



The HOLY SYNOD of the ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA

Statement of the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America on the Coronavirus March 30, 2020

The Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America meeting under the presidency of His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon in a Special Session on Monday, March 30, 2020, reviewed the response of the Church to the continued spread of the Novel SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19 (Coronavirus). During this meeting, His Beatitude presented reports on various meetings he had recently held with the members of the Finance Committee of the Metropolitan Council, the Diocesan Chancellors, healthcare and legal professionals, and the Standing Synod, as well as informal conversations that he has had with priests of the Orthodox Church in America. Also included was a report by the Chancellor, Archpriest Alexander Rentel, about his discussions with liturgical theologians.

After extensive deliberation on this subject, the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America reiterated its directive of March 17, 2020, and extended it to the end of April 2020:

1. Each Diocesan Bishop is entrusted with overseeing the spiritual and pastoral care of his Clergy and Faithful and with protecting their wellbeing in whatever measures he determines appropriate. This oversight, in response to the Novel SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19, is to be in keeping with the Holy Synod's vigilant response to the present pandemic, the most recent federal, state, and municipal civil directives, and updated medical knowledge obtained from recognized experts. Therefore, a Diocesan Bishop may allow for the Churches within his diocese to serve the Divine Services with limited participation on the part of the Faithful, or to designate a limited number of Churches in their dioceses to serve a limited number of services with only a few people present, or to suspend services altogether for the time being.
2. In light of decisions made by the officials of various government jurisdictions, we sorrowfully acknowledge that, in keeping with said government directives, at the direction of the Diocesan Bishop parishes, missions, and chapels of the Orthodox Church in America may be required to temporarily cease offering divine services.

3. Monasteries may continue services for the sacred monastic community alone, admitting no visitors until April 30, 2020.
4. The Holy Synod will consider these directives again at the end of April.

May our Lord Jesus Christ, who has given us the gift of this Great Lent, as He has always done, for our repentance and to enkindle love for our neighbor, grant us forgiveness of sins, renewal of faith, and the reassurance of hope. May He grant us His consolation, mercy, and peace in this time of anxiety. May He also grant wisdom to our civil leaders, and strength to those valiantly laboring in the healthcare community.