



Епархія Чикагская и Средне-Американская
Русская Православная Церковь Заграницей

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March 6/19, 2020
42 Martyrs of Ammoria

Dear Father Rectors,

Christ is amongst us!

According to the instructional letter sent March 4/17, 2020 it seems illogical to gather by Deanery, or even by multiple neighboring parishes, to serve Holy Unction this Great Lent. Therefore, Archbishop Peter blesses for each parish to serve Unction alone one time during this Great Lenten season, keeping in mind the limits imposed by local governments on the number of people that can gather at any one time. According to the recommendation of the physicians consulting with the diocese on Coronavirus issues, you should use a separate cotton wand for each of the faithful. The cotton wands should be gathered into paper bags along with the paper towels used after the sacrament to remove the excess oil from the faithful. These paper bags should be burned carefully to assure all items are burned completely.

As for Confession, it again seems illogical to adopt all CDC norms and at the same time allow the priest and the faithful to stand face to face for extended periods of time and essentially spread the airborne virus in this way. Therefore, Archbishop Peter is blessing that the faithful write out their sins and bring this list to the church, hand the letter to the priest, and then stay below the ambo or at some other reasonable distance while the priest reads the list of sins. The priest can then call the penitent to the confessional, give a little bit of advice, and read the prayer of absolution. The total contact time should be about 1 minute. Our physician consultants feel this is reasonable, as long as the penitent wears a mask. There is no need to ask the priest to mask since our beards make the masks essentially useless in such a short interaction. UPDATED 3/20/20: However, Archbishop Peter blesses that if both the priest and the penitent are comfortable performing confession in the traditional manner (face to face without a written confession and without wearing masks) they may do so.

Please let me know if you have questions in this regard. We understand masks are hard to come by now. Please do your best given the conditions in your local area.

With Love in Christ,

Archpriest Gregory Joyce
Secretary, Diocese of Chicago & Mid-America

