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DIOCESE OF NEW YORK & NEW JERSEY

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**UPDATED DIOCESAN GUIDELINES
CONCERNING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC**

**The Most Reverend MICHAEL
Archbishop of New York and the Diocese of New York and New Jersey**

As the Coronavirus crisis continues to unfold daily, and in light of evolving civil mandates issued in recent days, I am issuing the following Update to the *Diocesan Guidelines Concerning the Coronavirus Pandemic* (issued on March 18, 2020).

Because of the exponential increases in confirmed cases of the virus and resultant deaths from it, temporary prohibitions of “non-essential” gatherings of any size for any reason have been announced by both the State of New York (effective Sunday, March 22 at 8:00 PM) and the State of New Jersey (effective today, Saturday, March 21, at 9:00 PM). Wishing to cooperate with the intent of this civil mandate to slow the community spread of the virus, though with much sorrow, I ask the clergy and faithful of our Diocese to follow these updated Guidelines, so that we all may do our part in successfully combatting this pandemic.

These Guidelines will be reviewed again at the end of March, unless circumstances dictate earlier changes.

For parishes located in the State of New Jersey, these Guidelines go into effect today, Saturday, March 21, at 9:00 PM. For parishes located in the State of New York, these Guidelines go into effect Sunday, March 22, at 8:00 PM.

- 1) All liturgical services may be celebrated only with clergy (and where possible, his family) and a singer present – all of whom are not at risk and are healthy.
- 2) Please understand that NO ONE else should attend in person, so that we are protecting our clergy and faithful from contracting the virus and preventing the inadvertent spreading of it to others. Wherever the priest offers the Liturgy, he will offer it “on behalf of all and for all”.
- 3) If the parish priest is himself at risk health-wise, he should contact the District Dean and inform him, so that the good order of the parish is maintained. The Archbishop will maintain direct contact with each rector on a weekly basis, to monitor each parish’s situation personally.
- 4) If the Sunday Liturgy(ies) and/or the Vespereal Liturgy for the Annunciation cannot be celebrated because there is no one to sing, the priest should offer the Typika Service with the prescribed readings, at his icon corner.

- 5) All in-person parish and mission events and activities outside of the prescribed liturgical services, including coffee hour, Church School, Parish Council and ministry meetings and the rest, remain cancelled until further notice.
- 6) All measures to ensure the cleaning and sanitizing of the temple must continue.
- 7) Confessions may be heard by appointment, with the distribution of the Eucharist from the Reserve Sacrament if desired.
- 8) Of course, the Priest may bring Communion to one's home. Clergy are reminded that they have the primary responsibility of visiting the sick, but should take as much care as possible not to expose themselves, the faithful or others to the virus.
- 9) Baptisms should be postponed except for cases of emergency. Funerals should be limited to the immediate family only.
- 10) All parishes are encouraged to take advantage of the technology available to live-stream divine services, homilies, and daily prayers so that the faithful may participate in the prayers, which are themselves a source of grace and consolation. If this is not possible, the parish priest should direct the faithful to the internet sites of parishes or monasteries already providing this service.
- 11) Every effort should be made by the Parish Leadership to provide the faithful with the service texts disseminated by the Diocesan Office, to enable them to follow the services that are presented in live-stream format, or to pray at home with their families.
- 12) Each member of the Parish Council should assist the parish priest by taking a part of the parish directory and calling parishioners, inquiring about their well-being and particular needs. Council members are to be given the mission to call their fellow parishioners frequently.
- 13) The Parish should attempt to use electronic communication programs such as GoToMeeting or Zoom to carry on parish council work, parish adult education and Church School instruction, instead of in-person meetings.
- 14) A communique should go out from the Parish Council to parishioners, encouraging continued stewardship of the parish – affirming that although this is a difficult time, particularly for those whose income has been reduced or lost, the parish will still need the financial support of its stewards who are able to give, in order to fund its ongoing overhead expenses. Even though we cannot be present in person to love our church, we are going to support it, so that the church is still there for us to love when this crisis abates.
- 15) While the faithful cannot attend the services under these Guidelines, they should know that the clergy are offering prayers for them. The priest should offer the names of all parish members and their families and requested commemorations in the Proskomedia before every Liturgy that is celebrated; and the Archbishop is praying for every priest and his family, and for every parish.

16) If a priest or parishioners have questions or concerns about complying with either the civil mandates or these Diocesan Guidelines listed here, the District Dean should be consulted for guidance.

These Guidelines will be considered again at the end of March for any necessary modifications, unless circumstances necessitate alterations at an earlier time.

Dear Fathers, brothers and sisters: Please believe me that it is with a heavy heart these actions have been taken in our Diocese and throughout the Church. However, the health and well-being of the faithful is our optimum concern. We must see these changes as ascetic sacrifices being offered out of love for all our brothers and sisters, all of whom are susceptible to this virus. I pray that by implementing these measures, we can prevent the further loss of lives and hasten the time when it will be safe for us to return to a full liturgical cycle and normal parish activities.

I hope that this can become a time reminiscent of the home churches of the earliest days of Christianity, where family members will come together to pray and grow together in the faith. Even though this Lent is not the Great Fast we intended, I ask that we all will continue our Lenten work of prayer and fasting, repentance and almsgiving during this time. And I beseech God to grant us to be able to come together again soon, to offer in our parish churches glory, honor and worship to the One Who loves us more than we love ourselves.

As I wrote to you before, I say to all of you again, my beloved: Do not be afraid. The Word of God encourages us: "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 be terrified" (Deuteronomy 31:8).

With my humble prayers, archpastoral blessing and sincere love,

f Michael

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Archbishop of New York and the Diocese of New York and New Jersey