



Office of the Metropolitan

312 Garfield Street

Johnstown, PA 15906

July 16, 2020

Protocol No. 28/2020

Glory to Jesus Christ!

Dear Reverend Clergy and Faithful Laity of our God-Protected Diocese,

I am writing today to update you on several items as we continue to be challenged with the effects of the Coronavirus on our Church and its activities. Many of our people have become ill due to the virus and several (too many of course) have succumbed to it and have fallen asleep in the Lord. May their memories be eternal! The Diocese has continued to distribute an updated list of the sick, the dead, and those who provide care such as healthcare professionals and support staff, along with first responders and so many others. Let us continue to pray for all of our brothers and sisters.

We have tried diligently to follow the advice and pronouncements of local, state and federal government officials in thirteen states and a province in Canada. It has been very challenging and difficult as we have negotiated our way through the situation, some would say “the mess”. We reluctantly closed the doors of the Church to the public for several weeks, including Holy Week. Eventually we opened up again with just a few parishioners attending services at first and gradually increasing the numbers as allowed. We initiated policies and procedures such as hand sanitizing, social distancing, wearing masks (which is highly recommended), stopped choirs from singing, cancelled coffee hours, etc. It was difficult, but we did it. At this time most, but not all, of our Churches have returned to public services for all.

Now we are facing the prospect of re-closing our Churches because of the continuing presence of the Coronavirus. Several Governors are making pronouncements reversing the progress made so far. For example, yesterday the Governor of Pennsylvania announced that “gatherings would be limited to 25 individuals”. This was important and could have had an enormous impact on our Diocese in that 42% of our parishes are in Pennsylvania. It turns out that it does not apply to religious institutions. However, it took a question from a reporter to get the Secretary of Health and the Governor to admit that it did not apply to churches. That information should have been announced at the very beginning of the news conference, not at the end. My point is to not jump to conclusions too quickly, but to study all aspects of these governmental pronouncements before making changes in how we operate our Churches.

There has been much discussion, articles written, opinions expressed, ideas forwarded concerning the distribution of the Eucharist/Communion, specifically the use of one spoon. For the most part it created confusion, doubts, and distress for the people.

The American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese of North America

ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE OF CONSTANTINOPLE

The issue even reached the various Patriarchates and Autocephalous Churches in the Orthodox world. In the end most of the Orthodox Churches retained their traditional method of distribution. As a reminder, in our Diocese the method of the distribution of the Eucharist has not changed from the traditional method of one spoon, one chalice. I have not given permission to anyone to modify the method as of yet. If you have any different methods to be considered, please send me your ideas and we can discuss them.

Let us continue to practice all the mitigation procedures offered by the healthcare professionals in order to keep our people as safe as possible until the pestilence lessens. God bless all of you.

Working in His Vineyard,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "+Metropolitan Gregory". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the left of the printed name below it.

+Metropolitan Gregory of Nyssa

This Protocol is to be distributed by all means available including the emailing of parishioners as soon as possible.

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