

From: Saint John Orthodox Cathedral <stjohnalaska@aol.com>

Subject: Important Information for Orthodoxy Holy Week

Date: Wed, Apr 8, 2020 11:09 am

Attachments: Special Holy Week Schedule 2020.pdf (165K), Holy Week calendar 2020.pdf (118K)

Dear Faithful and Friends of Saint John's,

As we have come to accept, the commemoration of Palm Sunday and the services of Holy Week must be different this year. But within the guidelines of our Metropolitan Joseph and the special mandate Governor Dunleavy released on Tuesday regarding religious celebrations, there is still a beautiful way we can celebrate these holy days. Let us do so by making an effort on four levels. (The schedule for these is in the attached "Special Holy Week Schedule 2020.")

First, Cathedral Live-Streaming: Most of the major services will be led in the Cathedral by a small group of our clergy and our chanters. These services will be live-streamed so that the rest of us at home can actively participate by seeing, hearing, crossing ourselves, singing "Amen," "Lord, have mercy," and other hymns, etc. We should now arrange our life and our schedule to enter into these services the best we can.

Second, "Home Church": There are some services that do not need to be led by the clergy or served in the Cathedral. They are reader services that can be done in homes. Mother Galina, a nun in Pennsylvania and formerly from our parish, wrote on Monday: "Mother Christopher reminded us of a time in Romania when the leaders closed the churches but the people just made a little prayer corner church in their homes. So instead of closing several big churches the leaders actually created 100's of little ones!" Our schedule for the coming days will include five services that each household can do at the appointed time. The simple texts will be available on the [Service Resources](#) page of our website, and we can all stand in our homes before our Icons and pray together at the same moment. In this way we will be the Church. These services will not be duplicated in the Cathedral.

Third, Individual Readings: Each person, as he/she is able, can read other Scriptures and spiritual reflections for each day of Holy Week. (Some suggestions are in the attached "Special Holy Week Schedule 2020.")

Fourth, "Modified Traditions": Due to the thoughtfulness of the State's most recent mandate, it seems we might be able to keep a couple of meaningful traditions in modified way. One family asked if they could cut their own willow branches and at the end of Liturgy on Palm Sunday drive by the sidewalk extending from the Cathedral to Monastery Drive and have the priest bless the outstretched branches from a distance with Holy Water. Under two circumstances this would be possible. First, each household must stay inside their own car so there is absolutely no gathering of people whatsoever; and secondly, nothing from the Church can be distributed to everyone. (This is why we will not distribute blessed palms). This seems reasonable and for those who want to do this, I think we should try it. If this simple effort goes well, then perhaps we can apply the same conditions to our Paschal celebration some way. But the details about that can wait till later.

I hope you find these possibilities encouraging. Attached you will find the "Special Holy Week

Schedule 2020" and the "Holy Week Calendar 2020" in a format we are familiar with. Resources needed for the above are being added daily to our Church website at this link: [Service Resources](#). Remember, the Church is open during the day for individuals to visit, but there can be no gatherings, and required social-distancing must be maintained. Confession as we are accustomed must wait for now. Still, God hears our prayers and loves us.

Peace,

Fr. Marc