04/04/2020

# Statement of the ACOB-USA Executive Committee Concerning Holy Week and Pascha (Easter)

**The Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America has issued the following statement concerning Holy Week and Pascha (Easter). Read the full text down below:**

PDF Version

To the Clergy and Faithful Orthodox Christians of the United States of America:

During this period of crisis, we, members of the Executive Committee of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America, are meeting in conference call sessions every Friday to continually monitor the COVID-19 pandemic. Together, we discuss both pastoral and practical matters concerning the operational situation of our churches. As such, allow us first to thank all the medical health professionals, first responders, delivery personnel, and clergy who put themselves on the front lines in a sacrificial manner for the protection of our health and salvation.

We are facing unprecedented circumstances in extraordinary times. Many guidelines from various jurisdictions, following State and Federal regulations as well as CDC recommendations, have been successfully implemented in parishes around the country, helping to slow the spread of COVID-19. After consultation with public health and insurance officials,

law enforcement, theologians, and pastoral care professionals, we, members of the Executive Committee, have reached a consensus concerning Palm Sunday, Holy Week and Pascha (Easter) and strongly encourage all Bishops of the Assembly to implement the following recommendations:

1. Services, celebrated by a maximum of five people consisting of a Priest, a Deacon, Chantor(s), and/ or Server(s), continue in the churches and may be streamed online for the faithful to pray from their homes.
2. None of the traditional material offerings are to be distributed to the faithful in any way, including palms and/or pussy willows, flowers, candles, and eggs, etc.
3. Spiritual guidance may be heard over the phone, but the implementation of the Sacrament of Confession and Prayer of Absolution remains at the discretion of the local Bishop.

Whereas some Bishops might implement more stringent practices out of love and concern for their flock and broader society, less stringent approaches will put the Faithful and their Clergy at high risk and should be avoided by all Bishops.

These measures mitigate the risk of transmission due to proximity. We affirm that the Eucharist is truly the Body and truly the Blood of Christ. These measures should in no way be seen to diminish this sacred and eternal Truth.

The Church presently calls upon us, as the source of blessings, to nurture us in the commandments of Christ and lead us to His Kingdom. As the Church tells us when to fast, and when not to fast, we listen and do our best to obey these instructions. In like manner, when we suffer together in our isolation and are unable even to receive the Eucharist because of mandated distancing, we are in reality, due to circumstance, also in full communion as the Body of Christ. As we unite – as faithful Christians, as a nation, and as a global community – to stop the spread of COVID-19, may the blessings of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ be with you all!

Conveying our paternal blessings with love in the Lord,

**Archbishop Elpidophoros**, Chairman
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

**Metropolitan Joseph**, Vice-Chairman
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America

**Archbishop Michael**, Treasurer
Orthodox Church in America

**Metropolitan Gregory**, Secretary
American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese of the USA

**Bishop Irinej**
Serbian Orthodox Church in North, Central and South America

**Metropolitan Nicolae**
Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the Americas

**Metropolitan Joseph**
Bulgarian Eastern Orthodox Diocese of the USA, Canada, and Australia

**Bishop Saba**
Georgian Apostolic Orthodox Church in North America

**Metropolitan Tikhon**
Orthodox Church in America