



COPTIC ORTHODOX PATRIARCHATE
CHURCHES OF CHICAGO AND AFFILIATED MIDWEST REGIONS

Πατριάρχης ἡρεμῆχμῃ ἰορθοδοξοῦ
Ἡεκκλήσιᾶ ἡτε Ἐικᾶσο νεμ Ἡεωψ ἡεμη† εμεντ ετε ἡπκω†

Tuesday, March 17th, 2020

To our Beloved in Christ in the Region of Chicago and the Affiliated Midwest Regions:

During these unprecedented times of the widespread threat of getting or carrying the COVID-19 virus, the Churches of Chicago and Affiliated Midwest Regions have decided for everyone's safety to **limit the attendees of the liturgical services to ten (10) people**. This strict requirement *will be reviewed weekly*, so please look for updates. This restriction should be adhered to for all gatherings, including family gatherings in the homes.

This is consistent with the decisions made by several other dioceses in North America. This was a very difficult decision to make as we are well aware of the need to have church and Holy Communion as part of our lives during these times. However, as good citizens we acknowledge our responsibility to the wider community to limit the spread of the virus. Thus, for everyone's safety and to comply with the recommendations and directives from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the White House, this step had to be taken. We are commanded in scripture of the following:

“Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore, whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.” (Rom. 13:1-2)

To implement the ten (10) person maximum attendance at liturgical services, each parish will have sign-up sheets based on a first come first serve basis, but please be considerate to allow others a chance to attend (Rom. 12:10). Some individuals are more at risk (based on CDC guidance) than others. So for your and everyone's safety, below is a list of criteria for those who are able to sign up to attend a liturgical service:

- Individuals between 20 (high risk carriers) - 60 years old, see reference point #4 below.
- No flu symptoms and no exposure to persons known to be infected
- No heart diseases.
- No lung diseases such as asthma.
- No endocrine disorders such as diabetes.
- Not currently or recently pregnant in the last two weeks.
- No blood disorders such as sickle cell anemia or taking blood thinners.
- No chronic kidney disease.
- No chronic liver disease.
- No neurological or neurodevelopmental conditions.
- Do not have a compromised immune system or on immunosuppressant drugs.



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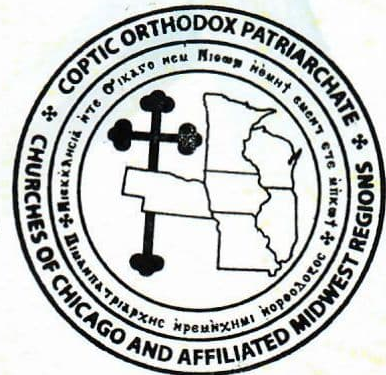
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Church is not stopping, but moving into your own homes. Please follow the services by live-streaming and set up a church atmosphere in your own home. We encourage you to follow the daily readings, pray the Book of Hours (Agpeya), have family bible studies, prostrations, read spiritual books, sing hymns and please serve one another by following up and asking about one another. In addition, each parish is looking into ways to utilize technology to bring the Word of God to each home.

Thank you for your cooperation and understanding in this matter. We pray that despite this situation, this holy season of Lent would be a blessed one for you all. May our Lord allow this situation to pass in peace.

“Remember O Lord the salvation of this holy place that is Yours.... And save us all from famine, plague, earthquake, drowning...deal with us according to Your goodness... fill our hearts with joy and gladness so that we too having sufficiency in everything always, may abound in every good deed” (From the Litanies of the Raising of Incense)

Fr. Samuel T. Samuel
Vicar of the Churches of Chicago and Affiliated Midwest Regions



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Government References:

1. The White House has issued recommendations to avoid gatherings which are above **10 people**. (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/coronavirus-guidelines-america/>)
2. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has issued guidelines to **cancel events of 250+ people**, and “during the next 15 days, all U.S. **events of 10+ people should be cancelled** or held virtually.” (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/large-events/>)
3. Several state governments have issued executive orders limiting public gatherings, such as Governor Pritzker of Illinois (where most of our parishes and members of the community are located) who has issued an Executive Order to **ban all gatherings exceeding 50 people** (including faith-based events). (<https://www2.illinois.gov/government/executive-orders>)
4. High risk individuals (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html>; <https://www.prevention.com/health/a31245792/coronavirus-high-risk-groups: Carriers>)