



THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA
THE ROMANIAN ORTHODOX EPISCOPATE OF AMERICA

The Most Reverend Dr. NATHANIEL Popp, Archbishop

**REVISION OF THE DIRECTIVES OF MARCH 17 & APRIL 2
May 15, 2020**

**Blessing to Celebrate the Divine Liturgy
TO ALL PARISH CLERGY**

Reverend Father:

Let us review some statements from our earlier Directives. *“Today we reflect on the terrible pandemic which overshadows the entire world and our own Nations. We are called on by government and medical advisors to act in defense of our families and neighbors by temporarily restricting gathering together. Although some official sources indicate what we might do, the responsibility remains with us”* what we decide to do. *There is not, nor probably will not be for a longer period of time, a “safe” number for meetings, no “safe” number of individuals.*” (April 2 Directive). We continue to be vigilant for you and the faithful.

We considered it necessary to further evaluate the limitations posted by a multitude of civil prescriptions on gatherings of “non-essential” activities, in which church gatherings were listed. In both of our Directives, we made clear that we did not bless the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, not in the church and not in homes. This restriction was so that no one from outside the rectory and the church would be involved. **We were, and remain, extremely concerned that “distancing” of external persons from the services be upheld. We have not altered our position.**

Two days ago, on May 13, we blessed a limited celebration of the Divine Liturgy in those parishes where the parish church and rectory are on the same property. **At this time**, following the same guidance, **we are giving our Archpastoral blessing for ALL CLERGY to serve the Divine Liturgy in the church on Sundays, May 17, May 24, Ascension May 28, and May 31 by observing regulations listed below and elsewhere.**

There are “caveats.”

1. The church doors must be locked at all times.
2. NO OTHER PERSONS MAY ENTER THE CHURCH.
3. It is preferable that a family member give responses. If there is no one capable and willing, you may have one cantor. It would be appropriate for the same cantor to be present to give the responses for all services.
4. If there is a cantor who comes to the church to give responses, **all precautions for sanitary safety** must be fulfilled and followed before and after the services.

5. You, yourself, must observe all sanitary requirements. Physical distance between you and the cantor must be strictly observed (the cantor should be further away from the altar and the priest, not in the strana, since medical professionals indicate that singing produces lots of small respiratory droplets that stay suspended and could carry the virus).

6. We request that only the priest receive the Eucharist. Those present may receive the anafora/antidoron bread.

For a more complete list of obligatory actions to be taken, please review the [Directive of the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America](#).

Many of you held non-Eucharistic services in your homes. Some of you shared them via social media with parishioners and with others who tuned in. Thank you, sincerely. We are requesting that, if possible, you live-stream or broadcast the Divine Liturgy for the at-home faithful.

You may continue to serve Saturday evening Vespers or begin. There is the Vespers of the pre-feast of the Ascension. If you have been serving some form of Matins, please continue or, as you choose, begin. You may also continue to serve at home.

We repeat and warn: No others persons in the church, other than the cantor for all services. Additionally, all meetings and events continue to be postponed/suspended.

There is no blessing, as of this time, for the other sacraments/Mysterion: Baptism, Chrismation, Marriage. Confessions, unless as a final act, are postponed. Funerals may be officiated according to local directives and, in accordance, with the Funeral Home procedures.

Please do respect our directions and remember that the COVID-19 virus is still outside the church doors. As we continue our journey to the Ascension of our Lord and the fulfillment of his promise to send the Holy Spirit on us, "...let us give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy is forever."

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

+ NATHANIEL, Archbishop

P.S. If you have questions, please put them in writing in a reply to this email message.