



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

March 31, 2020

To the faithful of the Eparchy of Passaic,

On March 16, all public services were suspended for the entire Eparchy of Passaic for two weeks. For the safety of our people and on the recommendation of the President of the United States, by this letter, I extend the suspension of public services in the Eparchy of Passaic through Thursday, April 30, 2020. The suspension of public services includes services inside buildings and also outdoor services or "parking lot" services. All activities at a church that involve a physical gathering of parishioners or interaction with the public are also suspended.

By this letter, I dispense all the people of the Eparchy of Passaic from any legal obligation to attend church services through Thursday, April 30, 2020. Please keep in mind that Divine Law still requires us to keep the Lord's Day holy by prayer and by refraining from unnecessary work. The bishop cannot dispense from Divine Law.

I thank all of our people and clergy who have made our services available through a variety of electronic media. If your parish is not making services available through the internet, please help the priest in making it happen in your parish. Very few of our priests have the technical expertise to accomplish these things without your help.

Baptisms, weddings, and funerals may only be celebrated privately with immediate family, and in compliance with the guidelines of the civil authorities, at this time no more than ten people present counting everyone. Communion should not be distributed at these events except the precious blood to the newly baptized. People who do not live together should keep social distancing in compliance with public health guidelines.

Confession or individual communion may be administered on request, but only in compliance with public health guidelines. No priest is required to put his own health at risk, especially those over 65. The lay people should not ask the priest to put his life in danger with unreasonable requests.

In ministering to the sick or dying, the priest should follow the advice of health workers. If communion is possible, the spoon must be sterilized or destroyed afterwards.

BYZANTINE CATHOLIC EPARCHY OF PASSAIC

My dear friends, let us recall that throughout history, the Lord God has called us to repentance—a change of heart. Speaking on behalf of God, the prophets told the chosen people that liturgical services and fasting from food are not pleasing to God unless they are accompanied by charity in the heart. The wrath of God is especially inflamed by gossip, by slander, by accusations, and by other sins of the mouth. As the Apostle James says, “One does not get clean water and foul water from the same spring. How can you bless God with your mouth, and then curse your brother who is made in the image of God?” The prophets tell us to replace these sins with works of charity for the poor, the widow, the orphan, and the strangers in our midst.

For those of us who live through this pandemic, God is calling us again to turn our minds back to him, to put aside all earthly cares, that we may live our lives in peace and doing everything to please our Creator.

For those of us who will “finish the race”, that is finish our earthly life, Jesus said, “I go ahead of you to prepare a place of you. I will come back and take you with me that you also may be where I am.” St. Paul said, “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man the things that God has prepared for those who love Him,” and he also says, “When Christ, your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.” And in the Apocalypse of St. John it says, “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death nor mourning nor crying nor pain.” And also, “Maranatha. Come Lord Jesus!”

I commend all the people of the Eparchy of Passaic to the protection of the great Archangel Michael, to the gentle kindness of St. Joseph, and especially to the care of the all holy Mother of God.

Your servant,

+ Kurt

Most Rev. Kurt Burnette
Bishop of Passaic

