



Bulgarian Diocese of Toledo **Orthodox Church in America**

519 Brynhaven Drive Oregon, OH 43616

ARCHBISHOP ALEXANDER
Diocesan Prelate

Office: (419) 693-9540
Fax: (419) 693-9541
Mobile: (419) 690-9979
email: alexander@bdoca.org

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Martyr Sabinus of Egypt

To the clergy and faithful of our God-protected Diocese:

Our divine services, chief among them the Holy Liturgy, are an offering made to God "on behalf of all and for all." During this global health crisis, we must continue to pray and, as long as possible, to gather for prayer in church and to offer to God his "due worship and praise" (Prayer of the Trisagion). "It is proper and right" (Eucharistic prayer of St. John Chrysostom). As a result, I am not yet prepared to cancel church services in our parishes.

However, in light of new information and recommendations released by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) today, some revisions to my initial directives are necessary. I bless the celebration of Vespers on Saturday evenings, the Divine Liturgy on Sunday mornings, the Lenten Presanctified Liturgies, and the Vespertal Liturgy of the Annunciation under the following condition: the only people that are required to be present are the priest (and deacon), an altar server, and chanter or small group of singers. As far as one can plan attendance, the complete gathering should total no more than ten (10) people.

Yet, anyone else who comes to services cannot and will not be turned away at the door. They along with the singers and the servers are to be advised of the risk. However, I advise that everyone other than the people mentioned above pray at home during the time of the divine services.

These revised guidelines are in effect up to, and including, Palm Sunday, April 12, 2020.

I do not make this decision lightly. However, we must do what is necessary to slow the spread of COVID-19.

With love in Christ,

+Alexander

Archbishop of Toledo and the Bulgarian Diocese – Orthodox Church in America