



March 16, 2020

Beloved members of the Diocese of Ohio, Michigan and Indiana:

As responsible members of our communities, concerned for the public health of ourselves, neighbors and the world - we are continuing to monitor the COVID-19 pandemic and directives from all States and Federal authorities. Through all of this, our faith in the Lord remains strong and unshaken. We pray for you and your families to be both spiritually and physically safe and healthy and that God may pass this difficult time peacefully.

With the support of the reverend clergy, and following the strict restrictions on group gatherings by the CDC and state authorities, in consultation with infectious disease specialists, we have decided to take extraordinary and exceptional and indeed difficult decision to keep you and all of the community as safe as possible.

Effective immediately and until further notice, all liturgical services, including Sunday and weekday Divine Liturgies will be closed to the congregations and public. The church will not stop praying, however, for now, the Divine Liturgies will be limited to the priests and 2 deacons selected by the fathers.

Please stay home and follow the services online. The doors will be locked and **no one** will be permitted to enter. We are pained to say this- but the health of each one of you is very precious and dear to us.

We encourage each family to follow the daily readings and direct the head servants and Sunday School teachers, through the guidance of the fathers of the church, to continue their services remotely using technology to reach all of our children for their benefit at this time.

We will evaluate this and prior decisions on a daily basis with the specialized experts.

Pray for this difficult time to pass, pray for the sick, pray for the medical professionals and pray for each other. We pray for our Diocese, our churches and for all creation. We read in the Book of Exodus 15:26 "If you diligently heed the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. **For I am the Lord who heals you.**"

With respect and love,

+SARAPHIM

Bishop of Ohio, Michigan and Indiana