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His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco issues guidance for Holy Week 2020



His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco has released the following statement regarding Holy Week 2020. Read the full text down below:

Beloved Clergy, Monastics and Laity of the Metropolis of San Francisco,

This will be a Holy Week and Pascha like we have never experienced. Rather than gathering in our parishes and participating in the Divine Services of the week, we will be attending them virtually, through live-streamed platforms. Rather than preparing our homes for large family celebrations, most of us will prepare far smaller gatherings of those in our immediate households, and coordinate a virtual Paschal meal with our families and friends, through the use of social media.

As His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew stated, “That which is at stake is not our faith – it is the faithful. It is not Christ – it is our Christians. It is not the divine-man – but human beings.” We are all taking these steps to protect the faithful, to protect Christians from the pandemic.

The Eparchial Synod of our Holy Archdiocese has released the guidelines for the liturgical observances for Holy Week. It was a difficult and painful decision, but one that was necessary for the protection of our clergy, faithful, and civic communities.

In addition to those guidelines, I am asking the parishes of the Metropolis of San Francisco to observe the following:

- The Divine Services of Holy Week should continue as scheduled in our parishes, with the priest, chanter and one or two assistants, as needed.
- Due to the ever-changing restrictions and potential curfew in various areas of our Metropolis, clergy have been given the discretion to conduct the Resurrection Service at the traditional time, or no earlier than 10:00 p.m. on Saturday evening.

I know that our parishes are working diligently to provide for a meaningful Holy Week experience at home through live-streaming and other educational and spiritual offerings. The Metropolis also has many resources available and I encourage you to take advantage of them.

Our identity as Orthodox Christians is deeply connected to the liturgical life and rhythms of the Church. This year, our liturgical rhythm is being challenged. Each of us must dig deeply into the storehouses of our souls and memories to find sustenance, while we experience this new virtual faith experience. When we are in our homes and online, remember that

the first witnesses of the Resurrection of Christ were just three women. Remember that Christ appeared only to two travelers on the Road to Emmaus. Remember that Christ first appeared to the disciples when they hid behind locked doors.

During Holy Week, I also hope that you will remember the caregivers and workers in our hospitals and nursing homes. Offer prayers for those who have fallen ill and those who have succumbed to the Coronavirus. Pray for those who are searching for treatments and a cure. Pray for those who are ensuring that the basic necessities of life are still available to us. Pray for your clergy and parishes. In any way you are able, find ways to celebrate and support them.

The festal hymns of our Church are in the present tense. Events of the past are happening “today,” when we celebrate them. In a few days, we will sing “It is the day of Resurrection.” The Resurrection of Christ happens whether we are at church or at home. Your physical separation from your parish should not diminish the joy of this Great Feast and the gift of eternal life we have been given through Christ’s Crucifixion and Resurrection.

Praying for your peaceful journey through Holy Week and a spiritually uplifting celebration of Pascha, I remain,

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