



March 14, 2020

To all Clergy and Faithful of the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania

Christ is in our midst!

In light of the recent directives from the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America, effective immediately all parish activities other than the scheduled liturgical services, including but not limited to classes, parish council and other meetings, food preparation, etc. are cancelled until further notice. Those who are not ill or at higher risk may come to services and then depart. This will be re-evaluated in due time.

Recognizing the disruption this may cause in various parishes, but out of love for the wellbeing of all, especially the most vulnerable in our diocese and communities, we must take this step to limit exposure while also allowing for the consolation and necessary strength the Divine Services provide.

Starting tomorrow, March 15, 2020, no parish may be doing anything other than liturgical services and no parish may be doing anything less than the prescribed Lenten services. Mission Services in the Wilkes-Barre, Frackville, and Philadelphia deaneries in diocesan parishes have already been cancelled.

Let us attend in these unique circumstances to greater personal prayer, including in them the sick and the suffering and the vulnerable and all those in the health and public safety professions who are laboring with great dedication and at personal risk. For those who self-isolate you may make use of the following streamed services from *St Justin Martyr, Jacksonville, FL* 10 a.m. Divine Liturgy <http://st-justin-martyr.org/>. There is a large red button at the top of their website. Also, *Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Ellwood City, PA* has streamed services <http://www.orthodoxmonasteryellwoodcity.org/calendar>. Under the list of services it states, "All church services are streamed Live, Click here to watch". Let us find ways to support those confined at this time through calls, video chats, and cards and look out for those who have no one left or close by to look out for themselves.

In concert with the recent statement of the Holy Synod, I want to reiterate that the distribution of Holy Communion will not, nor cannot be on the initiative of any individual, other than is our usual custom. Those who are uncomfortable with receiving can refrain from doing so until they feel ready to commune.

Finally, please find attached a copy of the *Moleben in time of Pestilence* which I am directing be offered at the end of every Divine Liturgy and every Presanctified Liturgy until this pandemic has abated.

It is essential that we have full and complete compliance from our clergy and faithful in following these directives. Non-compliance will not be tolerated.

Yours in Christ,

+ Mark

+ MARK, Archbishop of Philadelphia and the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania



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"Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in Thee." Augustine