

# ARCHDIOCESE OF PITTSBURGH AND WESTERN PA

## ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA

### Hierarchical Instructions: Holy Week/Pascha 2020

From: His Eminence, Archbishop MELCHISEDEK

3 April 2020

Protocol: 20-4-3-1

Mindful of the [directives](#) given by the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America on Wednesday, 1 April 2020, parishes, missions, and chapels of the Archdiocese of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania -- when serving the Divine Services for Holy Week and Pascha -- are to only serve with the essential members needed to make the service function well and yet be as beautiful as possible. This is defined as the priest, deacon (if the parish has one, but no more than two, if multiple deacons), (2) altar servers maximum (if necessary), the choir director/cantor, and a minimum number of choir members (if necessary). The total number of people in the church for the service is not to exceed ten (10) people at any time, provided the local authorities do not require a lower number. This assumes that every person present is compliant with the required health regulations in effect for that locality. Parishes are directed to post a notice on their door stating that people coming into the church come in at their own risk, and the parish is not liable for anyone entering in and becoming infected with SARS-CoV-2, or passing it onto anyone else.

It is recommended that any of the parishes who are holding services should live-stream these services (or record for later showing), and should direct their parishioners to these live-streams/recordings in order for them to maintain their connection to their parish.

## **Section 1: Schedule of Services**

Parishes, missions, and chapels of the Archdiocese may serve the following Divine Services, with a limited number of people as outlined above:

- Festal Divine Liturgy of Palm Sunday.
- The Matins of Holy Friday with the 12 Passion Gospels (on Thursday Evening).
- **EITHER** the Holy Friday Vespers (Burial) **OR** the Matins of Holy Saturday (on

Friday Evening).

- **EITHER** Holy Thursday Divine Liturgy **OR** Holy Saturday Divine Liturgy.
- Paschal Nocturnes / Paschal Matins
- Paschal Hours / Paschal Divine Liturgy (at the regular service time(s))

NOTE: No parish, mission, or chapel is obliged to serve all of the services outlined here, especially considering the energy required for the small number of people involved. It is expected that parish clergy will use their discretion in determining which services would be of the most benefit to the community, especially when services will be live-streamed or recorded.

## **Section 2: Procedures for Liturgical Worship and the reception of Holy Communion.**

**For Palm Sunday, rectors, at their discretion, are directed to:**

1. Bless palms and willows privately on Lazarus Saturday
2. Schedule a 2 - 3 hour prayer time for people to come and pray privately on Lazarus Saturday (as many parishes have been doing for the past two Saturdays).
  1. At this time, the faithful will be handed their palms or willows by one designated greeter, whose hands were sanitized prior to the distribution (or will be wearing gloves).
  2. For those faithful who do not wish to enter the church building, a designated and properly sanitized greeter (or wearing gloves) may be assigned to distribute palms/willows at an appropriate spot external to the church interior.
  3. On Palm Sunday, the Festal Divine Liturgy may be celebrated with a limited number of people, as outlined above.

**For Holy Pascha, rectors, at their discretion, are directed to:**

1. Schedule a 2 - 3 hour prayer time for people to come and pray privately on Holy Saturday. The priest may also, at his discretion, at this time bless baskets in a manner he deems fit, which allows no more than the maximum number of people in the church at any one time. (If possible and so desired, the rector may find it useful to do this externally outside of the church itself while congregating as few people

simultaneously as possible.)

2. Hold Paschal Hours and Divine Liturgy in the morning at a regular Sunday Liturgy time. This service should be live streamed or recorded if possible.
3. It is suggested that each communicant would come forward and would receive the Eucharist in **either of the following ways:**

**A.** New metal spoons (one for each person) will be sterilized, blessed, and placed in a clean basket/container covered in a communion cloth before use. The priest will take one of the spoons from the basket - that spoon is used to commune that person. The spoon is then placed in the used basket. (Care must be taken not to place it back in the chalice.) These spoons would be cleaned with spirits after the Divine Liturgy and the spirits burned or buried. The spoons would be bundled, wrapped, and set aside only to be used during pandemics or times of similar crisis.

**B.** Appropriate wooden or bamboo spoons would be procured, blessed, and placed in a clean basket/container. The priest will take one of the spoons from the basket - that spoon is used to commune the person. The spoon is then placed in the used basket. (Care must be taken not to place it back in the chalice.) These spoons would be destroyed by fire after the Divine Liturgy, and the ashes buried in a suitable place.

4. After Communion, the communicants would receive the zapivka (wine in a small paper or plastic cup / Prospora in a cup or individual bag), or, perhaps better, the parish may choose to dispense with the practice at this time.
5. The priest may then, at his discretion, bless the Paschal baskets for those present.

IMPORTANT! It should be noted by the clergy and laity alike that the measures outlined here about the method of administering Holy Communion are not to be understood as a declaration about the possibility of the Body and Blood of Christ spreading disease. The Holy Mysteries are life-giving, and are “for the healing of soul and body.” The reason for such measures is two-fold:

1. To avoid unwanted attention from those outside the church who do not understand

our sacramental theology and to not give them cause to accuse us of failing to abide by governmental and medical recommendations about sanitary measures.

2. To ease the conscience of those in the church who might be caused to stumble in their faith by receiving Communion from a common spoon during a time of great temptation in this pandemic.

### **Section 3: The Leavetaking (Apodosis) of Pascha**

As is prescribed by the Typikon, the Leavetaking of the Great Feast of Pascha is celebrated just as on the day of Pascha itself. While this date is usually on a Wednesday, due to the nature of our present-day emergency situation, parishes are to move their celebration of the Leavetaking to the Sunday before (the Sunday of the Blind Man), 24 May 2020. Parishes are permitted to celebrate the services in the full manner they normally would for Pascha. **(NOTE: if you normally celebrate the Midnight Paschal Liturgy, you may do so on this date).**

This is, in fact, a wonderful opportunity to celebrate this Leavetaking in a manner that is normally very appropriate, but is not commonly done in our busy modern lives. This one-time “dispensation” is given to allow the Church to abide by the current health directives and yet raise the possibility of a full and joyous Paschal celebration later in 2020 during this festive Paschal period.

\*\*\*\*\*

Finally, clearly, these directives are “not perfect” since no perfect solution exists under the current conditions we find ourselves laboring under as believers. May the Lord, never-the-less, bless our unworthy efforts to glorify His Name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit with love and devotion!

/ Signed /

MELCHISEDEK  
Archbishop of Pittsburgh and Western PA  
Orthodox Church in America