



THE BYZANTINE CATHOLIC EPARCHY OF PARMA

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

Prot. No. 41/2020 L
March 17, 2020

DECREE

After the latest development of the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) outbreak and consideration of the serious health risks involved in public gatherings, I, Bishop Milan Lach, S.J., have decided, effective immediately, to suspend all publicly celebrated Sunday Liturgies and services, including Holy Week services and Pascha (Easter) services throughout the Eparchy of Parma. Churches will be open for personal prayer only at the dedicated time by your pastor. I encourage you, however, to pray together in your homes with the prayers of our Byzantine Church.

I, Bishop Milan Lach, S.J. **dispense all the faithful of the Eparchy of Parma from the obligation of attending Sunday Divine Liturgies including Holy Week and Pascha (Easter) Sunday.** You are not dispensed from prayer on Sunday, the day of prayer and rest.

This is not an easy decision. After the consultation of the Catholic Bishops of Ohio with the Ohio State Governor and health officials, consultation with Metropolitan William Skurla, Archbishop of Pittsburgh, the Council of Consultors of the Eparchy of Parma, and in consideration of the recommendations from doctors, and noting that various state governments are closing down places of public gathering, and respectful of the President of the United States asking Americans not meet in groups larger than ten, I am convinced that this is a very prudent decision at this time. The purpose for this is social distancing, so it would be counter to the intention for many people to join together or closely together in a small church to pray. Continue to abide by the laws and rulings of your particular State, County, and Municipality. The progression of this virus in the next few weeks will depend on our behavior and discipline.

Divine services will be livestreamed at <http://parma.org/live> or may be available through your parish website. All other weekday services and activities remain suspended. Baptisms, funerals, and weddings can be celebrated with the immediate family only.

Most of our churches are small in number of parishioners, yet the people have always been practical and generous. Although services are cancelled, we still must pay our bills. Please remember that your parish still must pay its bills, even if no one attends. In some parishes, the pastor may not be able to pay for himself (and care for his children) at the end of this month if there is no collection. Please remember to support your parish financially in the coming weeks, if at all possible. I realize that many people will also suffer financial loss or even lose their jobs during this crisis, so I only ask that you support your parish as you are able.

Please remember that the situation is very fluid and developing and we will keep you updated accordingly.

Brothers and sisters, this is the time to be very responsible and caring for our elderly, for each other, but especially for those who work in the hospitals and have very essential jobs for the well-being of our society and country. I encourage you to pray to God for a swift end to this unprecedented health crisis.

Yours in Christ,

The Most Reverend Milan Lach, S.J.
Bishop of the Eparchy of Parma

Notary