



March 6, 2021
03/007

To the Clergy of the Stavropegial Institutions, the Archdiocese of Washington, the Albanian Archdiocese, and the Diocese of New England:

Christ is in our midst!

As we enter the liturgical period of the Lenten Triodion, I offer a few words of encouragement and guidance as we approach the Great Fast. The past year has been difficult for all of us but I note with great satisfaction that the leadership of the communities and institutions under my omophorion have manifested a most excellent degree of patience, cooperation, and initiative from the beginning of the pandemic to this day. I am grateful to God that, even faced with a multitude of directives provided by your hierarch, by the Holy Synod, and by the civil authorities, you have navigated the public health challenges in your local area with dignity and with care for every member of our communities.

This is worthy of commendation and I thank you for your efforts which, I am confident, have kept our communities safe and have contributed to the decrease in the rate of incidence of COVID-19 in many places. The wider availability of a vaccine also offers the hope that we might be able to offer more services and to gather in greater numbers as we move forward. Although the Synodal Directives of May 1, 2020 remain in place, I encourage our communities to use the upcoming Lenten season to continue the gradual increase in liturgical life that is provided in those guidelines by offering more opportunities for our faithful to gather for divine services.

The attached Guidelines are offered for your assistance and are specific to the Lenten. I only ask you to maintain the level of care and caution you have exercised up to now and to continue to consult those so appointed (His Grace, Bishop Alexis for the Stavropegial Institutions and the Diocesan Chancellors/Deans for the dioceses) when unusual or unclear situations arise. Because of the potential for further positive developments, separate guidelines for Holy Week and Pascha will be issued at a later time.

As we enter the final week before Great Lent, I entreat your forgiveness for any offenses I have caused you and ask our Lord Jesus Christ to bless and forgive us all.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Tikhon", with a cross symbol to the left.

+TIKHON
Archbishop of Washington
Metropolitan of All America and Canada

**Guidelines for the Parish Communities, Monasteries, and Seminaries
for Liturgical Celebrations and Related Activities
During Great Lent 2021**

Approved by Metropolitan Tikhon for use in the Archdiocese of Washington, the Albanian Archdiocese, the Diocese of New England, and the Stavropegial Institutions

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- **Forgiveness Vespers** should be served as usual, while observing all current safety protocols, but without the direct personal exchange of the kiss of peace. One permitted option is for the priest to ask forgiveness of the congregation from the ambo and for the faithful to respond from their places. Care should also be given to allowing those who are unable to attend in person to participate in some manner.
- **Maslenitsa/blini and coffee hours:** Because of Covid concerns, ‘blini breakfasts’ should not be offered in connection with the start of Great Lent. Current restrictions on coffee hour should be maintained and any allowance for these will require a blessing from the bishop.
- **Sunday of Orthodoxy Vespers** should be served in each parish separately, either directly after the Divine Liturgy or on Sunday evening, while observing all current safety protocols. The hosting of, or participation in, a multi-parish celebration requires the blessing of the hierarchy.
- **The Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts** should be served as usual, while observing all current safety protocols. The hosting of or participation in a multi-parish celebration requires the blessing of the hierarchy.
- **Deanery Sunday Lenten Mission Vespers** should not yet be scheduled this year. Sunday Lenten Vespers may be served in individual parishes, while observing all current safety protocols.
- **Processions**, such as those for the Sunday of Orthodoxy, may be done either outside or inside the church, at the parish priest’s discretion. In compliance with current Guidelines, members of households may walk together; otherwise, social distancing must be kept during processions.
- **The Service of Holy Unction** may be served, while observing all current safety protocols. Anointing should be done with the priest wearing a mask and using a separate cotton swab for each person being anointed. Used cotton swabs are to be burned. The hosting of, or participation in, a multi-parish celebration requires the blessing of the hierarchy.

Any questions or variations with respect to the above Guidelines or other Directives should be directed to the Dean or Chancellor for episcopal direction.