



*Office of the Metropolitan*

*312 Garfield Street*

*Johnstown, PA 15906*

March 18, 2020

Protocol No. 8/2020

God is with us!

Dear Reverend Clergy and Faithful Laity of the Diocese,

I am writing you with a very heavy heart as the Coronavirus pandemic continues to affect all of us here in the United States and around the world. Earlier today the Chief Secretariat the Holy and Sacred Synod following a meeting of the Ecumenical Patriarchate's Hierarchs in Constantinople issued a statement concerning the pandemic. The announcement follows below:

As this Coronavirus crisis continues to spread and intensify on a global scale, the Ecumenical Patriarchate is monitoring the situation with an urgent sense of responsibility towards the faithful and all people without exception, and, following the Communique of 11 March 2020, upon deliberation of its Hierarchs in the City announces the following:

- 1) The Ecumenical Patriarchate emphatically reiterates its appeal to everyone to limit their outings and travels to what is necessary, remaining in their homes for their own safety and the protection of the general public.
- 2) It commends the spirit of self-sacrifice demonstrated by those working in the field of healthcare and expresses its gratitude for their extraordinary and exhaustive efforts to assist those in need, as well as for the danger they knowingly risk by coming in contact with those infected by Covid-19.
- 3) It underlines the need for everyone to follow the decisions and instructions of the responsible health authorities for the sake of the common good.
- 4) In light of the decisions already taken by some of the eparchies of the Ecumenical Throne, today we universally declare our ecclesiastical resolution and mandate to cease all divine services, events, and rites, with the exception of private prayer in church that will remain open, until the end of March. This restriction will be later reassessed, in accordance with the development of the pandemic caused by the virus.
- 5) All Patriarchal and Stavropegial Monasteries will continue to hold regular divine services for their monastic communities, but outside pilgrims and visitors will not be permitted entry.

*The American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese of North America*

ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE OF CONSTANTINOPLE

- 6) In the same framework, the Patriarchal Offices at the Phanar will remain closed until further notice, while the Ecumenical Patriarch and clergy of the Patriarchal Court will perform the prescribed divine services and pray for the whole world and for its speedy relief from this trial.

From the Chief Secretariat of the Holy and Sacred Synod

Phanar, 18 March 2020

All parishes of the American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese are to follow the instructions of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. All divine services, events, and rites are to cease for the time being, except that the Churches are to remain open at normal times in order for parishioners to enter and offer their private prayers and maybe light a candle or vigil lamp. If the Priest and/or Parish leadership sees that the number of people is above the local limit, whatever it might be, the people should enter in smaller numbers. If there are any questions please email me or call at the Chancery. Hopefully this situation with our prayers and God's help will improve quickly.

**“But the Lord, He is the One who goes before you. He will be with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you: do not be afraid, nor terrified.” (Deut. 31:8)**

Working in His Vineyard with much love,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "+ Metropolitan Gregory".

+Metropolitan Gregory of Nyssa

***This Protocol is to be distributed by all means available including the emailing of parishioners as soon as possible.***