



METROPOLITAN ARCHEPARCHY OF PHILADELPHIA

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Memorandum of the
Bishops of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in the United States of America
Regarding Palm Sunday, Holy Week, and Easter celebrations
during the COVID-19 pandemic

Dear beloved clergy, religious, and faithful!

Christ is among us!

In order to help curb the spread of the Coronavirus the civil and health authorities in our country have extended the "Stay at Home Order" until the end of April 2020. Out of deep concern for the spiritual and physical well-being of all persons —we the bishops of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in America urge you at this crucial time to enter more deeply into the very heart of our Christian faith while following the directives of civil authorities. We ask you to celebrate the great mysteries of our salvation in Christ's Death and Resurrection at home. Together with you, we recognize the sacrifice we are all called to make by being physically distanced from the Holy Week and Pascha services in church and from one another.

Trusting in the graces flowing from the celebration of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Our Lord, we remain mindful that paschal joy has its source in a personal encounter with the Risen Christ. What did it take for Mary Magdalene's tears to give way to Easter joy? Nothing less than meeting the risen Christ! The Easter Gospel is not only about Christ's passage from death to life, but also about the encounter Mary has with the Lord. Jesus meets us – calls us by name, opens our eyes, and invites us to see him and be with and in Him in the Resurrection. No matter where we are or what may be happening in our lives, precisely in the midst of a deathly crisis such as the present pandemic, we are called to spiritual joy through the love of God who conquers death by death and gives eternal life.

We encourage you to participate as fully as you can in Holy Week and Pascha services by way of radio, television or live-streamed broadcasts. We encourage all the faithful to turn to the Church's treasury of prayer, praying individually or as a family in the domestic church. Christ is truly among us!

We request the clergy to continue Holy Week and Pascha services without the physical presence of the body of the faithful:

1. The faithful can participate in the celebration of Divine Liturgies and the Blessing of Willows and Easter Baskets via live-streamed services. The blessing pronounced in our churches will extend to the respective items in our homes. The prayer of blessing is the key element in these sacramental rituals. The faithful who have holy water in their homes may sprinkle it on these items while participating in the prayer via internet or by saying the prayers of blessing alone or together as a family or household.

2. The Great Friday Vespers with the placement of the Holy Shroud and Resurrection Matins services ought to take place within the church with no processions. The procession with the Holy Shroud can take place around the holy altar, and the opening rituals of Resurrection Matins can be conducted in front of the royal doors of the iconostasis instead of at the outside church doors.

3. The faithful can continue to approach the Sacrament of Reconciliation/Confession on an individual basis. Priests should indicate to parishioners when and where they are available for confessions maintaining the prescribed safe distance between priest and penitent. When confession is not possible, faithful are encouraged to make Acts of Perfect Contrition, when a penitent sincerely regrets his or her sins, not merely out of fear of God's just punishment, but because of having offended our Loving Lord. This year, the canonical obligation of going to confession in the season of Easter can be fulfilled in the time period extending to the feast of Pentecost.

Our beloved faithful, one day soon, an announcement will be made that we can celebrate the Divine Liturgy and other services all together again. We look forward to that joyous day. We will appreciate seeing each other more than ever, giving thanks for God's gift of communion in the Church, the Body of Christ of which we are members!

Our fervent prayer is that our Resurrected and Living Lord may bestow his peace and grace upon you and your loved ones, upon our community, our nation and the world! Please join us in praying for all who are suffering from the Coronavirus, for all health care workers and first responders, and for an easing of the anxiety and tension caused by this pandemic. Relying on the care of the Mother of God and the Mother of us all, we unite our sufferings to those of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and we place our hope and trust in His glorious Resurrection.

The blessing of the Lord be upon you!

+ Borys Gudziak
Archbishop of Philadelphia for Ukrainians
Metropolitan of Ukrainian Catholics in the United States

+ Paul Chomnycky, OSBM

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Ukrainian Catholic Church
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April 3, 2020

Dear Parishioners and Friends:

In a few short days we will share a joy, a joy of wonder, a joy that comes from within, because Christ is risen! This joy of the Resurrection starts from a personal encounter with the Risen Christ. What did it take for Mary Magdalene's tears to give way to Easter joy? Nothing less than meeting the risen Christ! And so, the Easter Gospel is not only about life from death, but also about this encounter Mary has with the Lord. Jesus meets us – calls our name, opens our eyes, and invites us to see. He wants us to experience the joy of encountering Him and living for Him and not for ourselves. If we do this, we will experience the joy of being liberated from our sins which trap us in self-centeredness. No matter what may be happening in our lives, especially during this terrible coronavirus crisis, we can still experience spiritual joy through the love of God and living the way God made us to live, which is to live for others and for Him.

More recently additional stringent practices and guidelines have been announced by our government and our Church which required that we cancel the distribution of pussy willows on Palm Sunday and sadly we must also cancel the blessing of Easter baskets on Holy Saturday. I realize that many of you will be disappointed not to be able to carry on our rich Easter traditions, but the current health crisis requires it.

I realize that many families are going through difficult times right now. Some are dealing with illness in their house. Almost everyone knows someone who is sick, or is vulnerable to getting sick. There is also the worry, as the crisis lasts, of financial problems in each household as the economy suffers. In a similar way, our parish is sharing that same hardship. With the extension of the social distance guidelines until the end of the month, our parish will have gone through seven weeks without a public Liturgy, and without our weekly offertory collection, which is the largest source of support for the parish. Typically, these seven weeks provide a sizeable portion of the parish's annual income.

It would be hard for most households to suffer such a loss. A number of you have already been able to donate quite generously and I thank each of you for your gifts and for your kindness. I am asking everyone to please support your parish during this time of need. Of course, if your personal financial hardship prevents you from contributing at your normal level or at all, I certainly understand and I pray for you. But for those that are able, please do now what you can to help.

May I remind you that certain services such as Palm Sunday Divine Liturgy, Good Friday Burial and Easter Sunday Divine Liturgy should be able to be viewed on YouTube. On your computer you can search within the YouTube website by looking for "St Vladimir Church Scranton PA". There is also a link on our website - stvladimirscranton.org - to view the above liturgical services.

We will get through this crisis and come out on the other side. The day will come when an announcement will be made that we can publicly celebrate the Divine Liturgy again. I miss all of you so very much and look forward to that day, and to welcoming you back into church. It will be a joyous day, and we will all appreciate seeing each other more than ever, and as all of us pray together we will give thanks again for Christ's gift of the Church to us!

My fervent prayer is that our Resurrected and Living Lord may bestow his peace and grace upon you and your loved ones, upon our parish, our community, our nation and the world! May God bless you and keep you!

Yours in Christ.

Father Myron Myronyuk

Rev. Myron Myronyuk