



Metropolis of Boston

SAINT ATHANASIUS THE GREAT

GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

4 Appleton Street, Arlington, MA 02476

Guidelines for Saint Athanasius the Great, Arlington Massachusetts regarding COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

Dear Parishioners,

We pray that this update on our parish finds you well and in good health. This letter is to update you on the current state of our parish and the actions we have taken to address the current outbreak of COVID-19 (Coronavirus).

These are times unlike any that many of us have ever experienced. As a parish we are facing an unprecedented public health crisis which has now been declared as a Pandemic by the World-Health-Organization. Together we will overcome these challenging times with care, diligence and patience.

The link below is a summary of the encyclical sent out by Archbishop Elpidophoros of America and the Holy Eparchial synod. It can be read in its entirety by clicking the link:

<https://www.goarch.org/-/encyclical-covid-19-pandemic>

Additionally the link below will direct you to the Synod's directives in their entirety:

<https://www.goarch.org/-/directives-covid-19?inheritRedirect=true>

The protocol described below are being undertaken to protect the health and wellbeing of all in our community, especially those who have underlying health conditions and anyone over 60 years old. It is important to note that simple steps like the ones listed below have been shown to reduce the overall risk of infection in communities.

As faithful Greek Orthodox Christians we are ever so mindful of practicing kindness, faith and love towards others. This protocol below will allow us to act on our faith and remain mindful of preserving the quality of human life.

Prior to attending services at Saint Athanasius the Great, please read and familiarize yourself with the following actions we are implementing at our Parish.

- 1) If you are feeling sick, we ask that you not attend services. Please worship at home via a live stream feed.
- 2) Hand sanitizing stations will be provided in the Narthex and at all entrances. We respectfully ask that you use these stations before proceeding anywhere and especially when entering the church.
- 3) Please refrain from kissing the Holy Icons, Gospels and Blessing Crosses, instead reverence them by making the sign of the cross and bowing.

- 4) The clergy will not offer their hand to be revered and will refrain from touching the faithful either through handshakes or an embrace.
- 5) Blessed bread after receiving communion will be distributed by one individual with the use of tongs while wearing gloves. Please extend the palm of your hand so that the bread can be placed into it ensuring that the tongs do not have contact with your hand.
- 6) The Antidoron will be passed out by the clergy after they have sanitized their hands. Please do not kiss the clergy's hand when you receive your Antidoron. This will also apply in cases of flowers (Sunday of the Veneration of the Holy Cross, Palm Sunday, Holy Friday etc.)
- 7) The Holy Eucharist will be distributed as usual (see below & links above).
- 8) In concelebrations, the clerical, "Kiss of Peace" will be through bowing to one another.
- 9) After every service, all liturgical objects and surfaces will be thoroughly cleaned.
- 10) Please refrain from greeting each other with kisses and keep a safe distance (social distancing of 6 feet or more) when having conversations. The World Health Organization advises that this virus is transmitted from person to person. More information is found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1APwq1df6Mw&feature=youtu.be>

The following list reflects postponements or cancellations for Saint Athanasius effective immediately:

- Sunday School is postponed until further notice.
- Sunday Fellowship Coffee Hour is postponed until further notice.
- Little Halos Pre-School is Closed Until March 27th – following protocol set forth by Arlington Public schools.
- Little Halos events / meetings / trips have been postponed until further notice.
- All gatherings after services have been postponed until further notice.
- All Lenten Suppers have been cancelled.
- All ministry meetings have been moved towards teleconferencing or cancelled.
- The Philoptochos Speaker Event on Sunday March 23 has been cancelled.
- The Philoptochos Easter Bake sale has been postponed until further notice
- All Goya events / meetings / trips have been postponed until further notice.
- All youth Greek dancing classes have been postponed until further notice.
- Adult Greek dance group has been postponed until further notice.
- All hall rentals have been postponed until further notice.

At this time, we have not canceled the Holy Friday Retreat and traditional Palm Sunday fish dinner. However, we will continue to closely monitor the situation and re-evaluate the hosting of those events over the next few weeks.

It is important to note that we have also been working closely with our cleaning company over the last few weeks ensuring that cleaning is thorough and that sanitization of high touch points are disinfected with stronger chemicals. We will continue to provide sanitization of all surfaces and high touch points and increase those efforts until further notice.

Finally, we would also like to address overarching concerns of the faithful with regard to Holy Communion and prayer:

- **Holy Communion** – Most importantly, please note that nothing will be done differently regarding Holy Communion. It has always been the teaching of the Church that the body and blood of Christ can never transmit disease. This is a matter of faith. Remember that everything regarding Holy Communion is miraculous. The on-going miracle of ordinary bread and wine changing into the Lord's body and blood is beyond our understanding and reasoning.
- **Prayer** - In times of trial and struggle, in times of disease and conquest, in times of poverty and illness, in times of natural disasters, a Christian is called upon to pray for our Lord's strength. It is critical even in this day and time to cling unto God and call upon His Holy Name. Let us continue in service to Him and come together with fervent faith allowing nothing to separate us from the Assembly of the Church.

We thank you in advance for your cooperation in abiding by this protocol. It is our fervent prayer that we can return to "normal" soon. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to Fr. Anthony for clarification or guidance.