



# GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF SAN FRANCISCO

## ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΦΡΑΓΚΙΣΚΟΥ

March 17, 2020

✠Alexis the Man of God

Beloved in the Lord,

*“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.  
Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart,  
and you will find rest for your souls.”  
Matthew 11:28-29*

With every passing moment the information we are receiving regarding the COVID-19 pandemic continues to change because of the volatility of this situation. Health officials, both locally and worldwide, are working diligently to curtail the spread of this virus. **Just yesterday, seven counties in the greater San Francisco area have been ordered to “shelter in place” until April 7, 2020, with no non-essential services being permitted, so as to slow the spreading of this disease.** This restriction currently affects ten parishes located in San Francisco, Belmont, Novato, San Jose, Oakland, Castro Valley, Concord and Santa Cruz. We anticipate that similar orders may be issued in other regions as the spread of the Coronavirus continues, and **expect that parishes will abide** by the guidelines of the authorities.

The pervasiveness of COVID-19 into every corner of our Metropolis makes it nearly impossible to monitor city by city and county by county the guidelines and protocols for each area. According to the recent guidelines issued by the White House and Centers for Disease Control (CDC), gatherings of more than 10 people are not permitted. For this reason, I am directing all parishes in the Metropolis of San Francisco to observe the following until further notice:

1. All parishes must adhere to the guidelines mandated by local, state and federal authorities.
2. For all services, including the Divine Liturgy, clergy may conduct services with one chanter, and one or two necessary assistants. The participation of the faithful should be in accordance with the parameters set forth by the authorities, or by encouraging them to participate through the various online resources which are attached.
3. Funerals are to be conducted with immediate family only.
4. Unless the situation is urgent, baptisms should be rescheduled.
5. Clergy will make themselves available to minister to the individual needs of their faithful.
6. Monastic communities are to be closed to all visitors.

During the difficult time of this pandemic, these words from the Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil are especially appropriate, **“Remember, Lord, the people here present and those who are absent with good cause. Have mercy on them and on us according to the multitude of Your mercy.”**

To say these are challenging times is an understatement. However, we must remain strong in our faith, and use this time when other worldly distractions are removed from our attention to instead focus on prayer, reading the Holy Scriptures, fasting, and truly prepare to receive the Crucified and Resurrected Christ into our lives on the Great Feast of Pascha!

With Love in Christ,

  
✠Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco