



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS ^{OF} ATLANTA

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΑΤΛΑΝΤΑΣ

March 16, 2020

To the Reverend Monastics & Clergy
The Esteemed Archons, Parish Councils, Philoptochos Societies,
and Faithful of the Metropolis of Atlanta:

My beloved brothers and sisters in Christ,

I greet you with love and joy in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! I pray that this message finds you well, as we journey to the halfway point of Great Lent!

The ever-changing situation surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic (also known as the Coronavirus) means that your Metropolis wishes to offer you appropriate updates concerning how this disease will have an impact on our daily lives, including aspects of our liturgical and sacramental lives.

This past Saturday the Archbishop and Holy Eparchial Synod of our Archdiocese had a teleconference, and discussed: the 2,000 year history and experience of our earthly Church, our expectations for the spiritual and physical well-being of all, as well as abiding by recommendations and directives of various State and Local government agencies.

The CDC has recently issued a statement instructing those hosting large gatherings to either consider postponing their events for at least eight weeks—or, as an alternative, to **limit the number of people in attendance**. We are mindful of the importance of doing our part to limit the potential spread of this disease, both as parishes, and as a Metropolis. We understand at this moment, that our obligations as Orthodox Christians are to put into practice the directives of the scientific community, while still honoring our Holy Tradition by encouraging the health and safety of our community.

In times such as these, I wish to stress the importance of individual discernment. Regarding any choice you make for church attendance, or anything else, examine your heart. Ask yourself: Am I healthy? Am I ill? Do I have health risks? Am I exposing others and myself unnecessarily? Etc.

Therefore, be mindful that you are part of a family, and that any decisions you make will impact not only your immediate family but society at large. Or, simply to put in action the commandment of our Lord, *“You shall love the Lord your God...and your neighbor as yourself.” (Luke 10:27)*

Please also remember that if you or a family member feels the need to abstain from any liturgical gatherings, the Church in its loving practice, always prays and thinks of the people who are “absent” for good cause. *(Taken from the Liturgy of St. Basil)* We

encourage those whose communities have live-streaming capabilities to participate in the Liturgy in the safety of their homes.

If anyone wishes not to come to church, the Holy Eparchial Synod extends this blessing, as such a decision is not a sin, but an act of love and responsibility for one's self and their fellow human beings in order to comply with the guidelines of the CDC for social and group gatherings. We encourage the faithful to participate in the experience of scared worship at home, on TV, or using multimedia platforms.

Continuing in this spirit of love and discernment, what follows are the official Metropolis guidelines for the bodily and spiritual well-being of all during this time:

1. All non-liturgical activities are to be suspended until further notice. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - Youth Ministries like Day Schools, Greek Schools, Catechetical Schools, HOPE/JOY, GOYA, OCF, Young Adult, and Hellenic Dance
 - Adult Education Classes or Bible Studies
 - Philoptochos
 - All ministries intended for seniors
 - Luncheons, speakers, Hellenic Fraternal Organizations and social gatherings (i.e. Book Clubs)
 - Athletic Activities
 - Service Projects(Should your parish have the means to conduct Bible Studies over video, you may use this technology until in-person events can be resumed)
2. If your parish has more than one Chant Stand, each stand should have only ONE Chanter or Choir Member. Your Chanter or Choir Member should take the place of all choirs (Mixed Gender, Youth, or Men's) during the services
3. The passing of trays will be suspended, and the means to make an offering should be available through US Mail or online giving.
4. As for the Memorials, please write the names of your deceased to the clergy so that they can pray for the souls (without Kolyva).
5. Funerals shall be limited to the immediate family, and there will be neither visitations the evening before, nor makarias following the service.
6. In the event that the Sacrament of Baptism cannot be postponed, this service should also be limited just to the immediate family, with gatherings being avoided.
7. For these safety precautions to be effective, those attending church should immediately leave when the service is finished. For the sake of others, please do

not socialize in the Narthex. Additionally, Sunday Coffee Fellowship hours should also be suspended until further notice.

8. Parishioners in the hospitals, or shut-ins will be supported during this time as well.
9. Parish Council and ministry meetings should continue to meet as normally scheduled and should only be conducted through conference calls or video conferencing.
10. Offices should remain open for their normal hours—but all business should be conducted over phone or by email.

Being mindful of the fact that some of our parishioners do not have access to email, we ask that their family members please disseminate this information to those who might not have received it.

Even if we cannot be present inside the church itself, we too can remain close to our Lord through prayer. I would like all of us—monastics, clergy and laity—to set a time each evening at 8 PM EST for the next few weeks until the Saturday of Lazarus, to use the attached prayer so that collectively we will unite our hearts and prayers to Almighty God, as the early Christians did: *“So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.”* (Acts 12:5)

As we are in the time of the Feast of the Veneration of the Holy Cross, let us pray for one another and with this,

I remain,

Paternally and prayerful yours,



+ALEXIOS
Metropolitan of Atlanta