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His Eminence Metropolitan Nathanael of Chicago issues update to the faithful concerning COVID-19 and Liturgical Services



Metropolitan Nathanael of Chicago has released an update concerning COVID-19 and Liturgical Services. Read the full text below:

Beloved Metropolis of Chicago family,

As we witness schools, businesses, and other institutions postponing and canceling activities, and as we anxiously await regular updates from public officials concerning the COVID-19 pandemic, I wish to assure you of my prayers and love, as well as to express to you my pastoral blessings and guidance during this time of unease and uncertainty.

As your Metropolitan, I have been blessed with the gift of fatherhood and

am called to care for you, your children, your parents, your grandparents, and all of your loved ones. Naturally, this involves *rightly teaching the word of God's truth* and nourishing you with spiritual sustenance. However, it also requires that I take every step to protect you from physical harm.

With the consent of the Holy Eparchial Synod, following the stringent restrictions on group gatherings being mandated by public officials across the nation, and after consulting infectious disease and other medical experts about COVID-19, I am obliged to take exceptional measures, no matter how difficult and painful they may be, in order to keep you and your loved ones, as well as our neighbors and communities, safe.

In this spirit of care and solidarity, ***all liturgical services in parishes of the Holy Metropolis of Chicago are suspended effective immediately, until further notice.*** Funerals, baptisms, and weddings will be celebrated with immediate family members in attendance only. Services in our two monasteries will only be open to the monastics residing therein. Moreover, all non-liturgical, ***in-person activities***, whether occurring on parish grounds or offsite, are suspended effective immediately until further notice. These include, but are not limited to, catechetical classes, Greek language classes, fellowship, youth ministries, lectures, retreats, parish council meetings, social events, Bible studies, athletics, and Philoptochos meetings.

During this period, the clergy of the Metropolis will continue to minister to you. Additional resources to help you navigate these trying times are available on a special page on the Metropolis website. There, you will find additional useful information, regular updates, and alternate means of enjoying the holy services of the Church. You are also encouraged to submit any questions and concerns to: .

My beloved, the ongoing efforts to curtail the spread of COVID-19 is a reminder that although the Church is not *of* the world, it is clearly *in* the world, and it most certainly cares *for* the world. As Orthodox Christians, we are called to love our neighbor and embrace our responsibility to others: our family, friends, and all people around us. The words of Saint Paul serve as an appropriate lens through which to view the importance of our temporary measures: "Let each of you look not only to his own

interests, but also to the interests of others” (Phil 2:4).

Extending to you my sincere prayers for safety, health, and many years, I remain

With paternal love in Christ,

+Metropolitan Nathanael of Chicago