



ЕПИСКОП ИСТОЧНОАМЕРИЧКИ
СРПСКЕ ПРАВОСЛАВНЕ ЦРКВЕ

BISHOP OF EASTERN AMERICA
THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

E. No. 210
April 06, 2020

TO ALL CLERGY AND ORDAINED MONASTICS
OF THE DIOCESE OF EASTERN AMERICA
THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

**SUBJECT: DIRECTIVES FOR HOLY WEEK AND THE RESURRECTION OF
CHRIST DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

Very Reverend, Reverend, and Venerable Fathers,

I pray that this circular finds all of you, your families and those entrusted to your pastoral care well in the Lord!

During this trying epoch in which COVID-19 has changed everything, I have been in regular contact with my Deputy and my Deans, as well as a great number of clergy, who have contacted me individually for specific instructions regarding their ministry.

First and foremost, my appreciation is offered to all of you, my deeply beloved clergy, for the inspiring and creative ways in which you have remained in constant contact with your flock and the wider community. Many of these measures are, as we know, only to be implemented under these present circumstances. However, as we have collectively learned so very much from our experience, there is much that can be garnered for future use.

At present, as we draw near to the conclusion of the Holy Forty Days – Quadragesima, and as we prepare to celebrate the Resurrection of Lazarus and the Lord's Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem, enter into Holy Week, and finally, to emerge in the radiance of His All-Glorious Resurrection, the following additional directives are to be implemented with regard to the COVID-19 pandemic:

- It is imperative that all services continue in our parish churches and monasteries per earlier issued instructions;
- Each of these services should be livestreamed through available technology, so that the faithful, from the *church in their house* (cf. Philemon 1:2), can see their parish church, pray, and hear their priest celebrate the services and preach the Word of God;
- Traditional material offerings are not be distributed to the faithful, including palms and/or pussy willows, flowers, candles, eggs, etc. Nor may any Paschal foods be brought into the church for blessing;
- Spiritual guidance may be executed over the phone for those who are unable due to age or infirmity to come to church. However, the Sacrament of Confession and

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Prayer of Absolution is to be reserved for a personal encounter of the penitent and priest. As there will be exceptions, please contact your Dean or the Bishop for specific instructions;

- The Sacrament of Unction, which is an addition to, but not integral to Holy Week, should be cancelled at this time and reserved for a forthcoming fasting period;
- The faithful must be permitted to enter their churches in limited numbers, mindful of locally enforced curfews, on Good Friday and Holy Saturday, and to come before the Tomb of Christ, reverently bow before the Shroud – *Plastanica*, without venerating the same; and
- Given that the celebration of Patronal Feasts – the *Slava*, will already begin with Lazarus Saturday and Palm Sunday, the traditional *Slava* offerings are not brought into the church. Rather, the faithful should be instructed, as did our ancestors in times of persecution, to cut their own Festal Bread – *Slavski kolach* at home. Clergy are to provide them with the text of the Troparion of their Feast in either English or Serbian, so that they can read it together as a family, following the common recitation of the Lord's Prayer.

Beloved brethren, it is our collective duty and our sacred obligation to serve our faithful, to the best of our ability, as all medical, emergency and essential workers are doing for the public at large.

Despite the harrowing circumstance in which we collectively find ourselves, nothing can possibly hamper the true joy of the Lord's Resurrection.

The above is for your information and, accordingly, implementation.

WITH ARCHPASTORAL BESSINGS,

BISHOP OF EASTERN AMERICA

