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His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco issues statement on the COVID-19 Pandemic



His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco has released a statement on the COVID-19 Pandemic. Read the full text below:

Beloved Faithful of the Metropolis of San Francisco,

Christ, Who is the source of our Life, our Hope and our Consolation, has never abandoned His Church. Persecutions, theological upheavals, wars, and times of illnesses or diseases have never separated us from Him. The Church will always be a beacon of every good gift unto humanity and all creation. Christ is and will ever remain the good Physician of our souls and bodies.

The appearance of the COVID-19 virus on the world stage has presented a great challenge for our civil authorities and medical experts. We are responding appropriately to the ever-changing information about this virus and efforts to contain its spread in order to save lives. We are constantly reviewing the guidelines promulgated by local health departments.

Until further notice, the following directives are in place effective immediately in addition to what has already been offered to us by the Archdiocese on March 6, 2020:

- All programs (GOYA, JOY, HOPE, Young Adults, Church School, Greek School, Senior Citizens, Bible Studies, Sports Leagues, Greek Folk Dance, etc.), are to be cancelled.
- Fellowship and Coffee Hours are to be cancelled.
- Memorial services will still be celebrated, but Koliva will be distributed in the Narthex in pre-filled cups or plastic bags following the service for the faithful as they leave.
- The passing of trays should be discontinued. Instead, a place to accept offerings will be provided in the Narthex.
- All non-liturgical gatherings at the church are to be cancelled.
- Any churches that host other groups for gatherings of any sort should cancel those activities.
- Parishes with more than one priest may offer more than one liturgy to increase social distancing of the faithful.
- All directives from the local authorities that impact church services including liturgical assemblies must be followed – **most especially social distancing and hand washing.**
- Each priest is to use his discretion depending upon his particular locality in conjunction with the information provided by authorities.

I found this message from Fr. Maximos Constas, Interim Dean of Hellenic

College Holy Cross School of Theology, to be particularly meaningful, “This is a time to be cautious, careful, and to follow the advice of responsible and informed individuals. Together with these, the best defense and protection of our health is to have faith in God, placing ourselves under His care and protection. Our faith and God’s providence and love are the best defense against every threat and every illness, both physical and spiritual. ***‘Look to the signs of the times,’*** as St. Ignatius of Antioch says, ***‘but then look to the One who is beyond time’*** (Letter to Polycarp 3).”

We must continue to be prayerful and faithful, and trust that the Lord will deliver our world from this disease. Please offer the attached prayer service, individually and collectively, that all those who are suffering are granted healing, and that the Lord will enlighten the medical professionals as they seek to control the spread of COVID-19.

As we journey through Great and Holy Lent amidst these challenging times, let us walk with faith, strengthened by the Lord’s mighty hand and illumined by His Grace and Peace.

With Love in Christ,
+ G E R A S I M O S
Metropolitan of San Francisco