

**To the Faithful of St. Mary Byzantine Catholic Church, Ambridge, PA
and St. George Byzantine Catholic Church, Aliquippa, PA**

17 March 2020

St. Alexis, the Man of God

St. Patrick, Enlightener of Ireland

*“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give you as the world gives.
Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” (John 14.27)*

My Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Today, as we continue to hear news of the spread of COVID-19 in our nation and in our region, the clergy of the Archeparchy received updated directives from our Metropolitan Archbishop regarding our church’s response.

As per Metropolitan William’s instructions, and effective immediately, we – together with the other churches of our Archeparchy – are suspending all public Liturgical celebrations in our parish until further notice. This includes Sunday, Holy Day, and Lenten liturgies and observances.

The Metropolitan has also dispensed the faithful from the obligation of attending Sunday and Holy Day Liturgies but reminds us that we are to "keep holy the Lord's Day through prayer and support of those in need in [our] Church." At the end of this letter, I am attaching “An Act of Spiritual Communion” which can be recited alone or with your family. Baptisms, weddings, and funerals will be permitted with only immediate family present. I will be celebrating the Divine Liturgy on Sundays in private on behalf of the parish and "on behalf of all and for all."

I will be hearing Confessions in the Confessionals on Sunday Mornings from 9:30 to 10:00 AM at St. George's and from 10:30 to 11:00 AM at St. Mary's. Should a pastoral emergency arise, I can be reached on my direct line at 412-356-3698.

At each Liturgy, we hear, “In peace, let us pray to the Lord...” Let this be our ongoing theme during these times of uncertainty and anxiety. Let us remain faithful to our Lord who has proclaimed peace to his disciples. He is able to calm the winds and the waves of our storm-tossed lives and he is the Lord enthroned above all principalities and powers of this world.

I encourage you to follow the practices directed by the Center for Disease Control and our government. Practice “social distancing,” keep your hands clean, avoid unnecessary social interactions. But as Christians we do so not out of fear, but out of love for our neighbors – for “perfect love casts out fear.” (1 John 4.18)

And above all, *pray*. Pray for those who are affected by this virus and those who will be. Pray especially for the aged and infirm. Pray for those whose livelihoods are being threatened by loss of work. And pray that our God, the lover of humankind, will quickly bring about an end to this pandemic.

“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8.38-39)

The mercies of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ be with all of you.

- Father Geoffrey Mackey

AN ACT OF SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

when unable to attend to the Divine Liturgy

+ Through the prayers of our holy fathers,
Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy upon us and save us.

Heavenly King, Comforter, Spirit of Truth,
everywhere present and filling all things,
Treasury of blessings and Giver of life,
come and dwell within us, cleanse us of all stain,
and save our souls, O gracious One!

Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy and Immortal,
have mercy on us. *(three times)*

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
now and ever and forever. Amen.

Most holy Trinity, have mercy on us;
Lord, cleanse us of our sins;
Master, forgive our transgressions;
Holy One, come to us and heal our infirmities for your Name's sake.

Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
now and ever and forever. Amen.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name.
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us,
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

+ Through the prayers of our holy fathers,
Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy upon us and save us.

+ Come, let us worship our King and God.
+ Come, let us worship Christ, our King and God.
+ Come, let us worship and bow before the only Lord Jesus Christ, the King and our God.

Read the Epistle and Gospel appointed for the day or the following:

EPISTLE

Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. (*Revelation 3.20*)

GOSPEL

I am the vine, you are the branches. He that abides in me, and I in him brings forth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing. (*John 15.5*)

Take a moment to meditate on the readings with thankfulness for the revelation of our Lord.

Then take a moment to think of the failures of the past week. Recall any sins committed since your last Communion and offer them to Christ. Meditate on his great love for you. in the forgiveness of sins at the cost of his own Passion and Death.

ACT OF CONTRITION

Christ our God, I am truly sorry that I have sinned against you, who are good and the lover of us all. Forgive me all my sins, known and unknown, things done and left undone; grant me the grace and consolation of the Holy Spirit, time for true repentance, and the wisdom and will to amend my ways. For you are good and you love us all, and we give glory to you with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.

ACT OF RECEPTION

I union, dear Lord, with the faithful at every altar of your holy Church where your blessed Body and Blood are being offered to the Father, I desire to offer you praise and thanksgiving. I believe that you are truly present in the heavenly, holy, and mystical Sacrifice. And since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, I beseech you to come spiritually into my heart. I unite myself to you, and embrace you with all the affections of my soul. Let me never be separated from you. Let me live and die in your love. Amen.

Come, Lord Jesus, dwell in your servant in the fullness of your strength, in the perfection of your holy ways, and in the holiness of your Spirit, and rule over every hostile power in the might of your Spirit, and to the glory of the Father. Amen.

May the precious and holy Body and Blood of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ be for the healing of my soul and body, the remission of my sins, and for life everlasting. Amen.

ACT OF PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING

+ Blessed, praised, and adored by Jesus Christ on his throne of glory in heaven, and in the most holy Sacrament of the Altar. Amen.

+ Through the prayers of our holy fathers,
Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy upon us and save us.