



A SUMMONS TO PRAYER FROM BISHOP IRINEJ

Holy Week, 2020

Most beloved Clergy, Monastics and Faithful of our cherished Eastern American Diocesan Family,

As we have now entered into Holy Week and are preparing for the Great Feast of Pascha, I have decided to write an open, personal letter to all, given that I have been deprived of the pleasure of seeing you during this past Great Lent. Indeed, I have missed, very much, serving in our churches with our clergy and faithful, and beholding your warm faces and beautiful smiles. The radiance of your souls.

From the onset of this trying epoch in which COVID-19 has changed everything, as your Diocesan Bishop and Archpastor, I have been endeavoring to fulfill my role as a true father to you, my entrusted clergy, monastics and faithful of the Diocese of Eastern America. Guiding the ship of our local Church through the tempest of this unprecedented pandemic, has been quite challenging.

Personal and regular contact has been maintained with my Deputy and my Deans, as well as other clergy, who have contacted me individually for specific instructions regarding exceptions to their now ministry. Therefore, my appreciation is offered to my devoted clergy, for the inspiring and creative ways in which they have remained in constant contact with their entrusted flock and the wider community. Many of these measures are, as we know, only to be implemented under these present circumstances. However, as we have collectively learned so very much from our experience, there is so much that can be garnered from this challenge.

Personally, in attempting to fully comply with all necessary preventative measures, beginning with the Sunday of the Cross, I have been celebrating the liturgical services of our Church at the Episcopal Residence, assisted by our talented and capable Diocesan Staff. Given that work on our future Episcopal Chapel has yet to be undertaken, a provisional chapel has been set up in the Residence. Here, I am able to liturgically commemorate all of those given to my charge, and so many others that have requested to be remembered.

In fact, during this period, many persons have contacted me and asked me to pray for those among us who have been affected by the Coronavirus, for those whom we have lost to the virus and for those who mourn their loss, as well as many others in need of prayer and comfort. I consider it my duty and privilege to offer up their names during the Service of Preparation – *Proskomedie*, and at the Great Entrance. All such names are mentioned individually.

Therefore, I now call upon all who so desire to send in the names of those whom they would like to have commemorated liturgically, whether among the living or departed. Only the first names, i.e. Baptismal names, are necessary. If you so inclined, kindly send in the names of your loved ones through our dedicated email address at: remembrance@easterndioocese.org.

As I remember you and commit myself to your holy prayers, let us rejoice together in the Resurrection, even though our fasting from being with one other, i.e. self-isolation, will need to continue until the Risen Lord ordains otherwise. Until such time, my dearly beloved, please be safe, and may good health and joy always be yours through Jesus Christ our Lord.

A blessed Pascha to one and all!

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With Archpastoral blessings and paternal love,

Bishop of Eastern America
The Serbian Orthodox Church