

24/05/2020

## Important Letter from His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco - Restoring Parish Life



**Download:** [Re-Opening Our Parishes - Letter to the Faithful](#)

### Video Transcript

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

***Christ is Risen! Χριστὸς Ἀνέστη!***

For nearly two months, we have lived under the conditions of physical and social distancing in order to slow the advance of the Coronavirus. As a church, we have had to severely restrict the lives of our parishes, especially with regard to attending Divine Services. This has also eliminated gathering for ministries in our parishes, from Christian Education to Philoptochos meetings, Bible Studies, Youth activities, and much more. We have all endured and suffered. We are thankfully witnessing,

throughout our Metropolis and our nation, the desired effects of our efforts. While many people still are contracting the virus, are hospitalized and succumb to the illness, the darkest days seem to be behind us, and we are seeing a glimmer of light at the end of this dark tunnel that we have all traveled.

Therefore, it is with great joy that I share with you we have reached a point to begin resuming the liturgical life of our parishes in a measured and safe way. Please understand we cannot flip the switch and return to our church life the way it was before. The Metropolis has released specific protocols and policies so that your parish can reopen, albeit in a modified way, a new normal.

***Let me be clear. Even though our civic authorities have begun to loosen restrictions on our lives and lift the lockdowns, the pandemic has not ended. The virus has not been eradicated.*** We have entered a phase of learning to live with the reality of the Coronavirus, until the day when effective treatments and a vaccine are available.

Discerning ways to live with this reality in our parishes has occupied many discussions with our clergy and lay leaders in the Metropolis. We have reviewed many reports and statements, from our Eparchial Synod, the Assembly of Bishops, and our civic leaders. The goal has been to develop protocols and policies so that our parishes can begin to open up safely, and in a consistent manner.

With our Metropolis comprising seven states, over 180 counties, and 1.2 million square miles of land and water, there simply cannot be a “one size fits all” announcement. Each parish must apply local guidelines to the protocols we have created. Each parish will have to organize its system, which means not every parish will be able to do things the same way for many reasons.

For the foreseeable future, our behaviors must become more deliberate and intentional. Parishes will be instituting policies for sanitation and managing attendance. There will be procedures so that we can gather, yet still maintain the safest social and physical distances. We still encourage those who are more vulnerable to COVID-19 to remain safely at home.

As our Assembly of Bishops has requested, please remain connected to your home parish. Do not deprive your neighbor from attending his or her home parish because it has opened in a way that is more to your liking. And when you see the announcements from different parishes, do not judge. Saint Paul taught the Romans thusly, ***“Let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister.”***

" (Romans 14:13).

When our church doors are opened, you will also have to become more deliberate, patient and understanding when you attend services. All of us have our routines when we go to church, from the way we light our candles to the place we sit. These routines will change. There will be announcements about those changes. Someone may instruct you to do something you are not accustomed to doing in church. Understand the reasons. These are being done to provide as safe an environment as possible. As the Epistle of James teaches us, **"be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires."** (James 1:19)

My beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord, over these months, we have seen the examples of health care workers, teachers, grocery store staff, scientists, our civic leaders, and many others facing this illness. Your clergy and parish leaders have had to face this illness with new approaches to their ministries. You have had to alter many patterns of your life as well. We are surrounded by examples of how we have drawn upon the best qualities in ourselves to care for one another, **"doing for the least of our brothers and sisters"** (Matthew 25:40).

As we begin to take the steps to return to our churches in the days ahead, may each of us continue to draw upon those qualities - of faith, patience, understanding, civility, and even humor - that have carried us through these difficult days, but most importantly our love for one another.

My prayers continue to be offered to the Risen Lord for your safekeeping, health, and for the restoration of our world.

**Χριστὸς Ἀνέστη! Christ is Risen!**

[Source](#)