



## *Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America*

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*Metropolitan Tikhon  
Locum Tenens of Boston, New England  
and the Albanian Archdiocese*

*Igumen Nikodhim  
Interim Chancellor*

April 14, 2021

To the Clergy of the Albanian Archdiocese,

Christ is in our midst!

As I previously indicated, I am issuing the following general directives for our parishes and institutions as we approach Holy Week and Pascha.

Over the past year, all of you have been working very diligently with your parish leadership in navigating the various synodal, diocesan, and civil guidelines. I am grateful for your careful attention to the many complexities of this process and I am confident that you will maintain this vigilance as we enter Holy Week and the Paschal season. Please continue to monitor the local civil directives as you have and observe the following basic safety measures in church:

1. Maintain 6 foot distancing between individuals or family groups;
2. Maintain the wearing of masks; clergy may choose to not wear a mask in the altar but should wear one if there is an increased number of servers;
3. If anyone is sick or presenting symptoms, they must stay home.

As you know, my directives last year were particularly restrictive and most of you did not have in-person services for Holy Week and Pascha. Our year-long experience of navigating the pandemic, your faithful application of safety measures during that time, and the increasing availability of vaccines have brought us to a point where it is possible for us to anticipate a more traditional cycle of services for Holy Week and Pascha. While maintaining the above vigilance, I encourage you to have as full a Holy Week and Bright Week schedule of in-person divine services as your local situation allows and to provide as many opportunities for the faithful to participate.

The following are general recommendations with respect to some specific elements of Holy Week and Paschal services. These are not intended to be comprehensive but should provide all of you with a sense of how to plan your Holy Week and Pascha schedules. I intentionally left them flexible with the understanding that you will continue to work with your parish leadership to apply them in your respective circumstances:

- Mask use is mandatory for all in attendance at each service with only these exceptions: those clergy who are serving, the cantors intoning responses, and children under two years old. Notices to this effect must be posted in both English and Albanian at the entrance of every Church. Each parish is strongly advised to secure ushers for Palm Sunday, Holy Friday, and Pashka who will not be timid in enforcing this inside the Church.
- Mask use, although encouraged, cannot be enforced outside the walls of the Church. For those communities that regularly have large numbers of people out of doors, please consider having opportunities for them to light candles and make contributions while remaining outside, thus minimizing the milling crowd at the threshold.
- Hand sanitizer and masks sized to fit both adults and children should be available at the entrance of the Church. Given the higher number of people anticipated to be in attendance, please plan for this.
- All parishes are directed to serve the Holy Unction service on Wednesday of Holy Week. Although cotton swabs must be used for each individual this year, these are to be burned and not to be distributed

to the faithful. Those clergy who are so inclined may permit individuals to take with them swabs of some other holy oil but not Holy Unction, which is a sacrament of the Church. Clergy should set aside some portion of the Holy Unction in an appropriate vessel, that they may later anoint those unable to attend.

- Palms on the Sunday of the Triumphal Entry and flowers following the Lamentations service may be distributed to the faithful by the priest. If the number of attendees necessitates distribution by more than the clergy, those handing them out are to wear gloves. Similarly, unless Paschal eggs are customarily distributed by the priest, those who distribute these are to wear gloves.
- Collection baskets may be passed at their customary times provided those engaged in this are masked and wearing gloves.
- Pascha baskets and other celebratory foods may be blessed by the priest at the close of the Paschal Liturgy; however, every precaution must be exercised in those parishes wishing to practice the agape meal. If it is the custom of the community to share a meal on Pashka, this must take place outside or in an area where adequate spacing and ventilation can be assured.
- Every effort should continue to be made to include online opportunities for the faithful to engage in worship if they are not yet able to return to Church.
- While each priest is joyfully encouraged to serve a full complement of services, he must be judicious and discreet in both meeting the needs of the community by scheduling opportunities for all to worship while also assessing carefully the feasibility of doing so. Reasonable cleansing of the Church and its surfaces between services is still advised by the Centers for Disease Control, and the individual protocols for the reopening of each parish are still in effect. Pastors should not fear pressure either from their peers or their people for those necessary adjustments to this year's liturgical offerings provided such choices are made in the interest of safety and public health

If you have more specific questions or if there is an area of ambiguity in your context, please contact the Chancellor for guidance.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a cross symbol followed by a stylized, cursive name that appears to be 'TIKHON'.

+TIKHON  
Archbishop of Washington  
Metropolitan of All America and Canada

cc: Igumen Nikodhim Preston, Interim Chancellor  
Fr. Alexander Rentel, Orthodox Church in America Chancellor