



## The HOLY SYNOD of the ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA

### **Statement of the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America on the Coronavirus Outbreak March 17, 2020**

The Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America meeting under the presidency of His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon in a Special Session on Monday, March 16, 2020, considered further the response of the Church to the growing spread of the SARS-CoV-2, and the Coronavirus. During this special session, the Holy Synod received expert reports and were able to question professionals in the areas of concern relating to the virus, including medical doctors. After extensive deliberation on this subject, the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America with one accord has decided the following:

1. Each Diocesan Bishop is entrusted with overseeing the spiritual and pastoral care of his Clergy and Faithful and with protecting their wellbeing in whatever measures he determines appropriate. This oversight, in response to the coronavirus, is to be in keeping with the Holy Synod's vigilant response to the present pandemic, the most recent federal, state, and municipal civil directives, and updated medical knowledge obtained from recognized experts. Therefore, Diocesan Bishops may allow for the churches within their dioceses to serve the Divine Services with limited participation on the part of the Faithful, or to designate a limited number of Churches in their dioceses to serve a limited number of services with only a few people present or to be closed altogether for the time being.
2. In light of decisions made by the officials of various government jurisdictions, we sorrowfully acknowledge that, at the direction of the Diocesan Bishop and in keeping with said government directives, parishes, missions, and chapels of the Orthodox Church in America may be required to temporarily cease offering divine services.
3. Monasteries may continue services for the sacred monastic community alone, admitting no visitors until April 1.
4. The Holy Synod will consider these directives again at the end of March.