



Orthodox Church in America
DIOCESE OF THE MIDWEST

31 March 2020
St. Innocent, Metropolitan of Moscow
№. 49

MEMO

To All Rectors and Priests-in-Charge in the Diocese of the Midwest

The Holy Synod met by teleconference on March 30th and based on that meeting, here are the following changes I am making in my directives:

I will bless the celebration of Divine Liturgy only on Sundays **where the church needs to be locked. No more than three people may be there, the celebrant, the chanter/singer, and one other person to assist in providing a live stream to our parishioners.** In the case of the priest who lives next door to the church who has a family, the priest and his family should do the service and there would be no need for a chanter or for someone to do the live stream.

For those who would have to drive to church, I would give a blessing for the priest and two other people to drive to church to offer the liturgy on Sunday and provide the live feed. Again the doors must be locked. If the priest has a family that can do this, again there would be no need for a chanter or for someone to assist in the live stream.

If a priest has no one to assist him in the liturgy, I would bless him to contact a chanter and to go to the church to sing the responses to the liturgy and one other to assist with live streaming.

Divine Liturgy is not to be offered from the home. However, services such as Hours, Typica, Lenten Vespers, Matins, Akathists, and Molebens may be offered from the home (or from the church if the priest lives next door) and live streamed. I am only giving a blessing for the priest to drive to church to offer the Divine Liturgy. If you are celebrating these non-Eucharistic services in the Church, the doors need to be locked and the three-person rule still applies.

No Presanctified Liturgies are to be celebrated. I will be issuing another letter by early next week regarding Holy Week and Pascha.

I would say that among my brother bishops on the Synod not one of us was in favor of opening our churches up to everyone and lifting restrictions. We all are of one mind that in adopting these measures we are saving lives. Several statements from the Holy Synod will be forthcoming in the next day or two. To illustrate the gravity of this situation, I am including a link to a story from the LA Times.

<https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2020-03-29/coronavirus-choir-outbreak>

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This week clergy will be receiving an email from their Deans arranging for us to meet via Go To Meeting. The web meetings will be on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday of this week at 10 am and 1 pm central time for each deanery. You should be receiving notice of that today. This will be your opportunity to directly express concerns you have and for me to respond as best as I can.

This is a difficult time for all of us, but as I told our kids last Thursday in my meeting with them, there will be Pascha. We just need to re adjust our minds as to how we will celebrate it this year. No one can suspend our Lord's Passion, Three-day-burial, and Resurrection from the Dead.

Please share this letter with your fellow clergy (Attached and Assigned Clergy including Deacons) who may not be receiving this.

Asking for your forgiveness and understanding, with love in Christ, the unworthy

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ Paul". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

+PAUL

Bishop of Chicago and the Midwest

Cc.: His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon