



THE BYZANTINE CATHOLIC EPARCHY OF PARMA

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

Prot. No. 39/2020 L
March 13, 2020

DECREE

In light of the development of the Coronavirus in the United States and the desire to ensure the health of our faithful, effective immediately and until further notice, **I, Bishop Milan Lach, S.J., dispense the faithful of the Eparchy of Parma from the obligation to attend Sunday Divine Liturgy and all Holy Day services.** Please see below for further instructions.

1. Priests will continue to celebrate the Divine Liturgy on Sundays, but you are strongly encouraged to stay home if you are feeling unwell, are elderly, and if you have a concern of being exposed to any illnesses. If you do attend the Sunday Divine Liturgy, please do so at your own discretion and with concern for your fellow parishioners. This dispensation for attending the Divine Liturgy does not mean that you are dispensed from keeping Sunday, the Lord's Day, holy by rest and prayer. As the elderly are the most vulnerable to this virus, I strongly encourage the elderly to remain at home, as well as anyone who is feeling weak or ill, and to refrain from attending the Divine Liturgy on Sunday as well as any other social gatherings within or outside the parish.
2. For those who choose to come to Sunday Divine Liturgy, please feel free to abstain from receiving Holy Communion and know that you receive a blessing with the Holy Eucharist every Sunday after the distribution of Holy Communion, even if you do not receive. There is no obligation to receive weekly Communion (you are only required to receive one time a year during the Pascha season), but if you do receive, please receive properly as at all other times by following the instructions below:
 - Fast for 1 hour before receiving Holy Communion (excludes water and medicine).
 - Tilt your head all the way back; open your mouth as wide as possible; don't stick out your tongue; don't close your mouth on the spoon; don't say "Amen".
 - You must be in the state of grace (have not committed a mortal sin, a list can be found on the Eparchial website in my Pastoral Letter given at the beginning of the Great Fast).
3. Please follow the instructions of the government authorities in your particular state. In the State of Ohio, the Governor has instructed that people of Ohio refrain from meeting in groups over one hundred persons for the next three weeks. As your bishop, I also advise and encourage you to follow this request in order to ensure your health and the health of those around you. Please also practice good hygiene to create a healthy environment for you and others:
 - a. Stay home if you do not feel well! You are not obligated to attend the Divine Liturgy on Sunday if you are feeling sick. Please stay home and pray instead.
 - b. Wash hands often, especially after using the restroom and before eating.
 - c. Wash hands with soap and water for a minimum of 20 seconds, then dry with a paper towel. Use hand sanitizer when soap is not available.
 - d. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.



- e. Do not sneeze or cough into your hands. Use a tissue or your elbow.
 - f. Do not shake hands with others.
 - g. Do not stand close to each other, spread out in the church.
 - h. Refrain from kissing the icons during this time of dispensation. Make a deep bow before them instead.
4. All ECF classes, social gatherings after Divine Liturgy on Sunday, fish fries, sales, any parish meetings, clubs, retreats, etc. are cancelled at the parishes until further notice.
 5. All other liturgical services (Matins, Vespers, Saturday Vigil Liturgies, Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts, All Souls Saturdays, etc.) are cancelled as well until further notice.
 6. You will have the opportunity to watch a live stream video of the Divine Liturgy from the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist at 11AM EDT. You can find this on the Eparchy of Parma Facebook page (please access via this link if you do not have a Facebook account: <https://www.facebook.com/EparchyParma/videos/493809317961987/>), or on TV Logos at <http://www.logos.tv/parma-live>. For other links you can check the Eparchial website www.parma.org.
 7. I encourage all families and believers to pray the Paraklisis, Akathist, Moleben, or other prayers at home for the people affected by the virus, for the deceased, for all medical professionals, and all government officials who need to make decisions for the protection of our communities.
 8. Please know that this is an evolving situation, and we will continue to provide updates.

Dear brothers and sisters, together with our priests and deacons, I am praying for you as we live together through these challenging times. This period is also an opportunity for us to prepare for the celebration of the Passion and Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the victor over all.

Respectfully yours in Christ,

The Most Reverend Milan Lach, S.J.
Bishop of the Eparchy of Parma

Notary