

Rector's Letter, April, 2020

Dear brothers and sisters:

When we began Lent forty days ago (or was it 400?), we had heard terrible news of a strange new virus spreading rapidly out of China across the globe. Many of us expected hard days ahead for us in the United States, but I think it was hard for anyone to imagine just how much our lives would change in a few days. On the First Sunday of Lent, we asked almost everyone to pray at home. By the next day, His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon directed all parishes in the Diocese of New England to suspend all gatherings and liturgical services. Although this direction could be modified, we currently expect this complete suspension to continue at least through the month of April.

The rest of our lives have followed the same pattern, with our thoughts rarely straying far from anxious news of the coronavirus. And now we have come to the end of Great Lent and the verge of Holy Week and Pascha. It's tempting to be discouraged, confused and disheartened.

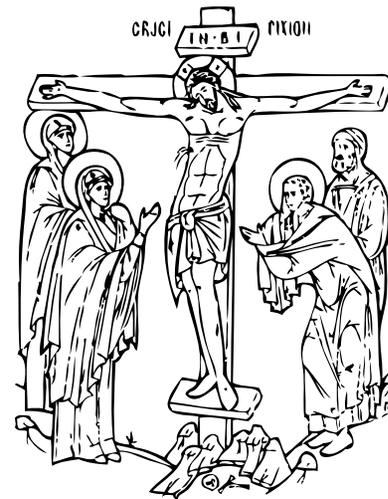
But the life of the Church continues wherever we may be, as long as we turn our hearts, our minds, and our lives toward Jesus Christ and following his will for us. We have been asked to stay at home and practice physical distancing. Noth-

ing stops us from praying more deeply and often than we did before. Schools have sent their students home, but our Bibles are waiting for us to take up and read. Many places of business are closed, but we have been gathering online most days to worship the Lord. We can't go to the movies or to sports events, but people in our communities need our loving care more than ever.

Great Lent always calls us to shake free of the world's assumptions and expectations. This year, we have been shaken with greater force than usual, but the Lord is the same yesterday, today and forever. He called this world and each one of us from nothingness into being. He holds each of our lives in his hands, the hands still marked with the print of the nails from the Cross. He invites us to set aside fruitless worry and fear and remember that he has taken all the burden of suf-

fering upon himself, to deliver us from despair and death. We can hold the truth of his voluntary long-suffering constantly in our hearts as we approach the Three-Day Passion.

On the third day, the disciples were scattered and



living in fear. No one was with Jesus when he rose from the tomb. And yet the risen Lord showed himself in various places and times and places: in the garden outside his tomb, in the upper room behind closed doors, on the road to Emmaus.



On Pascha this year, wherever we may be, we still rejoice: Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life!

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Joshua S. Mosher

Around the Parish

We are continuing to adapt to these changed circumstances, finding fresh ways to be faithful to what has been entrusted to us. We have set up a plan for us to **pray at home while gathering together online**. Our parish website has the lat-

est information: sspeterpaul.org/praying. The response so far has been enthusiastic, and more are welcome! We especially enjoy gathering Sunday mornings at 9:30 to pray and then hold “virtual coffee hour.” We are delighted that some of our shut-ins have been able to join us as well.

All our gatherings for prayer will use the following details:

SS. Peter & Paul: Praying Together

Please join our meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

<https://www.gotomeet.me/JoshuaMosher/ss-peter--paul-praying-together>

You can also dial in using your phone.

United States (Toll Free): **1 877 309 2073**

Access Code: **333-540-349**

New to GoToMeeting? Get the app now and be ready when your first meeting starts:

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/install/333540349>

Please note: you do not need to sign up for a free trial or subscribe to GoToMeeting to participate. **The software is free for attendees.**

Our online gatherings include a “Call Me” feature, where GoToMeeting calls your phone at the start time, and you can answer and participate. If you would like to sign up to be called, please contact Fr. Joshua: 203-237-4539 or priest@sspeterpaul.org.

We have worked out a plan for **observing each day of Holy Week and Pascha from home.**

Please visit our parish website for details, or consult the calendar included in this newsletter.

Sign Up for Parish News: Everyone in the parish is invited to sign up for our Parish News list. We established it at the beginning of the year as a fresh way to communicate. Now that we are confronting the necessity of quarantines and “social distancing,” it’s a valuable tool for our community to stay connected. In addition to regular announcements and crucial updates, I will be making a special effort to provide additional spiritual reflection and material from our services.

You can sign up for Parish News on our Contact page: <https://sspeterpaul.org/contact> .

You can also follow our parish on Facebook.

We have shared a steady stream of news and other material on our page:

facebook.com/saintspeterandpaulmeriden/ .

We welcome your donations and pledges, which can be mailed to SS. Peter & Paul Orthodox Church, PO Box 334, Meriden CT 06450.

From the Council President

April 2020

Our world, our country, our Parish community have been through so much in the past few weeks. Every day, the news changes. But one thing has remained constant—the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father,

and the communion of the Holy Spirit is with us all.

In 1908, thirteen men organized an Orthodox Brotherhood society named in honor of the Chief Apostles St. Peter and St. Paul. For 112 years, our Church has been a proud symbol of Orthodox faith in the Greater Meriden area. Our gold dome has shone brightly as a keeper of the “City Park” neighborhood. Our bells have tolled, inviting members and strangers to worship. Many have passed through our doors to give thanks to our Lord, to celebrate weddings, baptisms, festal occasions, and to bring loved one’s home to their eternal rest in God’s heavenly kingdom. Hundreds of lives, some powerful pillars, others less noticed, have taught the Gospel, written our history, shaped our families lives and values, and practiced Orthodox customs and traditions.

Our beginning was a humble one. Our story is typically American—an example of the immigration history of our great nation. Our forefathers left their homeland with few material possessions. They entered a new land, a new life with hope in their hearts, strong love of God, and a burning desire to do His will. Faith was their essence of being. For five generations, our Church family has told their stories of the many challenges they endured—wars, hurricanes, influenza, depression, and more.

This reflection of our past, recognizes our present. Faith still remains the essence of our

lives. Our calling, our work continues. We rededicate ourselves to the task begun by our ancestors—to be the Church, to the Glory of God. We hold the future of our Church and the Orthodox faith in our hands. If we worship God as previous generations worshipped with the same love and trust, the future will be bright. If we focus with faith unchallenged upon doing God’s will and preserving a strong legacy of liturgical life, family tradition, and community activity, we will survive this challenge. I look forward to the day we all look back on this Lenten Season and proudly tell our story of how we kept our True Faith and overcame this pandemic.

In the midst of a pandemic that has brought virtually the entire globe to a standstill over the past few weeks, we face more unknowns than knowns. Let us pray that together, with God’s guidance, we will endure and get through this. We will become stronger, more faithful Christians. And, our family will be able to enjoy many more milestones and celebrations of SS. Peter & Paul Orthodox Church.

In this unprecedented time, our Parish Priest and our Parish Council are all here for you. Do not hesitate to call. Our Parish Council Directory with Contact Information is included.

In Christ,

Donna Leonowich

**SS. Peter & Paul Orthodox Church
2020 Parish Council Contact Information**

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