

His Eminence
The Most Reverend
Metropolitan JOSEPH



Archbishop of New York and
Metropolitan of
All North America

**ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE
OF NORTH AMERICA**

“The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever.” Is 40:8

July 14, 2020

Beloved Clergy,

Greetings and blessings to you and your families in the Name of our Great God and Savior, Jesus Christ!

We received word of the truly regrettable decision by the governor of California to close churches in the wake of the surge of coronavirus cases. From day one, we took measures in cooperation with our civil authorities to reduce the size of our gatherings and follow all recommendations from the local health departments, but this recent move to close our churches looks to be more motivated by politics than by science and is an unacceptable encroachment on our right to freely exercise our faith.

After much prayer and deliberation, I will reiterate our current policy as highlighted in our recent communications:

- ❖ All parishes in California may continue to fill up to 25% of the seating capacity of the nave. Parishes may also have members of the faithful participate outside and enter the church to receive Communion.
- ❖ If the priest and parish council see that the community spread in their locality requires them to reassess the situation and adjust the numbers downward, you have the blessing to make that determination. No parish, however, has my blessing to close completely.
- ❖ We will continue the practice of having two chanters standing opposite one another on the solea.

In light of the new directives from the governor, parishes should consider these additional options:

- ❖ If your local county attempts to close your parish, the Divine Liturgy and other services *are to be celebrated outdoors*. We will not give in to efforts to deprive our

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faithful of the sacraments. St. John of San Francisco in like manner served outdoors when his church in Shanghai was closed by the authorities.

- ❖ Parishes in counties affected by this order should NOT livestream the services – only livestreaming of the audio is permitted.
- ❖ If your county remains unaffected by the new order from the governor, you should only livestream *during the service* – do NOT leave archived videos on Facebook or YouTube.

We will continue to prayerfully monitor the situation. I ask that we proceed with steadfastness and courage, wisdom and discernment in these difficult times.

With fervent prayers and love in Christ, 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

Archbishop of New York and Metropolitan of all North America

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

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