



EPARCHY OF NEWTON
MELKITE GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

18 March 2020

Dear Clergy and Laity of the Eparchy of Newton

Christ is among us! He is and always will be!

This greeting at the Kiss of Peace in the Divine Liturgy affirms our strong belief that the Lord is with us always and everywhere; and yes, even during the Coronavirus pandemic. He remains with us, and we are urged to cooperate with our civil officials and the precautionary restrictions they are placing on us during this crisis. We offer our prayers for those who are affected with the virus: may Jesus Christ, the Healer of Soul and Body remain with them and bring them to full recovery. We pray also for those who have died, asking the Lord God to welcome them into the heavenly mansions and number them among the saints.

Since we are a national eparchy, we must be aware of the local restrictions of our government and also of the Roman dioceses in which our churches are located. There are challenges for us, and we need to remain calm and strong in faith and action. After the Boston Marathon bombing several years ago a new slogan appeared here: Boston Strong! So we now add to it Newton (USA) Strong!

Please observe the following guidelines:

1. Take all precautionary measures according to the directives issued by medical and local authorities.
2. All Faithful of the Eparchy are dispensed from the obligation of attending Sunday and Holy Day Divine Liturgies.
3. All Melkite churches must follow the restrictions of the local government and Latin dioceses in which they are located, i.e. if the local Latin diocese has cancelled Mass, then cancel Liturgy, at least until then end of March.

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4. Public Lenten Services and parish dinners are suspended.

5. Funerals should be served only with the immediate family members of the deceased. A date can be chosen later for a public memorial service when the pandemic subsides.
6. Each parish may celebrate a Sunday Divine Liturgy with two or three present and *live stream* it to the parish members. Or, tune into several other Melkite churches who are presently *live streaming*. Father Hezekias will send out links to our churches that are *live streaming* the Divine Liturgy.
7. Lenten week day services (Presanctified, etc.) may also be celebrated in the church with two or three and *live streamed*.
8. Parishioners should be sent via email a copy of the Typica Service (it is in the Horologion), and families should be encouraged to pray it at home daily and at least on Sunday.
9. Churches may be open at designated times after the *live streamed* Liturgy for those who wish to receive the Eucharist.

These guidelines remain in effect until the end of March. At that time, we will assess what the government officials and other dioceses recommend.

Please, each and every one, be safe. Follow the necessary precautions and remain strong in prayer. With my best wishes and prayers, I remain.

Sincerely yours in Christ God,

The Most Reverend Nicholas J. Samra
Bishop of Newton