

Romanian Catholic Diocese/Eparchy of St. George

Official

Instructions in Light of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic

March 20, 2020

To the Eparchial Clergy:

After careful consideration, consultation and prayer, following upon a meeting of the Catholic bishops of Ohio on March 16, 2020, and consistent with their decision to suspend Catholic Masses in the State of Ohio, the following directives are hereby enacted. These directives are consistent with what is being done in many dioceses and eparchies in the United States and Canada, as well as with Decree 153/20 of March 19, 2020, by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments issued by mandate of Pope Francis:

1. All Divine Liturgies and other liturgical services are suspended in all parishes and missions of the Eparchy of St. George through Easter (new calendar), April 12. The dispensation from attending the Eucharist on Sundays and Holy Days, granted earlier, remains in effect. This suspension may need to be extended beyond April 12. A decision about extending the suspension will be made and communicated at that time.
2. Priests are given the special faculty to celebrate the Divine Liturgy privately on the days permitted. We encourage such celebrations of Divine Services, even without a congregation, so that the petitions of our clergy and faithful may continue to rise to Heaven during this time of crisis.
3. All gatherings of people, including dinners, parish meetings, outside events and bingo games are forbidden. To the extent possible, funerals are to be limited to close family only, and the recommended six feet of separation is to be maintained. If possible, the funeral ought to be celebrated at the funeral home rather than the church.
4. Regularly scheduled confession is to be cancelled. Individuals requiring the sacrament may make individual arrangements with the priest, who will hear the confession in the church, again maintaining social separation.
5. Routine visits for confession/communion, etc., are to be suspended for the time being. Priests should make every effort, however, to maintain even closer contact by telephone with the home-bound and those in nursing homes.
6. In critical illness, hospitalization, surgery, or in danger of death, the priest is to make every effort to attend to the needs of the faithful in person and minister the Sacraments of the Sick: Confession, Communion, and Anointing. Gloves may be worn for anointing, although a cotton swab ("Q-Tip") is preferred for this purpose. It should be brought back by the priest, sealed in a Ziplock bag, and properly disposed of by burning. **However, please be aware that visiting a patient may result in a 15-day quarantine, depending on circumstances**, so please exercise good judgment and consult with the medical personnel involved with your parishioners.

Pastoral Suggestions

It is vital that people be encouraged and helped to maintain and even strengthen their prayer and spiritual lives. To that end, please make the following information known to parishioners:

- Services are being live-streamed from the Cathedral in Canton. The live stream may be accessed at <https://stgeorge.click2stream.com/>. Turn on the sound in the right-hand corner. No sound will be heard without turning it on.
- The service schedule at St. George Cathedral may be found on the parish's public Google calendar:
<https://calendar.google.com/calendar?cid=OWF1MXAzW01bnA0cXNkM3BlZnZrZmE4YzRAZ3JvdXAuY2FsZW5kYXIuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbQ>
- Updated information will always be maintained at our eparchial website:
<http://www.romaniacatholic.org>. Clergy and faithful are urged to check the website frequently for updated information.
- Priests and pastoral ministers are encouraged to make use of resources being made available by the USCCB. These resources may be found at:
 - <http://www.usccb.org/coronavirus>
 - <https://catholiccurrent.org/covid19/>
 - You are also encouraged to stay in touch with resources available locally as well.
- Jack Figel, Editor of *Unirea/Canton*, has created an app consisting of, among other things, texts for vespers and the canonical hours. The app is available for iOS in the App Store as well as on Google Play.

Please keep the Chancery informed of cases of COVID-19 that occur among our faithful, maintaining appropriate patient privacy, of course. Similarly, if there are any parishioners you think may benefit from a phone call from one of us in Canton, please let us know. We cannot guarantee that we will be able to follow up, but we will try.

More information and support will be made available as much as possible. Suggestions and comments are welcome. Please send them to the Bishop, who will attempt to answer as quickly as possible. Please pray for your Chancery team (we are working from home), for all our faithful, for all those who become ill or have died from this virus, and, above all, for one another. In the spiritual world, it is we who are priests, deacons, monastics/religious and pastoral ministers who are the "first responders."

May God have mercy on His world!