

March 17, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Earlier today I sent you a letter from Metropolitan JOSEPH with his instructions in regard to the coronavirus and church services. I am attaching it here again, in case you missed it before. Please ***read it in its entirety.***

Since only a very limited number of people should be assembling in a public gathering (for the obvious reason of curtailing the spread of the coronavirus, which appears to be increasingly more serious in its effects), I would ask that you follow the following admonition: ***please do not attend the services until further notice.*** This may sound like a strange thing for a priest to ask, but under the circumstances, my conscience requires it.

This is not a lack of faith in God's power to preserve and save, but is a reasonable response to unusual circumstances. Faith and reason are not opposed to each other; human reason is itself given to us from God. God himself, when speaking to the people through the Prophet Isaiah, said to his people, "Come now, let us reason together" (Isaiah 1:18).

I know that there are some of the Orthodox jurisdictions that are canceling church services altogether. Our Metropolitan, however, has not suggested that our Archdiocese go that far at this time. I will comply with the Metropolitan's directive of holding a very limited number of services, lifting up prayer for the church and our country. We will continue this until I hear differently from the Metropolitan. Please do not worry that I will not have sufficient help at the altar or in chanting. I will have all that is necessary. What I want all of you to do is, while the services are being offered, during their normal times, particularly the weekend services, ***take that time to pray.***

There are other things I would like to say and share, and these thoughts and ideas will be forthcoming in future emails. Right now, the one point I want to stress is the importance of ***staying away from public gatherings,*** unfortunately even worship services, until our nation gets a handle on this virus.

You are in my prayers. Please keep one another in your prayers. Right now, one of the best ways to continue our Lenten journey is to pray for our family, friends, neighbors, and nation during this unusual crisis. Here, charity and prayer are combined. Let us practice fasting, particularly fasting from activities that take us away from the other two Lenten disciplines, charity and prayer.

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Herman