. 11, the Church Officers on Mar. 18, the Choir on Mar. 25, the Brotherhood on Apr. 1, and the Seniors on Apr. 8.

We still have a couple of opportunities to **participate in special services in sister parishes** around Connecticut at 4 PM on Sundays before Pascha:

- ❖ April 5, Nativity of the Virgin Mary Church, Waterbury (Unction Service, Bishop Nikon presiding)
- ❖ April 12, Holy Transfiguration Church, New Haven (Bridegroom Matins of Holy Week)

We are now half-way through the Fast, and many have already come to make their personal Confession. Please remember that **every member of this parish has a responsibility to participate in Holy Confession with the priest of this parish** — at least once during Great Lent. Please do not let the days slip away. By Holy Week (beginning April 12), it is truly past the appropriate time; by that point our attention should be shifted from our selves to our Lord's saving Passion. If the scheduled times cannot work, then please make an appointment soon.

Saturday, April 4, will be our church clean-up day. We need as much help as possible to clean the church building inside and out in preparation for Holy Week and Pascha. We will be working from 9 AM to about 12:30 PM; so please make plans to come for the whole time or any part, to work on the inside or the out. The more who volunteer, the easier on all.

Our Lord calls us to show love to those in need as he has loved us. One way we try to follow his command is by assembling **Pascha baskets for neighborhood children.** Over the next few weeks, we will be collecting candy, stickers, pencils, notepads and other fun and useful items for children in eight different families — you can also donate money if you prefer. We will be distributing the baskets on Sat., April 11. Please speak with our coordinator, Donna Leonowich (203-250-9028).

Still further ahead, our customary day for the **Blessing of Graves** is Thomas Sunday, April 26, with a rain date of Sunday, May 3. After the Blessing, we would like to offer a light luncheon for the parish as well those who travel to our cemetery. **We stand in need of a coordinator for this event.** If you would be willing, please speak to Fr. Joshua or John Stoidis.

We plan to hold a **tag sale to raise funds for the parish this May.** We will be able to accept donations at the Community Center toward that sale starting in April.

The ROLL (Russian Orthodox Laymen's League) radio program has found a new home on **Ancient Faith Radio — Hymns of the Faithful: Music of the Orthodox Church.** Ancient Faith Radio is an "Internet radio station" so you need to go online to listen. Go to <http://ancientfaith.com/> and click on Ancient Faith Music to listen to the program at the following times: Sunday at 3 PM, Tues 7 PM, Fri 4 AM. This program, still produced in Connecticut, is supported by ROLL. Please speak to Helen Kasperovich, our ROLL representative, about making a contribution.