Metropolitan Tikhon, Primate

April, 25, 2020
Bright Saturday

To the Clergy and Faithful of the Albanian Archdiocese,

Christ is risen!

I greet all of you on this final day of Bright Week and our celebration of the single and eternal Day of Resurrection! It is my hope that all of us have been illumined by the Pascha of the Lord which has brought us from death to life and that we will continue to rejoice throughout the season of the Pentecostarion.

This has been a most unusual Holy Week and Pascha for all of us in the Church, even as our entire society learns to survive in these most extraordinary circumstances. I am grateful for the patience and longsuffering that all of you have exhibited in accepting both the directives that have been placed upon us by the civil authorities and those which the Holy Synod and I have asked you to voluntarily accept. I know that it has not been easy for the clergy to have their sacred ministries limited in such a way and for the faithful to be deprived of the possibility of attending the divine services and receiving the holy mysteries.

At the same time, I have been very moved and amazed at the degree of creative and healhty ways that both clergy and laity have responded to this crisis and the difficulties it has brought about. Truly our Church and our Archdiocese are blessed with tremendous talent and maturity which has enabled us to weather both the practical and spiritual challenges that have come upon us. Thank you all for your efforts, your ingenuity, and your Christian attitude throughout this current pandemic.

As you know, I had the blessing of being able to serve most of the services during Holy Week and Bright Week at the Monastery of Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk, which has remained a closed community, sealed off from all contact with the outside world. At the same time, I was always mindful of the reality of all my clergy and faithful who were in more trying circumstances. As I said in my remarks at the conclusion of the services, I truly miss being in the company of all of you and was continually reminded of your absence as I served in a mostly empty temple. Nevertheless, I lifted all of you up by name at the proskomedia table before the liturgies that I have celebrated, and I will continue to do so. I will gratefully

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receive any futher names of the living and the departed that you would like to forward to me through your parish priest.

The season of Great Lent was a season of self-denial and repentance which was made more real by our forced isolation and separation from our Church communities. Now, the present season of the resurrection presents us with an opportunity to taste of the freedom and joy that Christ offers to us, even as our society looks to slowly re-open and journey cautiously towards normalcy. In the Church, this journey must also be slow and cautious as we place our love and care for our neighbor as our uppermost value during this time. Nevertheless, it seems clear to me that, in conjunction with our paschal celebration, we have an opening to consider ways to open up our churches and communities, at least to some degree.

This will require a deliberative and collaborative process on the part of all of us. At the end of next week, the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America will be meeting two times to begin to consider the manner and degree in which we might begin to re-open the churches. I ask for your patience in this, but I also ask for your collaboration. Prior to the meeting of the Holy Synod, I will be consulting, at the beginning of next week, with various professionals and experts and also meeting with the clergy of the Archdiocese. As new directives are prepared, I will also be scheduling, the following week, a meeting with the rectors and parish leadership in order to explain and answer questions about the new directives. Please be watching for more information about this.

In the meantime, I greet all of you with the joy of Holy Pascha and pray that our Lord will pierce whatever darkness or gloom may surround you by the light of His most amazing resurrection from the dead.

Sincerely yours in the risen Christ,

+TIKHON
Archbishop of Washington
Metropolitan of All America and Canada
Locum Tenens of the Albanian Archdiocese