

His Eminence
The Most Reverend
Metropolitan JOSEPH



Archbishop of New York and
Metropolitan of
All North America

ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE
OF NORTH AMERICA

April 2, 2020

Beloved Faithful in Christ,

Greetings to all of you in the Name of Our Great God and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Today, I met with my brother hierarchs of this God-protected Archdiocese – Bishops Basil, Thomas, Alexander, John, Anthony, and Nicholas – as well as the Vicar General, Fr. Thomas Zain, by video conference. Each bishop reported on the spread of the coronavirus in their respective dioceses, and we discussed the most up-to-date information we have from our public health and legal experts. The meeting was held with prayerfulness and brotherly conciliarity as well as great love and concern for our holy flock. We know that we are responsible before Almighty God for each and every one of you, and this awesome responsibility is one that none of us takes lightly.

After much prayer and deliberation, we made some heart-rending decisions that we believe are in the best interests of our flock – despite the pain we have in relaying them. Effective immediately, we are cancelling all of our summer camping and retreat programs, including family camps. We are cancelling the clergy symposium and the meeting of the Archdiocese Board of Trustees. The Bible Bowl, Creative Arts and Oratorical festival themes will transfer to next summer in order to honor the work already put in by the participants.

Beloved faithful, we are in this time of struggle together. Although we are in the difficult circumstances of canceling those blessed events that bring us physically together in the summer, we must redouble our efforts to be spiritually united in our prayers. The Archdiocese will be doing its part to reduce its expenditures and the travel of our departments and ministries in anticipation of the financial issues we all will continue to face during this difficult time. We will cancel this year's Palm Sunday collection to keep financial resources in the parishes. We ask the faithful to continue to support their parishes even though we are not worshipping together in church building. We plan on sharing a preliminary plan for the celebration of Holy Week and Pascha with the clergy tomorrow, which will be subject to change depending on the latest developments in this rapidly changing situation.

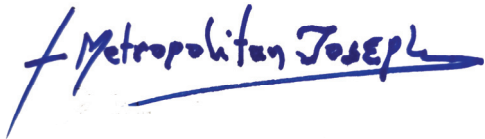
“The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch” (Acts 11: 26)

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In one of our recent communications, we discussed the inspiration we can take from the life of St. Mary of Egypt and the monks of the Sinai desert. We send this letter to you after reading of her blessed life last night during Compline. Once again, I ask you to commit to a time of fervent prayer and sincere repentance. We need to strengthen our entreaties to the Lord to dispel all wrath stirred up against us and deliver us from this pandemic. Let us continue to raise up our prayers for the nurses and doctors, the sick and suffering, the civil authorities and first responders, the reposed and grieving. We, your hierarchs, who will continue meeting weekly during these trying times, also ask your holy prayers that our deliberations will be guided by the inspiration of the All-Holy Spirit. Please be assured of our heartfelt and unceasing prayers for all of you, our dear spiritual children.

Asking the prayers of our holy Mother Mary and Father Zosimas that our Lord will strengthen us in hope and love, faith and courage, I remain,

Your Father in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Metropolitan Joseph". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

+JOSEPH

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