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Statement by the First Hierarch of the Russian Church Abroad on the California fires



STATEMENT BY THE FIRST HIERARCH
OF THE RUSSIAN CHURCH ABROAD
ON THE CALIFORNIA FIRES

It is with pain of heart that I am following the events unfolding in California, which is engulfed in flames, making this the second worst fire season in the history of the state. And I hasten to express my profoundest sympathy to everyone. I prayerfully empathize with His Eminence Archbishop Kyrill, the auxiliary bishops His Grace Bishop Theodosy and His Grace Bishop James, the clergy, monastics and flock of the Western American Diocese, the citizens of California, all who have suffered from the flames and the tens of thousands of firefighters battling them.

Glory to God, the fire did not touch the Church of Our Lady of Kazan on the Russian River, from which the holy icons, holy vessels, and divine service books were evacuated in a timely manner. I have learned that danger has also bypassed other churches in the Diocese. Nonetheless, many have lost their property and have been deprived of necessities. Thousands of people have been dislocated and millions are facing problems with the loss of electrical power. Because of the restrictions connected with the threat of spreading the coronavirus, churches have been closed to communal prayer. Yet, where Divine Services are performed outside the church building, it is impossible to breathe due to the smoke and high temperatures.

One of the speedy intercessors in situations such as this is a Saint canonized 50 years ago, Holy Father Herman the Wonderworker of Alaska, to whom I call upon all to turn to in prayer during these days. Let us also pray to Holy Hierarch John (Maximovich), whose incorrupt relics rest in the Diocesan Cathedral in San Francisco. We pray with special fervor before the “Kursk-Root” Icon of the Mother of God of the “Sign,” that She would never cease in lifting up Her holy arms and help to stop the fires. Let us pray for the preservation of our brothers and sisters in California, for abundant rain to be sent down upon them, that Almighty strength and Divine aid be granted them for overcoming the consequences of the fiery trial that has befallen them.

With prayer, profound sympathy and love in Christ,

+Hilarion,

Metropolitan of Western America and New York

First Hierarch of the Russian Church Abroad

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