



MITROPOLIA ORTODOXĂ ROMÂNĂ A CELOR DOUĂ AMERICI
THE ROMANIAN ORTHODOX METROPOLIA OF THE AMERICAS

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Reverend Fathers,
Esteemed members of the Parish Councils,
Beloved Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

The nature of the COVID-19 pandemic changes continually and we are all struggling to do our part to meet this challenge. Health officials, local and national governments, and dedicated citizens are working diligently to curb the spread of this virus. I asked the clergy of our Metropolis to join me on a conference call to discuss measures that we should take to assist in this effort. Listening to their opinions and advice, we have decided to issue the following guidelines, knowing that changing circumstances may force different measures in the future:

CELEBRATION OF THE DIVINE LITURGIES AND OTHER SACRAMENTS

- All parishes must adhere to the guidelines mandated by local, state and federal authorities.
- **For all services, including the Divine Liturgy, clergy may conduct services with one chanter, and one or two necessary assistants.** The participation of the faithful should be in accordance with the parameters set forth by the authorities, or by encouraging them to participate through the various online resources. (Links to various live-streaming of the Services will be provided).
- Parishes will establish a **weekly program** where the priests might be able to respond to all the requests of the faithful for Confession, Communion, and various prayers, in order to lessen the crowding of faithful in the Church;
- Funerals are to be conducted with immediate family only.
- Unless the situation is urgent, baptisms should be rescheduled.
- Clergy will make themselves available to minister to the individual needs of their faithful.
- Monastic communities are to be closed to all visitors.
- The Mystery of Holy Unction may be celebrated by a single priest.

PASTORAL MATTERS

- Clergy should take care that persons over 65 or are suffering from health problems have been communed.

- Parishioners, but especially those living alone, should be called regularly to be reassured of the Church's concern for their well being.
- Spiritual packets containing: Anaphora, Holy Water, Oil from Holy Unction, should be prepared and distributed to those who request them, especially those who are unable to leave their homes.
- The faithful should be encouraged to pray the *Service of the Paraklesis to the Theotokos* on Tuesdays and Thursdays at designated times: 9.00 PM-EST; 8.00 PM-CET and 6.00 PM-PST (Texts in English and Romanian are attached). On Wednesdays and Fridays, you can follow the Presanctified Liturgy at the Metropolitan Cathedral in Chicago and broadcast live on www.biserica.tv starting at **5.00 pm - CET**, and on Sundays, St. Basil's Liturgy at **9.30 am-CET**.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND AROLA

- All regular Religious Education classes, as well as meetings and activities of AROLA, and other normal parish activities, such as coffee hours, bake sales, etc., will be suspended for the present time.
- The Metropolitan Department of Religious Education will provide weekly video and print materials for parents and children.
- AROLA will have a Project to provide short weekly lectures on spiritual themes by nuns, preotese, or qualified clergy.

FINANCIAL ISSUES

In addition to the spiritual and liturgical matters that we will have to address, there are also some very real financial issues.

- It is important to remember is that many if not all of our parishioners, and indeed our neighbors and friends, are similarly affected financially by this crisis. Some may be out of work and without a salary. Others may be facing financial hardship. We should be sensitive to this and try to discretely find out who may be in need and how we may help.
- Almost all businesses and non-profit organizations are also facing financial problems. Many hospital and community health centers are running deficits even now. We are not alone in this.
- The government(s) is/are in the process of passing financial packages that will help. How it will affect religious organizations is still unclear.
- Those parishes with mortgages should contact their financial institutions and discuss what the options are IF the parish is not able to meet their payments during this crisis. Again, we are not alone and they are already beginning to formulate plans and solutions. Parishes with financial resources should consider how they might assist those parishes with financial need. Those in need and those who can help should contact the Metropolia where programs of assistance are now being developed.
- Our parishioners should be made aware of the very real problems that financial short-falls due to the epidemic can have on the life and well being of the parish. As people will not be able to attend the Holy Services, especially at this time of Great Lent, parishioners should be asked to remember to support the Church

financially as well as spiritually, so that the parish is able to meet the on-going expenses.

During this time when we particularly focus on our spiritual growth, we should make use of opportunity presented to us to open ourselves to God and our neighbor. Remember the three aspects of Fasting: Prayer, Abstinence, and Charity. Let us truly love one another so that we may rejoice in the light of our Lord's Resurrection!

With archpastoral blessings and love in the Lord,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "f. Metr. Nicolae".

† Archbishop and Metropolitan Nicolae