

March 17, 2020

Suspension of Services

Beloved Sisters and Brothers in the Lord,

The Lord bless and strengthen you in these challenging times!

This is turning out to be a most challenging Great Lent, a time that has been complicated by the worldwide pandemic of the Covid-19 or Coronavirus. These complicated and confusing days are made even more so by the fast-pace change and updating in information and facts relating the medical effects of the virus. Additionally, of course, we are all experiencing the disruption of daily lives and routines as well as having concerns for the future.

The Holy Synod of Bishops has given directives and His Eminence Archbishop BENJAMIN has applied these directive (both will be posted on our parish website: www.sspeterpaulaz.org) for all parishes within the Diocese of the West. Therefore, with the blessing of Archbishop Benjamin, I now inform you of the steps that we are taking at Saints Peter and Paul Church:

- 1) Until a reassessment of this policy at the end of March, the Divine Services **will not be served** at Saints Peter and Paul Church. This is in effect immediately, March 17, 2020. Following the directives and the best advice of civil and medical authorities, we seek to limit the amount of physical contact through what is being called “social distancing.”
- 2) You are asked to maintain and, indeed, strengthen your prayer life in these trying times. You will find the *Typica* service posted on our parish website. Please pray this service before the Holy Icons in your homes at the times we would normally gather for our celebration of the Divine Liturgy, i.e. on Sunday mornings at 9:00 a.m. I also ask that every day you pray the prayer that is provided below as part of both your morning and evening prayers. Also, please make good use of the many spiritual and liturgical resources available at the official website of The Orthodox Church in America: www.oca.org.
- 3) For your convenience and edification, Divine Services are being live-streamed from various churches and monasteries. Links to these will be made available on our parish website as they become available.

- 4) Be assured that the clergy of our parish remain available to serve you, especially in cases of emergency, and are available to speak with you by phone and through the usual other means, e.g. email and texting. Know that we have all of you in our daily prayers.
- 5) For your own part, I ask you to check in with one another often and to assist one another as much as possible. Social distancing should not be misconstrued as social isolation. Be concerned. Be loving. Be neighborly. It is times such as these that Christians are called to rise to the occasion in love and service to those in need.
- 6) Please refer back to our parish website for updates on the Church's response to this situation.

Let me emphasize the fact that these difficult decisions have been made out of true love and concern for everyone. No one wants to close churches or to suspend the Divine Services, even temporarily. But, we are commanded to care for our neighbor, indeed to love our neighbor (1 John 4:20). In this current situation, we are required to take these *temporary* steps to insure we do not imperil the health of our brothers and sisters. Let us be united in prayer, asking that the Lord will show us His mercy and that this current crisis may soon pass over us.

I assure you of my prayers and of the prayers and blessing of His Eminence Archbishop BENJAMIN and all the members of the Holy Synod of Bishops.

With love in the Lord Jesus, the Physician of our souls and bodies,

+Bishop Daniel

PRAYER IN THE PRESENT TIME OF DISTRESS

Let us pray to the Lord. Lord, have mercy.

O God Almighty, Lord of heaven and earth, and of all creation visible and invisible, in thine ineffable goodness, look down upon us, thy people gathered in thy Holy

Name. Be our helper and defender in this day of affliction. Thou knowest our weakness. Thou hearest our cry in repentance and contrition of heart. O Lord who lovest mankind, deliver us from the impending threat of the Corona Virus. Send thine angel to watch over us and protect us. Grant health and recovery to those suffering from this present illness and from all illness and disease. Guide the hands of physicians and healthcare workers and preserve those who are healthy. Enable us to continue to serve our suffering brothers and sisters in love. Grant to all a spirit of calm and peace and trust in Thy providence so that together we may glorify thy most honorable and majestic name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen