



ЕПИСКОП ИСТОЧНОАМЕРИЧКИ  
СРПСКЕ ПРАВОСЛАВНЕ ЦРКВЕ

BISHOP OF EASTERN AMERICA  
THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

E. No. 96  
March 05, 2021

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

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

*Let us begin the fast with joy!  
Let us prepare ourselves for spiritual efforts!*  
(Forgiveness Sunday Vespers)

Most beloved in Christ,

This Great and Holy Lent, which will soon be upon us, once again continues to be complicated with regard to the viral spread of **COVID-19** and its various mutations and strains. This pandemic has now taken the lives of four of our Hierarchs, clergy, monastics and many faithful. It is our sacred obligation, especially when fasting, that we also fast from spreading the coronavirus.

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.

With regard to the Great Lenten Services, the following decisions will remain in effect for Great Lent, 2021:

- All Sunday Evening Great Lenten Vespers and Lectures are herein cancelled. The Deans are requested to make a schedule of lectures in tandem with our Department of Christian Education, so that they can be presented virtually through our Internet Ministries;
- All 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 in gatherings, however without a common meal following, unless permitted by local government regulations;
- The Triumph of Orthodoxy Vespers are herein cancelled, unless local conditions and regulations allow for such gatherings;
- Clergy Confessions and Seminar are herein cancelled. Each Dean may arrange, according to geographically limited numbers, 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 still to be administered without placing the stole over the head of the penitent, who will keep their head bowed

65 Overlook Circle • New Rochelle NY 10804-4501 • USA  
+1 (914) 633-9000 • [diocese@easterndioocese.org](mailto:diocese@easterndioocese.org) • [www.easterndioocese.org](http://www.easterndioocese.org)

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 conclusion of Great Lent, the situation will be reassessed, and we will address the question of Holy Week and Paschal Services.

May this forthcoming season of Great and Holy Lent truly help us to *“rejoice in the virtues of the spirit and fulfill them in love! That we all may see the Passion of Christ our God, and rejoice in the spirit at the holy Pascha!”* (Forgiveness Sunday Vespers).

The above is for your information and implementation.

With Archpastoral blessings and Paternal love,

BISHOP OF EASTERN AMERICA

