



Orthodox Church in America
DIOCESE OF THE MIDWEST

7 March 2020

Hieromartyrs Basil, Ephraim, Capito, Eugene, Aetherius & others, bishops in Cherson
№. 40

Beloved Clergy, Faithful, and Monastics of the Diocese of the Midwest,

We have entered the most profound season of Great Lent when we concern ourselves with repentance and good works. During this sacred time, we look at every way in which we can draw closer to our loving Savior. This takes a great deal of attention. We are striving to simplify our diets and our daily activities. We are working to become more vigilant in the focusing of our thoughts on Christ. We embrace a simpler way of living with as few distractions as possible. And yet, although this is our main focus as Christians during this period, we cannot ignore the growing concern over the corona-virus.

Attention to this virus has increased over the past few weeks. To address the risk posed by this virus, precautions such as travel restrictions have been put into place alongside recommendations to follow common-sense measures such as washing our hands. It is good to adhere to these and other instructions and to keep informed of ongoing updates.

I encourage all of you, the faithful of this diocese, to take every precaution in protecting yourself and the well-being of your loved ones. At the same time, let us be attentive to abide in the peace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Abiding in this peace is part of our witness to the world, that our faith and deliverance are found only in God.

Our Lord's first words to His apostles after His glorious resurrection were, "peace be with you." (Jn 20:19) It is with this peace and consolation of Our Savior that we continue our efforts of repentance during this season and throughout our life. This is the very peace with which we arm ourselves and approach our Healer and Redeemer through Holy Communion, the Fountain of Immortality. We take precautions as needed during such times of uncertainty, but we do not fear or lose sight of the one thing needful (Lk 10:42).

As we continue our Lenten journey, and as more information becomes available on this developing situation, let us not look away from Our Peace so that we are not overcome with fear. Let us rely not on our own strength and understanding, but on the strength of Christ and His love.

In Christ,

+PAUL

Bishop of Chicago and the Midwest