

Dear Saint Philip Family, Glory to Jesus Christ!

It is with a heavy heart that I am writing to inform you of **changes to our worship schedule** in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These changes have been determined by our hierarchs in order to comply with the mandates of civil authorities, and are for the purpose of slowing the spread of the virus. By this personal sacrifice we are fulfilling the commandment to love our neighbor. **Please read the attached letter** from our Metropolitan Joseph, sent to me by our Bishop Thomas.

I have been praying deeply and consulting broadly as to how to implement this in a way that keeps the doors of repentance open to you. I didn't have peace with this until I called my spiritual father to unburden my anxiety and receive some guidance. This is our plan until further notice:

1. Services are only **Sunday Orthros and Divine Liturgy**, as well as **Festal services**, including Friday 7pm Akathist, and next week's Annunciation Orthros and Liturgy.
2. All other services and events (meetings, clubs, classes, rehearsals, meals, etc...) are canceled. However **the church will still be open for prayer and pastoral ministry during the times of the canceled service times**. Please consult the calendar on the website which will be updated.
 - For Example: There is no Presanctified Liturgy Tonight but the church will be open from 6:30-until about 8:30.
3. The **church will be open Monday to Friday, 10 - 3** (regular office hours) for you to come and pray.
4. We will **only have ten (10) people gathered** for a service at any given time. Only clergy will be in attendance to serve and chant the services - this means Priests, Deacon, Subdeacons, Readers, not choir members. All others can come in briefly to pray, light candles, and perhaps receive anointing, as directed by the minor clergy to maintain a group size of 10 or less.
 - I'm working on a plan for people to sign up to coordinate this and how to administer Holy Communion.
5. Our **Holy Relics** will be available for veneration near the central icon-stand. Please **visit our cemetery** on your way to stop by the church to pray. It is an inspiring place to walk and pray.
 - Let's not forget those who have gone before us in faith, they are alive in Christ and available in prayer to help us.
6. We have plenty of **Holy Water** and will bless more as needed. Please bring a bottle to carry some home and sip with your morning prayers.
7. Stop by or schedule a **confession**. I would consider phone confessions if needed. This is a time of prayer and repentance for us. Beg the Lord for tears of repentance. God is visiting us, calling us back to His warm, loving Fatherly Embrace! I will be strict during this crisis about the relationship between Holy Confession and Holy Communion to make sure that we are all repenting.

8. Pray at your home! Pray with your family! Pray without Ceasing!!!! Pray for me, Fr James, Dn David, our clergy, parishioners and all our clergy and bishops to be strong and faithful through this crisis.

9. I am thankful to some parishioners who are putting together a **streaming video** service for us. It is obviously not a substitute, but hopefully it will be an encouragement. Dn David will be sending out educational and liturgical resources as well as information on how to connect to our live feed.

10. If you or someone you know (parishioner or not), needs pastoral care, please let us know.

In Christ,
+ Fr. Noah

PS -

We live by faith, not by fear. But, how?

A. Things like this can either make us insane or saints. It's our choice to trust God.

B. **Social Distancing does not mean Spiritual Distancing.**

- Draw close to Christ, the Virgin Mary, the Saints, and your departed and living loved-ones in prayer and service.
- What is your gift? Food. Finances. Friendship. Offer it willingly!

C. Common Sense and Uncommon Love is what is needed now.

D. Let every breath praise the Lord.

- We can truly dedicate each breath to God in thanksgiving for Christ.
- We can truly take each thought captive for Christ.

E. Remember, it is still Great Lent! Don't forget that we will come out victorious in the end and Christ is still risen!!!

F. Our Homes are mini-churches!

- **Cense your home**, as St Gregory Palamas advised his people during plagues.
- Pray and study the scriptures and saints daily with your family.

G. Maybe this is our moment to reclaim the west, or at least our communities!?!

- The Roman Empire was Christianized largely by loving Christians responding in faith to dire situations!
- Be courageous in your family, your neighborhood, etc...
- We are not afraid of sickness, suffering, sorrow, but we are afraid of sin and cowardice is a sin!

H. Trust in the Lord and lean not on your own understanding.

PPS - I have been very encouraged by correspondence with some of you in the least few days. If you haven't updated me, please do so, for my sake, because I love you and am concerned about you.

- Also, reach out to each other. A phone call, email, or text, or old-fashioned card....

PPPS - Many parishioners have offered to help others with groceries or even some bills. Please do not hesitate to let me know if you have these needs.