

**Important service schedule changes because of the corona virus pestilence.**

**St Nicholas Orthodox Church, McKinney, TX**

**March 4/17, 2020**

Dear Faithful in Christ,

We are blessed to have an excellent bishop. Archbishop Peter has written a letter effective today (March 4/17, 2020) that is a masterpiece of pastoral discretion, and is linked at the end of this letter. There are two major “take homes” from his excellent letter. The first is that we are obliged to obey the instructions of the civil authorities as they work to stem the tide of the current pandemic. The second is that we must continue to serve the Divine Services which nourish us spiritually and are as necessary as secular solutions for bringing this pestilence to an end.

The mayor of McKinney has officially limited gatherings of people to no more than 10 persons, in a proclamation dated today (March 4/17, 2020), which is also linked at the end of this letter. In obedience to this directive and to those of our Archbishop, we will continue to serve the divine services and pray for God's help and mercy for all of the faithful, but these services will not be open to the public while the restrictions are in place. We urge all of our faithful to obey with a cheerful heart. Nothing good comes from disobedience!

During this time, although most of us will need to stay away from the church gatherings, we should not stop praying! In fact, if you have more time at home than usual, it is an excellent opportunity to pray more to God that He forgive us our sins and grant us His mercy now and in the life to come. On Sunday mornings, we would ask everybody to say the Typica service. In addition, the canons and akathists in your prayer book are a wonderful help in times of trouble, and we encourage you to use them more frequently. We will send more information and other resources for prayer at home in a subsequent message.

In order to accommodate those of our parishioners who wish to commune of the Holy and Life-Creating Mysteries during this time, we have created a form in which you may state your availability and desire to go to services, whether on Sunday or on any day during the week. If there are enough people who are zealous to come and worship and to receive the Holy Mysteries, then we will try to add more Presanctified Liturgies during the course of the week, so that in groups of 10 people many will be able to receive, perhaps as often as once a week.

To make this happen, you need to enter your information on this form: (<https://forms.gle/2JbPDstxa8MVoTzA7>). You may also call Fr. Nicholas or Fr. Seraphim for clarification on anything. In subsequent communication from us, we will share with you when we are going to conduct the services and who will be allowed to attend them. Please do not come to the church if you do not receive an invitation.

Please read Archbishop Peter's letter in its entirety. Relevant excerpts of it that we especially want you to know about and benefit from are below.

From Archbishop Peter's instructional letter:

"Rectors shall implement and enforce the guidelines given by both local authorities and the Diocese. Rectors may enforce stricter measures as they see fit. Rectors may not relax or fail to implement standards set by either local governments or the Diocese. Effective immediately, all Rectors shall institute the following rules, above and beyond those already published:

1. Divine Services shall continue to the ability of each parish and monastery. Services may be limited by the availability of clergy, chanters, and limits imposed by the temporal authorities"

....

"We are now at a time that, in our generation, is frankly unprecedented. In many ways our historical place in the Church will be defined by how we react to the present pandemic. More importantly, our final answer will be given to the Lord at the Last Judgment. We should keep this in mind as we make the crucial decisions we will be forced to make in the near future. It should be clear from the above guidelines that there are two crucial pieces to your decision-making process: Divine Services should continue if at all possible, and we should err on the side of the health of our faithful and our nation when making decisions regarding public attendance at the Divine Services. Let us ask the Lord for wisdom! Let us ask His help to avoid hubris, panic, and conspiracy theories! Let us be an example of love and trust in the Lord so that we lead our faithful to love and trust in the Lord, and that we will lead them to the Heavenly Kingdom! I ask your prayers for me in these challenging times, and I assure you of my prayers and blessing for you and your parishioners.

With Love in our Lord Jesus Christ, Peter, Archbishop of Chicago & Mid-America"

Brothers and sisters, it is easy to succumb to worry and panic, and to lose hope in the face of these present trials. But as Vladyka writes, let us continue to love and trust in the Lord. May God bless you and help you in all things.

With love In Christ,

Priest Seraphim & Priest Nicholas,

St Nicholas Orthodox Church, McKinney, Texas

**Links and Information:**

Google Form: <https://forms.gle/2JbPDstxa8MVoTzA7>

This File: [http://www.orthodox.net/articles/pastoral-letter-corona-virus-04\\_2020-03-17.pdf](http://www.orthodox.net/articles/pastoral-letter-corona-virus-04_2020-03-17.pdf)

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- EMAIL List: <http://groups.google.com/group/saint-nicholas-orthodox-church>
  
- [Coronavirus Instructional Letter by Archbishop Peter \(March 4/17,2020\)](https://chicagodiocese.org/news_200317_1)  
[https://chicagodiocese.org/news\\_200317\\_1](https://chicagodiocese.org/news_200317_1)
- [Second Revised Mayoral Declaration Of Local State Of Disaster Due To Public Health Emergency](https://www.mckinneytexas.org/DocumentCenter/View/22842/Mayor-Declaration-Update-3-17-20-signed)  
<https://www.mckinneytexas.org/DocumentCenter/View/22842/Mayor-Declaration-Update-3-17-20-signed>