

DIOCESE OF NEW ENGLAND – ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA



**The Right Reverend BENEDICT**

*Bishop of Hartford and New England*

**Archpriest John Kreta**

*Chancellor*

2 March 2025

To the Clergy and Faithful  
of the Diocese of New England

Dearly beloved in Christ,

In one of the stichera in today's Vespers we heard

Let us begin the season of the Fast, beaming with joy!  
And as we prepare for spiritual battles,  
let us purify our souls, let us cleanse the flesh.  
And the same way we fast from foods let us fast from every passion.  
Let us delight in the virtues of the Spirit,  
and persevering in them with longing  
may we all be made worthy to behold the most sacred Passion of Christ our God,  
and to rejoice exceedingly in his holy Pascha!

And our venerable Father Benedict urges us in these holy days to be particularly careful about our ascetical labors, so that we may look forward with great joy to holy Pascha.

So we have begun in our parishes by asking each other for forgiveness and forgiving each other, thus taking heed of Christ's telling us in today's Gospel that if we fail to forgive each other, our heavenly Father will not forgive us.

And so I ask all of you for forgiveness for anything I have done or failed to do in carrying out the holy office entrusted by God to my hands through you and the Holy Synod.

Good strength for the labors that lie ahead!

In Christ's service,

+ *Benedict*