

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!

Rector's Letter, March, 2023

Dear brothers and sisters:

“This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.”

—*First Epistle of the Holy Apostle John 1:5–2:2*

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” What a warning to us! It is so easy to go through our days self-satisfied. We might say to ourselves, “we have not committed any real sin: we aren’t murderers, thieves, or anything like that!” We may feel we’re pretty decent, in fact,

that God will give us a pat on the back for our fine conduct. But “God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.” His ways are not our ways, and His thoughts are not our thoughts. Jesus warns us: If we hold anger in our heart against another, we are murderers; and if we harbor an impure thought for another, we are adulterers.

More than this, our calling is to be one with God — not one with God some of the time, or in some ways, but united to God body and soul. There is no room for any darkness in the Divine Light. We do not get to excuse ourselves for not forgiving that one person who really hurt us; or for shading the truth “just a little bit” in our dealings with the government or an annoying business; or any of the ways we compromise with darkness.



“We’re not perfect,” we exclaim. “Does God expect us to act like saints?” Unfortunately for our convenience, the answer is yes. God knows that we cannot act like saints on our own, and that is why He has

Beyond Our Parish

Each Sunday afternoon during the Fast, we are invited to a sister parish in the Connecticut Deanery. Each service is followed by a light supper. The following **Lenten services in**



the Deanery can be added to your calendar, all beginning at 4 PM on Sundays during Great Lent:

- ❖ Sunday of Orthodoxy, March 5; Holy Ghost Church, 1510 E Main St, Bridgeport: Sunday of Orthodoxy Vespers.
- ❖ 2nd Sunday of Great Lent, March 12; Christ the Savior Church, 1070 Roxbury Rd, Southbury: Deanery Mission Vespers.
- ❖ 3rd Sunday of Great Lent, March 19: Holy Trinity Church, 4070 Park Ave, FORCC Vespers.
- ❖ 4th Sunday of Great Lent, March 26: Ss. Cyril & Methodius Church, Ss. Cyril and Methodius Orthodox Church, 34 Fairview Ave, Terryville: Deanery Mission Vespers.
- ❖ 5th Sunday of Great Lent, April 2, Three Saints, 26 Howard Ave, Ansonia: Annual Unction Service.
- ❖ Palm Sunday, April 9, Holy Trinity Church, 305 Washington St, New Britain: Bridegroom Matins of Holy Monday.

Theotokos at 6 PM. This is stunning and ancient collection of hymns rejoices in her role in our salvation.

For the feast of **St. Innocent, Enlightener of the Aleuts and Apostle to America**, we will add an additional Liturgy of Pre-Sanctified Gifts to our calendar on Thursday, March 30, at 6 PM.

Saturday, April 1, 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.

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>.



given His Son to us. We have to be honest that we have hardly begun to seek holiness, to be like Jesus Christ, to love God and our neighbor. We need to measure ourselves not against sinners but against Jesus Christ, and we need to admit that the ways we fall short *are sins*. We need to turn ourselves around and come back to our savior. In other words, we need to repent and confess our sins: “If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness,” the Apostle John teaches us.

Every sin — every way that we fall short of the measure of Jesus Christ in our life — is an offense against our holy God, and also against our brothers and sisters in Christ. There are no “private sins.” Even if we keep them hidden, they darken our hearts and break our fellowship with each other in Christ. So too, we don’t confess in private but bring our hidden sins out into the light, so that we can be rid of them. The priest, as the head of our community, stands in for the whole church family, and both the penitent and the priest stand as sinners before God.

Each person confesses completely, particularly, and without excuse all the ways he or she has sinned against God, particular people, this community, and the whole world. And then, because we sincerely confess that we are sinners, we do “have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” He brings us the merciful forgiveness of God, restores us to fellowship and communion with Him, and leads us afresh on the path of holiness and salvation.

We have begun Great Lent, the season of repentance. Come soon to seek the Lord's mercy and be renewed through Holy Confession—don't leave it to the last moment! We come now with a humble and contrite heart, so that in due time we may rejoice.

Yours in Christ,



Around the Parish

We have begun a ten-part online series, "A Foundation in Orthodox Christianity." We will meet via Zoom on Tuesday evenings, starting with prayer at 6:00. Each session will start with a presentation aimed at a very introductory level, and will have an opportunity for discussion. All are welcome! Join us via this URL: <https://tinyurl.com/sspp-zoom>

Our last preparation before Great Lent begins is the **Rite of Forgiveness** on Sunday, Feb. 26. Each of us has the responsibility to ask and offer forgiveness before Lent starts. Unless we are homebound, we shouldn't be anywhere but in church that day.

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, Feb. 27 through March 2.

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 10 and 17, 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.

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 **Vigil** on Friday, March 24, and **Divine Liturgy** on Saturday, March 25, at 9:30 AM.

On Friday, March 31, we continue our celebration of the Virgin Mary with the **Akathist Service to the Most-Holy**

