



ЕПИСКОП ИСТОЧНОАМЕРИЧКИ  
СРПСКЕ ПРАВОСЛАВНЕ ЦРКВЕ

BISHOP OF EASTERN AMERICA  
THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

E. No. 168  
March 13, 2020

TO ALL CLERGY, MONASTICS & FAITHFUL  
OF THE DIOCESE OF EASTERN AMERICA  
OF THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

RE: **GREAT LENTEN SERVICES AND PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES  
IN PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF COVID-19**

*The season of the Holy Fast is now at hand.  
Let us begin it with good actions.  
(Second Canon of Clean Monday)*

Beloved in Christ,

This Great and Holy Lent, in which we now find ourselves, has been duly complicated with regard to the viral spread of **COVID-19**, more popularly known as **Coronavirus**, which has been declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO), and as of this day, President Donald Trump, has declared, *until further notice*, a **NATIONAL EMERGENCY** in the United States of America.

God, as we know, is never the author of evil, however, He does, however, permit it for our good and toward our salvation. As such, we must not look upon this pandemic as a temptation, for our Lord never leads us into temptation, rather as a test of our faith and spiritual maturity.

Relative to the same, the following, most appropriate quote by Nicole M. Roccas, is taken from *"In Faith and Love: A Layperson's Thoughts on Drawing Near during a Pandemic"*:

"COVID-19, and the precautionary changes and disruptions it is bringing to many of us, is not a diversion from our Lent and our lives. It **is** our Lent. It **is** our lives. This is, for now, the arena we have been given in which to work out our salvation alongside and in community with one another."

Having discussed the matter of Great Lenten Services in the wake of the Coronavirus with our Episcopal Deputy and Deans, the following decisions have been rendered, and are in effect for an *interim period*:

- All scheduled Sunday Evening Great Lenten Vespers and Lectures are herein cancelled. To avoid undo travelling, each parish priest, together with his faithful, may, if they so desire celebrate these truly meaningful services in their individual parish churches, without any lecture or social hour following;
- All scheduled joint Liturgies of Pre-sanctified Gifts are herein cancelled. Each parish priest, together with his faithful, may celebrate in their individual parish churches to reduce travel and group numbers a gatherings, however, without a common meal following; and

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- Clergy Confessions and Seminar scheduled for March 25-26, 2020 are herein cancelled. Airlines and hotels will readily provide refunds at this time. Each Dean may arrange for Clergy Confessions in their local Deaneries;
- Concerning the Sacrament of Holy Confession, given the close proximity of the confessor and penitent, and what we *thus far* know about the Coronavirus, is to be administered without placing the stole over the head of the penitent, who will keep their head bowed during confession, or kneel (if it is not a Sunday). At the conclusion, the confessor shall make the sign of the Cross over the head of the penitent; and
- As we near the end of March, the situation will be reassessed and we will address the question of continuing Great Lenten Liturgical Services and the like.

The above is for your information and implementation.

With Archpastoral blessings and Paternal love,

BISHOP OF EASTERN AMERICA

