

Rector's Letter, March, 2022

Dear brothers and sisters:

The season of Great Lent is upon us. There is a temptation to see this season as a gloomy retreat from cheerful, ordinary life, a time to give up things and perform certain obligations to appease God. But this is not at all how the Fathers invite us to begin:

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)

“Joy,” “bright radiance,” “garments of light” — there is no place for gloom here. Nor is there room for obligations. We are not forced to do anything. We are invited to accept this season as a gift. Yes, we speak often in the Church of “the commandments of Christ our God,” but it is up to us whether to follow them or not. Certainly in twenty-first century New England there is no penalty to fear in disre-

garding Christ's commandments to love as he has loved us.



Instead, Jesus Christ has set before us a way of life and invites us to walk according to that way. It is the way of love, prayer, holiness, and courage.

Love because that is the very heart of Christ's Good News: that God so loved the world that he sent his only Son to lay down his life for us; so that we might be made whole by loving God and each other according to that divine love.

Prayer because that is how we share in the Holy Spirit, who sustains us and guides us to the heavenly kingdom.

Holiness because that kingdom is not of this world, and we need to allow ourselves to be transformed if we are to enter it; we need to repent and be made new.

Courage because none of these activities fit with the spirit of the age and we need every encouragement not to give up before we've even begun. Such is the character of the life Christ invites us to follow — not in some vague future life but starting right now.

Great Lent is not a deviation from normal life. It is an urgent call to *return* to life. We need the reminder each year because it is all too easy to forget what we have learned and fall back into our old habits. The special season, with its extra services, increased disciplines, change of color and tone, and focus upon repentance, is a means for us to encourage one another in the whole Christian life.



We are reminded of our own beginning in the Christian life: our baptism, when, as St. Paul says, we “put on Christ” as “garments of light.” Those garments are not meant to be stuffed into the back of a drawer, forgotten. They are the “bright radiance” of lives filled with Christ’s life, with love, prayer, holiness, and courage. They are echoes also of the light of Christ’s Resurrection, “that shines upon the world with the glory of eternal life.”

Pascha is the destination of Great Lent exactly as eternal life in the kingdom of heaven is the destination of our earthly pilgrimage. If we want to arrive at that destination, we need to walk in the right direction. So let’s joyfully begin.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Joshua S. Moshun

Around the Parish

As was announced last month, in March we are resuming the canonical Orthodox practice of using one spoon for the distribution of Holy Communion. If you have questions, please speak with Fr. Joshua

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. In addition to the Rite of Forgiveness, we will celebrate the **Canon of St. Andrew and the first Presanctified Liturgy** and Lenten Supper on Wednesday. These services begin at 6 PM, Monday through Thursday of the first week of Lent, March 7 through March 10.

Please remember that **every member of this parish has a responsibility to participate in Holy Confession** regularly, and at least once during Great Lent. In addition to the regularly scheduled time for Confession following Saturday Vespers, Confessions are also heard by appointment—just contact Fr. Joshua. Please do not let the days slip away.



One of the traditions of Great Lent is the **remembrance of the departed**. On Fridays March 18 and April 1, we will commemorate the departed at the conclusion of Friday vespers. Please bring the names of those you wish to have commemorated at the services.

Our parish is honored to host one of the Connecticut Deanery's Lenten Vespers, on the Second Sunday of Great Lent, March 20, at 4 PM. Please mark the date on your calendar; we will be asking for your support in hosting this event.

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 Friday, March 25, at 6 PM.

Saturday, April 9, is our **parish clean-up day** in preparation for Holy Week and Pascha. We plan to start by 9 AM. All are welcome to help beautify the church inside and out.

We are planning once again to deliver **Easter baskets to families in need** in our church neighborhood. Using our Charity Fund, the parish fills each



basket with fun and useful items for school children. Please give generously to the Charity Fund to support this and all our efforts this year.

Our services in the temple are streamed via Facebook and Youtube. You can most easily find them on our website: <https://sspeterpaul.org/media> .

Please remember that, if severe weather conditions force **church service or event cancellations**, announcements will be posted on WFSB (channel 3) and WNBC/WVIT (channel 30), as well as on our own parish website: <www.sspeterpaul.org>.

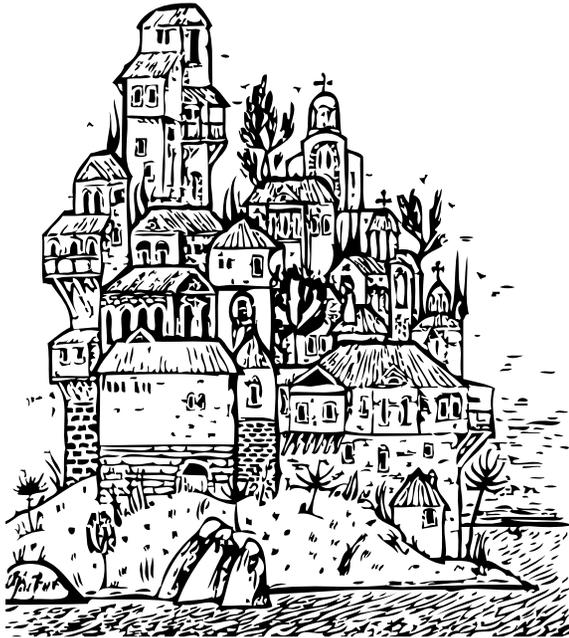


Beyond Our Parish

The following **Lenten services in the Connecticut Deanery** can be added to your calendar, all beginning at 4 PM on Sundays during Great Lent:

- ❖ Sunday of Orthodoxy, March 13; Holy Ghost Church, 1510 E Main St, Bridgeport: Sunday of Orthodoxy Vespers.
- ❖ 2nd Sunday of Great Lent, March 20; SS. Peter & Paul hosts Deanery Mission Vespers.

- ❖ 3rd Sunday of Great Lent, March 22: Holy Trinity Church, 4070 Park Ave, FORCC Vespers.
- ❖ 4th Sunday of Great Lent, March 29: Holy Transfiguration Church, 285 Alden Ave, New Haven: Deanery Mission Vespers.
- ❖ 5th Sunday of Great Lent, April 5, Three Saints, 26 Howard Ave, Ansonia: Annual Unc-tion Service.
- ❖ Palm Sunday, April 12, Christ the Savior Church, 1070 Roxbury Rd, Southbury: Bride-groom Matins of Holy Monday.



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!