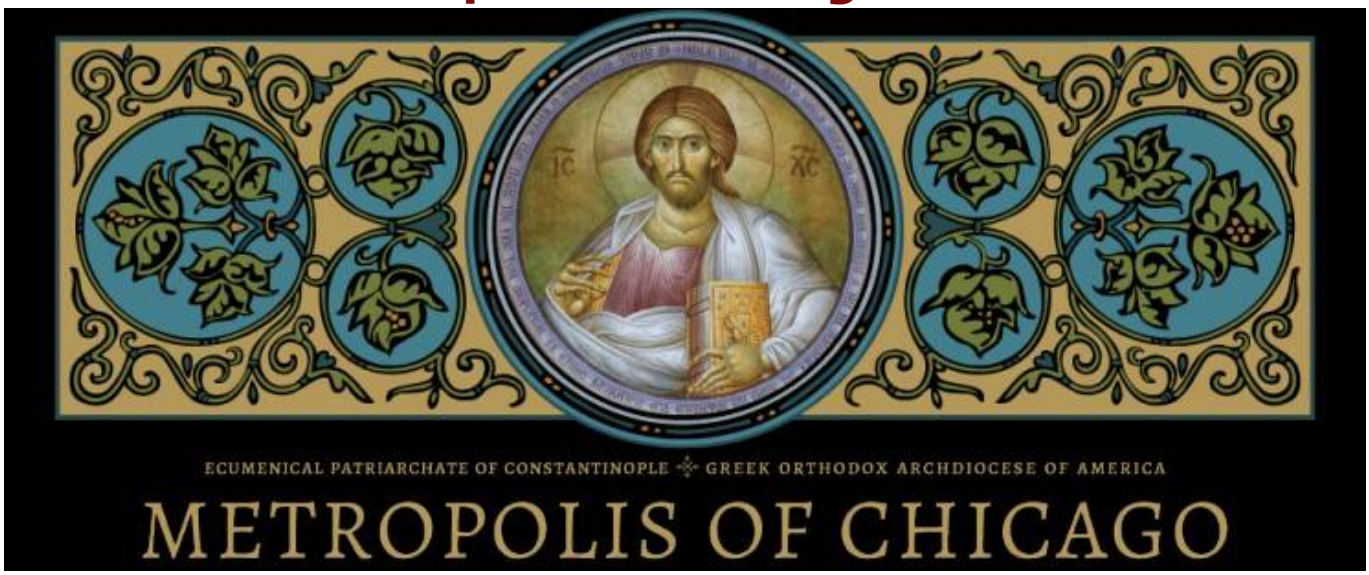
27/03/2020

Updated statement regarding Liturgical Services across the Metropolis of Chicago



On Sunday, March 22, 2020 the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Chicago made the following statement:

As cases of COVID-19 continue to escalate across the nation, the primary aim of the Metropolis of Chicago has been and will continue to be to protect our laypeople, clergy and neighbors from exposure to the virus, while also providing spiritual nourishment to the faithful in a safe manner. We remain in regular communication with law enforcement, physicians and public health experts to better understand our role in preventing the spread of the virus. In doing so, the Metropolis can and will make appropriate adjustments to its policies to safeguard the well-being of people.

One week ago, the Metropolis was concerned that large gatherings at our parishes would put people at significant risk and impair the concentrated public health effort to “flatten the curve.” Now, a week later, “stay-at-home” mandates are being issued by an increasing number of states. As the public concern continues to escalate, the need for keeping people safe while providing spiritual nourishment is our top priority. Accordingly, effective as of Saturday, March 21 at 11:59 p.m., the Metropolis has made the following adjustments to its directive of March 14, 2020:

- Services may be celebrated in parishes, but will NOT be open to the congregations to attend in person. The church building will remain locked during services.

- The faithful are NOT permitted to attend services and they must remain home.
- Parishes with the capacity to do so, may stream their services live over the Internet.
- Clergy who are not feeling well, or are exposed to those not well, are NOT to celebrate services and must follow the CDC guidelines (www.cdc.gov).
- Clergy who are among the “high risk population” are NOT to celebrate services.
- Clergy who are caregivers to family members among the “high risk population” are NOT to celebrate services.
- Funerals will continue to be performed with only the immediate family present. However, the total number in attendance (including the priest) cannot exceed 10 people.
- Baptisms will only be performed in extreme cases. Only the immediate family may be present, however, the total number in attendance (including the priest) cannot exceed 10 people.
- Church buildings will remain closed, except for the purpose of celebrating the liturgical services, as limited within this directive.

Further instructions have been provided to Metropolis clergy to help them implement these directives. Moreover, weekly telephonic/virtual meetings with the clergy have allowed for leadership to better understand the ever-evolving needs of our parishes and the conditions on the ground. Similar meetings will be scheduled with lay leadership across the 58 parishes to address common concerns and share the practices that prioritize the health and safety of all.

The Metropolis remains in a state of prayerful vigilance. It will continue to respond accordingly to facts on the ground and will continue to cooperate and consult with law enforcement officials and medical and health experts to support the broader effort to halt the spread of COVID-19. At the same time, the Metropolis will do all it can to balance public health priorities and the spiritual tradition of the Church.

The escalating seriousness of the pandemic and our decisions how to respond to it have been difficult, perhaps the most difficult in memory. Above all, the Metropolis asks its faithful to lead by example and observe public directives, take responsibility to prevent the spread of the virus, and keep the elderly and infirmed safe.

— Source: chicago.goarch.org