

MEMORANDUM

Prescriptions for Safety in the Parish during COVID-19 Response

TO: DOS Parish Leadership
DATE: 3/13/2020
RE: COVID-19

In obedience to the request of our Archbishop, only the Sunday Divine Liturgy, the Vespereal Liturgy of the Feast of Annunciation, and the Presanctified Liturgies, will remain on our parish calendars through March 29. This implies, clearly, that no other gathering or service of any sort will take place on the parish property. Please modify your online/parish calendars accordingly.

Remember, these practices should be employed at present – *if there is sustained community transmission* (e.g. rapid onset of illness among members), services should be canceled until further notice to include the liturgies mentioned above. **Our rectors and priests-in-charge should take initiative to act proactively to implement tighter controls or cancel services altogether if these rapidly changing circumstances warrant locally.**

The liturgies that will be offered will be served with a minimum number of participants: only the priest (and deacon), reader, altar server, two chanters (choir members), and a greeter. All parishioners who are not on this “crew” (previously appointed by mutual agreement) should remain home.

- **Appoint a “greeter”** for the scheduled liturgies who will:
 - Direct all appointed servitors of the liturgy (singers, servers, etc.) to wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water throughout the service.
 - Assure that nobody who arrives (including servers or singers) is exhibiting any visible symptoms.
 - Ask them if they are feeling well as they arrive, and
 - If anyone has been feeling “a bit under the weather,” please ask them politely to return home.
 - Stand near the door to greet (warmly) anyone who might be visiting or a member who didn’t receive your parish communications. Inform them that, “Our archbishop has asked that we pray in our homes until at least March 29, but we are serving liturgies with just a few people.” They will perhaps receive this news, and head home to pray, but if they persist, do not turn them away, but ...
 - Ask them to please stand at least 6 feet from any other individual in the parish (at all times).
 - Inform them that they are **not** to venerate any icons, crosses or other objects in the church, and they are not to kiss the hand of the priest when receiving a blessing.
 - Ask them (and others in attendance) to depart quietly and promptly at the end of the service.
- As noted above, nobody in attendance should venerate the holy objects or kiss the priest’s hand.
- Doors, where possible, should be “propped open” so that handles do not need to be touched.
- Altar servers (if used at all) are **not to kiss the priest’s hand**, and priests/servers may find ways to avoid handing any objects to the priest in any case (such as preparing the censer, but not handing it off).
- The Eucharist will be administered in the usual manner, for the healing of soul and body. Do not venerate the chalice after communion (for those that do, nor the priest’s hand).

- Following communion, there will not be Zapifka (though there may be blessed bread provided, though even this is optional as multiple hands in the basket might be problematic).
- The priest will not provide the cross for veneration, but rather give a blessing with his hand (but not extend his hand for reverence).
- Singers and readers should observe CDC protocols of keeping *at least 6 feet distance* from others in the same room in all cases.
- After each service all liturgical objects and surfaces will be thoroughly disinfected.
- Confessions: Normal "one-on-one" pastoral interactions will continue so long as both priest and parishioner are healthy, and so long as the greater community is not experiencing "sustained community transmission" (ie, great incidence of the virus). Priests should be available for confession by appointment. The priest will give a blessing in the temporarily prescribed manner (ie, blessing with my hand, but not extend my hand for reverence), and take the other hygienic precautions. He will continue to place the stole over the penitent's head so long as everything else is being followed.
- If a community is experiencing rapid spread of the virus, all services should be canceled until further notice. Please inform the Archbishop and Diocesan Leadership.
- As at any other time, if anyone desires a sick visit or that communion to be brought to them because of illness or infirmity, the priest, if he is healthy, should make this visit.
- In the case of clergy who are ill or unavailable, those lay-members who are strong, of good health and not at high risk should be assigned to call upon those who are ill.
- Proper channels for communication (email, website updates, text messages or phone calls) should be employed consistently and frequently throughout this period of heightened awareness. Communication is key to assuring that our members abide by our expectations.
- Surfaces in the facilities should be disinfected at least weekly (not simply cleaned, but disinfected) by designated volunteers, wearing protective gloves and following the directives on the CDC website:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/home/cleaning-disinfection.html>