

# Pastoral Letter

## March, 2021

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Let us joyfully begin the most sanctified season of abstinence, and let us shine with the bright radiance of the holy commandments of Christ our God, with the brightness of love and the splendor of prayer, with the purity of holiness and the strength of good courage. So, clothed in garments of light, let us hasten to the Holy Resurrection on the third day, that shines upon the world with the glory of eternal life.

*(from Matins of the First Monday of Great Lent)*

Last year, so many of our expectations for the Lenten season were overturned. And so much remains uncertain even now, as again we begin Great Lent. We look forward with hope, as public health prospects improve, but our plans remain tentative: as the Lord wills.

I understand that some of us still have profound concerns about the risks surrounding COVID.

**Nevertheless, as your pastor, I call upon every member of this church to make an appointment to participate in the sacrament of Confession and to partake of Holy Communion during Great Lent.**

I make this appeal out of a deep, fatherly concern that none of us be deprived of these essential and life-giving spiritual Gifts, even while the present health crisis passes the year mark.

The season of Great Lent spans six weeks, from March 15 to April 23, which gives us time to plan and prepare. I am glad to discuss all details and complexities personally. Please call me as soon as you can: 203-237-4539.

In the fear of God, and with faith and love, draw near!

With love in Christ,



## Around the Parish

**SS. Peter & Paul is no longer using GoTo-Meeting.** For Divine Liturgy on Sundays, you can participate online via our **YouTube livestream**—find them on our website at <https://sspeterpaul.org/media.html>. No meeting software will be used on Sundays unless specifically announced. For other services like Great Vespers on Saturdays, use the Zoom meeting invitation on our website: <https://sspeterpaul.org/praying>

**Great Lent begins on March 15**, and we enter into the spirit of the Fast with the **Rite of Forgiveness** on Forgiveness Sunday, March 14. This

year, we will have to adapt to the reality of COVID, with distancing and limits on attendance. We do plan to observe the Rite in some fashion, but even more important is to follow the Lord's commandment to make peace with those who have grieved you (or who are not at peace with you!), and offer forgiveness as our heavenly Father has forgiven us.

In the **first week of Great Lent**, we will have services most of the week, to enter into the spirit of repentance and spiritual effort which makes the time of fasting fruitful. We will pray together with the **Canon of St. Andrew** on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday—this year, online only. On Wednesdays during Great Lent, we have the **Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts**, which like all Liturgies will be celebrated in the temple and also streamed online. We are not planning to have Lenten suppers afterward this year.

March 25 is the **Annunciation of Our Most-Holy Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary**. The feast commemorates when the Archangel Gabriel proclaimed the good news to the Virgin that she would be the mother of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. We will celebrate with **Vespers & Liturgy** on Thursday, March 25, at 6 PM.

**Children's education this month:** We will have an online session after the Liturgy on March 28 via Zoom—use the link from our website: <https://sspeterpaul.org/praying>

## St. John Chrysostom on Fasting

Do you fast? Give me proof of it by your works:

- ❖ If you see a poor man, take pity on him.
- ❖ If you see a friend being honored, do not envy him.
- ❖ Do not let only your mouth fast, but also the eye and the ear and the feet and the hands and all the members of our bodies.
- ❖ Let the hands fast, by being free from avarice.
- ❖ Let the feet fast, by ceasing to run after sin.
- ❖ Let the eyes fast, by disciplining them not to glare at that which is sinful.
- ❖ Let the ear fast, by not listening to evil talk and gossip.
- ❖ Let the mouth fast from foul words and unjust criticism.
- ❖ For what good is it if we abstain from birds and fishes, but bite and devour our brothers?

May he who came to the world to save sinners strengthen us to complete the fast with humility, have mercy on us, and save us. Amen!