

DIocese OF NEW ENGLAND – ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA



The Most Blessed TIKHON

*Archbishop of Washington, Metropolitan of All America and Canada
Locum Tenens of The Diocese of New England*

Archpriest John Kreta

Chancellor

April 9, 2021

To the Clergy of the Diocese of New England,

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:

1. While data continues to be evaluated concerning the risks of surface transmission of the virus, please clean high contact areas and surfaces. If you can maintain a reasonable degree of cleaning, you may hold services as frequently as practical.
2. Processions may take place while maintaining appropriate social distancing (families may walk together) either inside or outside the Church.
3. Liturgical items (palms, pussy willows, red eggs, antidoron, artos) may be distributed (pre-wrapped or pre-tied) by someone wearing plastic gloves or by spacing them on a table for individual pick-up. They should be distributed or picked-up at the end of the services rather than during the service.
4. Paschal Agape meals may be organized at your discretion but should only take place if they can be done outdoors or in a large enough space to allow social distancing. Meals should not be shared but each family should bring their own food/baskets.
5. Pascha baskets may be brought to the Church and blessed.
6. The use of ushers or other method of monitoring may be needed for those services that traditionally bring out visitors who may not be regular attendees.
7. Bell ringing is permitted according to the usual parish custom

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 stylized cursive letters that appear to be 'Tikhon'.

+TIKHON
Archbishop of Washington
Metropolitan of All America and Canada

cc: Archpriest John Kreta, Chancellor of the Diocese of New England
Archpriest Alexander Rentel, Chancellor of the Orthodox Church in America
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