

ANNIVERSARY OR OUR DEPARTED FOR THIS SUNDAY

<u>DAY</u>	<u>NAME OF THE DEPARTED</u>	<u>ANNIVERSARY</u>
8	Adma Kassis	12
10	Adrinee Terzian	3
10	Fouad Elias Qubti	26
10	Zaki Michael Nassar	23
11	Gregoire Papadopoulos	34
11	Adele Shaker	20
11	Robert Khoury	18
13	Edward Aziz	53
13	Jean Kathleen Chacra	34
13	Wadie Wakileh	40

ETERNAL LIGHT

- **June 14:** Eternal light is offered for the good health of **Stella Samaan** from Nabil Samaan
- **June 28:** Eternal light is offered in loving memory of **Mitry & Violette Samaan** from Nabil Samaan
- **Please**, pray for the health of the following parishioners: Ellen, Robert, Alex, Sam, Elias, Isabelle, Nassar, Valentine, Lucy, Nina, Sonia, Samer, George and Elizabeth. If you have any names of people who need prayers, email them to father.
- **A call to all graduate from Universities and high schools : if your son/daughter are graduating this June, please send their names and the name of the degree and the school they are graduating from to Fr. George directly, to frdahdouh@sbcglobal.net.**
- Check our new website www.stgeorgeto.org

Everyday Holiness: Homily for the Sunday of All Saints in the Orthodox Church

[Fr. Philip LeMasters](#)

If you are like me, sometimes when you read the lives of the saints you shake your head and think, “I could never do anything like that.” Many endured horrible tortures to the point of death because they refused to deny Christ. Others denied themselves food, clothing, and shelter in ways that seem beyond the strength of human beings. Some accepted insult and abuse while forgiving their tormentors and turning the other cheek in a fashion that seems not of this world. As today’s epistle reading reminds us, the Old Testament saints endured such trials purely in anticipation of the coming of the Savior. Most of us, who have received the fullness of the promise in Christ, cannot fathom how we could be nearly as faithful as was this cloud of witnesses who point us by their examples and prayers to commend our lives to Christ.

On this Sunday of All Saints, we commemorate all those who have united themselves to the Lord to the point that they have become radiant with His holiness by the power of the Holy Spirit, including those whose are not formally canonized as saints by the Church. The canonized saints are like the members of the hall of fame who stand as shining examples of obedience to the Lord. We celebrate them because their lives are such vivid icons of what it means for a human being to become a partaker of the divine nature by grace. We do not know the names of all the saints, of course. Not all who are illumined with the divine glory are known publically as such; of course, the point of holiness is never simply to draw attention to oneself. It is, instead, to be faithful in offering our lives to Christ. Only He knows the names and number of those Who have done that, for He alone knows our hearts.

If we want to join their number, then we must attend carefully to Christ's teachings today in the gospel reading. "Everyone who acknowledges Me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father Who is in heaven; but whoever denies Me before men, I also will deny before My Father Who is in heaven." No doubt, these words concern the importance of remaining faithful to the Lord even in the face of fierce persecution. Martyrs and confessors continue to refuse to deny Him, regardless of the physical abuse they suffer in many countries around the world. But we would let ourselves off the hook by thinking that this teaching refers only to those whose lives are literally at risk for being faithful Christians. We must also ask whether we acknowledge Him before our neighbors every day of our lives in what we say and do. It is only our pride that makes us think that true faithfulness must be dramatic and spectacular. Most of us struggle to be faithful even in our routine trials and temptations. We will fail to unite ourselves to Christ in holiness if we fail to see that the most common challenges that we face are our opportunities to acknowledge that we belong to Him, and not simply to ourselves.

The Savior said, "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who does not take his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me." There is nothing wrong, of course with loving our parents or our children, but if we are to become radiant with the holiness of God, we must keep even our strongest loves in proper order. We must remember that our parents, children, and spouses are gifts of God to us. His love is obviously the ground of all love worthy of the name. Our calling is not to worship people or make them ends in themselves, but to relate to them in a way that fulfills God's gracious purposes for them and us. If we make false gods out of others, we will make them miserable and probably

drive them away. And since God created us in His image and likeness, we will learn the hard way that we will never find fulfillment in anyone but Him.

“People pleasing” is quite dangerous because it is ultimately a self-centered form of idolatry in which we crave the approval of others to the point that we will sacrifice anything for it. Instead of offering even our most prized and intimate relationships to the Lord for His healing and blessing, we end up offering ourselves to others, willing to compromise our faithfulness for the sake of giving whomever we want to impress what we think they want. That is not taking up our crosses, but sacrificing our obedience to the Savior in order to serve lesser gods. And since what drives this attitude is our self-centered desire for the approval of others, it is ultimately a way of worshiping ourselves.

The Lord said that, “everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My Name’s sake, will receive a hundred-fold, and inherit eternal life.” That is not only a promise for those who have physically given up their families and possessions, but also for those who have made the less dramatic sacrifice of putting Christ first in how they treat and speak to their spouse, children, family members, and friends. It is a promise for those who have denied themselves in order to have more time, energy, and resources to share with the poor, sick, and lonely. It is a promise for those who turn away from self-centeredness by offering themselves to the Lord in daily prayer, regular worship, and conscientious fasting.

Too often we think that holiness occurs only within the context of the four walls of the Church. If we are to take up our crosses and follow Christ, we must also learn to see the infinite opportunities of dying to self out of love for Him and our neighbors in our daily lives. That means we must take a painfully honest look at ourselves. For example, we may enjoy filling out minds with entertainment—such as news, social media, video games, film, etc.—that only inflames passions of worry, fear, hate, envy, and lust. If so, we need to turn away from it as we focus on the words of the Jesus Prayer or at least something else that does not inflame our passions. If we cannot learn to make such small sacrifices, we will never have the strength to make larger ones.

Regardless of our age, we likely are close to people whose values and way of life are apparently not consistent with obedience to Christ. Even as we must not condemn them personally, we must resist the subtle temptation to compromise our faithfulness to the Lord in what we say and do in order to gain their approval. It is one thing to show

everyone Christ's love as best we can, but another to fail to acknowledge Him by engaging in conduct and conversation that contradict our primary loyalty to Him. That would be a form of putting other people, and ultimately ourselves, before God, which is a path only to greater weakness for them and us. We must all discern mindfully and prayerfully whether we are acknowledging Christ in situations where it is much easier to act and speak as though He were not our Lord. We must all be willing to take up the cross of obedience to Him even if it means that we will be met with disapproval.

“Many that are first will be last, and the last first.” The Savior's statement applies to all who have put Him first in their lives, for doing so requires sacrificing much that the world worships. It is obviously the case for martyrs and confessors to this very day, but also applies to everyone who sacrifices, even in small ways, in order to seek first the Kingdom of God. When we direct our time, energy, and attention to serve Christ, His Church, and our neighbors in whom He is present, we take a lower place in the estimation of the world. When we refuse to sacrifice ourselves on the altars of conventional accounts of success and happiness, we embrace the humility of Christ. Even when we do so in seemingly ordinary ways, we take step in running “with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfection of our faith.” That is how, we too, may join that great cloud of witnesses who have become radiant with the holiness of our Lord. Nothing dramatic or spectacular is required, but only true faithfulness.

DIVINE LITURGY VARIABLES ON SUNDAY, JUNE 14, 2020

TONE 8 / EOTHINON 1

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: ALL SAINTS SUNDAY

THE HOLY PROPHET ELISSEUS (ELISHA); METHODIUS THE CONFESSOR, PATRIARCH OF CONSTANTINOPLE; VENERABLE NIPHON OF ATHOS; CYRIL, BISHOP OF CRETE

NOTE TO CLERGY: Remember to include this special petition in the Great Litany before the one for the head of state, as directed by the Antiochian Archdiocese.

Deacon: For Metropolitan Paul, Archbishop John, and for their quick release from captivity and safe return, let us pray to the Lord.

الشماس: مِنْ أَجْلِ الْمَثْرُوبُولِيَّتِ بُولُسَ
وَالْمَطْرَانَ يوحنا وفك أسرهما وعودتهما
سالمين، إلى الرب نطلب.

- *During the Little Entrance, chant the Resurrectional Apolytikion. The Eisdikon (Entrance Hymn) is "O come, let us worship... save us, O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead..." After the Little Entrance, chant the apolytikia in the following order:*

APOLYTIKION OF THE RESURRECTION IN TONE EIGHT

From the heights Thou didst descend, O compassionate One, and Thou didst submit to the three-day burial, that Thou might deliver us from passion; Thou art our life and our Resurrection, O Lord, glory to Thee.

انْحَدَرْتَ مِنَ الْعُلُوِّ يَا مُتَحَيِّنٌ، وَقَبِلْتَ الدَّفْنَ ذَا
الثَّلَاثَةِ الْأَيَّامِ، لِكَيْ تُعْتِقَنَا مِنَ الْآلَامِ، فَيَا حَيَاتِنَا
وَقِيَامَتَنَا، يَا رَبُّ الْمَجْدُ لَكَ.

APOLYTIKION OF ALL SAINTS IN TONE FOUR

Thy Church, O Christ God, hath regaled herself in the blood of Thy Martyrs throughout the entire world, as in porphyry and purple. Through them she lifteth her voice crying: Turn with Thy compassion toward Thy people, and grant peace to Thy city, and to our souls the Great Mercy.

أَيُّهَا الْمَسِيحُ الْإِلَهُ، إِنَّ كَنِيْسَتَكَ مُتَسَرِّبَةٌ بِدِمَاءِ
شُهَدَائِكَ الَّذِينَ فِي الْعَالَمِ كِبْرْفِيرَةٍ وَأَرْجُوَانٍ، وَبِهِمْ
تُنَادِيكَ قَائِلَةً: وَجِّهْ رَأْفَتَكَ لِشَعْبِكَ، وَامْنَحِ السَّلَامَ
لِعَبِيدِكَ، وَهَبْ لِنَفُوسِنَا الرَّحْمَةَ الْعُظْمَى.

- *Now sing the apolytikion of the patron saint or feast of the temple.*

KONTAKION OF ALL SAINTS IN TONE EIGHT

*(**The original melody**)*

As first-fruits of our nature to the Planter of created things, * the world presenteth the God-bearing martyred Saints in off'ring unto Thee, O Lord. * Through their earnest entreaties, * keep Thy Church in deep peace and divine tranquility, * through the pure Theotokos, O Thou Who art greatly merciful.

أَيُّهَا الرَّبُّ الْبَارِيُّ الْخَلِيقَةَ، إِنَّ الْمَسْكُونَةَ تُقَدِّمُ
لَكَ كَبَوَاكِرِ الطَّبِيعَةِ الشُّهَدَاءَ اللَّابِسِي اللَّهِ.
فَبِتَضَبُّرَاتِهِمْ احْفَظْ كَنِيْسِيَّتَكَ فِي سِيْلَامٍ دَائِمٍ،
مِنْ أَجْلِ وَالِدَةِ الْإِلَهِ يَا جَزِيلَ الرَّحْمَةِ.

EPISTLE OF ALL SAINTS SUNDAY

God is wondrous in His saints.

In the churches, bless ye God.

The Reading from Saint Paul's Letter to the Hebrews. (11:33-40; 12:1-2)

Brethren, all the saints through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and scourging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were killed with the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated—of whom the world was not worthy—wandering over deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect. Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfection of our faith.

عَجِيبٌ هُوَ اللهُ فِي قَدِّيسِيهِ،

فِي الْمَجَامِعِ بَارِكُوا اللَّهَ.

فَضْلٌ مِنْ رِسَالَةِ الْقَدِّيسِ بُولْسِ الرَّسُولِ إِلَى

الْعِبْرَانِيِّينَ

يَا إِخْوَةَ، إِنَّ الْقَدِّيسِينَ، بِالْإِيمَانِ قَهَرُوا الْمَمَالِكَ، وَعَمَلُوا الْبِرَّ، وَنَالُوا الْمَوَاعِدَ، وَسَدَّوْا أَفْوَاهَ الْأُسُودِ. * وَأَطْفَأُوا حِدَّةَ النَّارِ وَنَجَّوْا مِنْ حَدِّ السَّيْفِ، وَتَقَوَّوْا مِنْ ضَعْفٍ، وَصَارُوا أَشِدَّاءَ فِي الْحَرْبِ، وَكَسَرُوا مُعَسْكَرَاتِ الْأَجَانِبِ. * وَأَخَذَتْ نِسَاءٌ أَمْوَاتَهُنَّ بِالْقِيَامَةِ، وَعُذِّبَ آخَرُونَ بِتَوْتِيرِ الْأَعْضَاءِ وَالضَّرْبِ، وَلَمْ يَقْبَلُوا بِالنَّجَاةِ لِيَحْصَلُوا عَلَى قِيَامَةٍ أَفْضَلِ. * وَآخَرُونَ ذَاقُوا الْهَزْءَ وَالْجَلْدَ وَالْقَيْوَدَ أَيْضًا وَالسِّجْنَ. * وَرُجِمُوا وَنُشِرُوا وَامْتَحِنُوا وَمَاتُوا بِحَدِّ السَّيْفِ، وَسَاحَوْا فِي جُلُودِ غَنَمٍ وَمَعَزٍ وَهُمْ مُعَوِّزُونَ مُضَايِقُونَ مَجْهُودُونَ. * وَلَمْ يَكُنِ الْعَالَمُ مُسْتَحِقًّا لَهُمْ، فَكَانُوا تَائِهِينَ فِي الْبَرَارِيِّ وَالْجِبَالِ وَالْمَغَاوِرِ وَكُهُوفِ الْأَرْضِ. * فَهَؤُلَاءِ كُلُّهُمْ مَشْهُودًا لَهُمْ بِالْإِيمَانِ لَمْ يَنَالُوا الْمَوْعِدَ. * لِأَنَّ اللَّهَ سَبَقَ فَنَظَرَ لَنَا شَيْئًا أَفْضَلَ، أَنْ لَا يَكْمَلُوا بِدُونِنَا. * فَنَحْنُ أَيْضًا إِذْ يُحَدِّقُ بِنَا مِثْلَ هَذِهِ السَّحَابَةِ مِنَ الشُّهُودِ فَلَنَلْقَ عَنَّا كُلَّ تَقَلٍّ وَكُلَّ خَطِيئَةٍ مُحِيطَةٍ بِنَا، وَلِنُسَابِقَ بِالصَّبْرِ فِي الْجِهَادِ الَّذِي أَمَانَا، * نَاطِرِينَ إِلَى رَئِيسِ الْإِيمَانِ وَمُكْمَلِهِ يَسُوعَ.

GOSPEL OF ALL SAINTS SUNDAY

The Reading of the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew. (10:32-33, 37-38; 19:27-30)

The Lord said to his disciples, “Everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will

فَصَلِّ شَرِيفٌ مِنْ بَشَارَةِ الْقَدِّيسِ مَتَّى الْإِنْجِيلِيِّ

الْبَشِيرِ وَالتَّلْمِيزِ الطَّاهِرِ.

قَالَ الرَّبُّ لِتَلَامِيذِهِ، كُلُّ مَنْ يَعْتَرِفُ بِي قُدَّامَ

acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven; but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.” “He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and he who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.” Then Peter said in reply, “Lo, we have left everything and followed you. What then shall we have?” Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of man shall sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for my name’s sake, will receive a hundred-fold, and inherit eternal life. But many that are first will be last, and the last first.”

النَّاسِ، أَعْتَرِفُ أَنَا بِهِ قُدَّامَ أَبِي الَّذِي فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ. * وَمَنْ يُنْكِرُنِي قُدَّامَ النَّاسِ، أُنْكِرُهُ أَنَا قُدَّامَ أَبِي الَّذِي فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ. * مَنْ أَحَبَّ أَبًا أَوْ أُمَّأَ أَكْثَرَ مِنِّي فَلَا يَسْتَحِقُّنِي، وَمَنْ أَحَبَّ ابْنًا أَوْ بِنْتًا أَكْثَرَ مِنِّي فَلَا يَسْتَحِقُّنِي. * وَمَنْ لَا يَأْخُذُ صَلِيبَهُ وَيَتَّبِعُنِي فَلَا يَسْتَحِقُّنِي. * فَأَجَابَ بُطْرُسُ وَقَالَ لَهُ: هُوَذَا نَحْنُ قَدْ تَرَكْنَا كُلَّ شَيْءٍ وَتَبِعْنَاكَ، فَمَاذَا يَكُونُ لَنَا؟ * فَقَالَ لَهُمْ يَسُوعُ: الْحَقُّ أَقُولُ لَكُمْ، إِنَّكُمْ أَنْتُمْ الَّذِينَ تَبِعْتُمُونِي فِي جِيلِ التَّجْدِيدِ، مَتَى جَلَسَ ابْنُ الْبَشَرِ عَلَى كُرْسِيِّ مَجْدِهِ، تَجْلِسُونَ أَنْتُمْ أَيْضًا عَلَى اثْنِي عَشَرَ كُرْسِيًّا تَدِينُونَ أَسْبَاطَ إِسْرَائِيلَ الْإِثْنِي عَشَرَ. * وَكُلُّ مَنْ تَرَكَ بِيُوتًا أَوْ إِخْوَةً أَوْ أَخَوَاتٍ أَوْ أَبًا أَوْ أُمَّأَ أَوْ امْرَأَةً أَوْ أَوْلَادًا أَوْ حُقُولًا مِنْ أَجْلِ اسْمِي، يَأْخُذُ مِئَةَ ضِعْفٍ، وَيَرِثُ الْحَيَاةَ الْأَبَدِيَّةَ. * وَكَثِيرُونَ أَوْلُونَ يَكُونُونَ آخِرِينَ، وَآخِرُونَ يَكُونُونَ أَوْلِينَ.

KOINONIKON (COMMUNION HYMN) OF ALL SAINTS IN TONE EIGHT

Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous; praise is meet for the upright. Alleluia.

ابْتَهِجُوا أَيُّهَا الصِّدِّيقُونَ بِالرَّبِّ. لِلْمُسْتَقِيمِينَ يَنْبَغِي النَّسْبِيحُ. هَلِّلُوِيَا.

THE DISMISSAL

Priest: May He Who rose from the dead, Christ our true God, through the intercessions of His all-immaculate and all-blameless holy Mother; by the might of the Precious and Life-giving Cross; by the protection of the honorable Bodiless Powers of Heaven; at the supplication of the honorable, glorious Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John; of the holy, glorious and all-laudable apostles; of our father among the saints, John Chrysostom, archbishop of Constantinople, whose Divine Liturgy we have now celebrated; of the holy, glorious and right-victorious Martyrs; of our venerable and God-

الكَاهِنُ: أَيُّهَا الْمَسِيحُ الْهَذَا الْحَقِيقِي، يَا مَنْ قَامَ مِنْ بَيْنِ الْأَمْوَاتِ، بِشَفَاعَاتِ أُمِّكَ الْكَلِيَّةِ الطَّهَارَةِ وَالْبَرِيَّةِ مِنْ كُلِّ عَيْبٍ؛ وَبِقُدْرَةِ الصَّلِيبِ الْكَرِيمِ الْمُحْيِي؛ وَبِطَلَبَاتِ الْقُوَّاتِ السَّمَاوِيَّةِ الْمُكْرَمَةِ الْعَادِمَةِ الْأَجْسَادِ؛ وَالنَّبِيِّ الْكَرِيمِ السَّابِقِ الْمَجِيدِ يُوْحَنَّا الْمَعْمَدَانَ؛ وَالْقَدِيسِينَ الْمَشْرَفِينَ الرَّسُلِ الْجَدِيرِينَ بِكُلِّ مَدِيحٍ؛ وَأَبِينَا الْجَلِيلِ فِي الْقَدِيسِينَ يُوْحَنَّا الذَّهَبِيِّ الْقَمِّ رَئِيسِ أَسَاقِفَةِ الْقُسْطَنْطِينِيَّةِ، كَاتِبُ هَذِهِ الْخِدْمَةِ الشَّرِيفَةِ، وَالْقَدِيسِينَ الْمَجِيدِينَ الشُّهَدَاءَ الْمُتَأَلِّقِينَ بِالظَّفَرِ؛ وَأَبَائِنَا الْأَبْرَارِ

<p>bearing Fathers; of Saint N., the patron and protector of this holy community; of the holy and righteous ancestors of God, Joachim and Anna; of the Holy Prophet Elisseus (Elisha); Methodius the Confessor, patriarch of Constantinople; Venerable Niphon of Athos; and Cyril, bishop of Crete—and of all the saints of all ages who are well-pleasing to God, whose memory we celebrate today—have mercy on us and save us, forasmuch as He is good and loveth mankind.</p>	<p>الْمُتَوَشِّحِينَ بِاللَّهِ؛ وَالْقَدِّيسِ (ة) (فُلَان، فُلَانة) شَفِيعِ(ة) وَحَامِي(ة) هَذِهِ الرَّعِيَّةِ الْمُقَدَّسَةِ؛ وَالْقَدِّيسِينَ الصِّدِّيقِينَ جَدِّي الْمَسِيحِ الْإِلَهِ، يُوَاكِمِ وَحَنَّةً؛ وَتَذَكَارِ النَّبِيِّ الْإِسْيُوسَ، وَمِثُودِيُوسَ الْمُعْتَرِفَ بَطْرِيَرِكَ الْقِسْطَنْطِينِيَّةِ، الْبَارَّ نِيفُونَ الْأَثُوسِيَّ، وَكَيْرُسُسَ أُسْقُفِ كَرِيْت - وَجَمِيعِ الْقَدِّيسِينَ الَّذِينَ أَرْضُوا اللَّهَ بِأَعْمَالِهِمِ الصَّالِحَةِ - الَّذِينَ نُقِيمُ تَذَكَارَهُمُ الْيَوْمَ، وَجَمِيعِ قَدِّيسِيكَ، إِرْحَمْنَا وَخَلِّصْنَا بِمَا أَنْتَ صَالِحٌ وَمُحِبٌّ لِلْبَشَرِ.</p>
<p>Priest: Through the prayers of our holy fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy upon us and save us.</p>	<p>الْكَاهِنُ: بِصَلَوَاتِ آبَائِنَا الْقَدِّيسِينَ، أَيُّهَا الرَّبُّ يَسُوعُ الْمَسِيحُ إِلَهُنَا، ارْحَمْنَا وَخَلِّصْنَا.</p>
<p>Choir: Amen.</p>	<p>الجوقة: آمين.</p>
<p><i>These texts have been prepared by the Department of Liturgics of the Antiochian Archdiocese. Portions of the Archdiocesan Service Texts include texts from The Menaion, The Great Horologion, The Pentecostarion, The Octoechos, and The Psalter of the Seventy, which are Copyright © Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Brookline, Massachusetts, and are used with permission. All rights reserved. These works may not be further reproduced, beyond printing out a single copy for personal non-commercial use, without the prior written authorization of Holy Transfiguration Monastery.</i></p>	

His Eminence
The Most Reverend
Metropolitan JOSEPH



Archbishop of New York and
Metropolitan of
All North America

ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE
OF NORTH AMERICA

June 8, 2020

Beloved Faithful in Christ,

Greetings and blessings to you and your families in the Name of our Great God and Savior, Jesus Christ!

As we wrote in our pastoral letter for Pentecost, these holiest of days have been difficult and heartrending. We have experienced the unprecedented restrictions on the gathering of our faithful in the churches, anxiety and fear stemming from a new virus spreading with great speed throughout the world, economic distress arising from the lockdowns, and controversies and divisions arising from the various ways in which the various churches have chosen to respond to the situation. As we have steadily returned to a more normative liturgical and sacramental life, we have been further rocked by the killing of George Floyd while under police custody and the subsequent protests.

We called in our letter for our communion with God to light a flame, not of anger and divisiveness, but of love and reconciliation. We have desired throughout these days to return everyone to the churches as soon as possible in a safe and responsible way. We have striven to balance the need for our people to be physically in church during these trying times without becoming ourselves a part of prolonging or worsening them.

Keeping in balance these considerations, I am granting my blessing to all our churches in the United States to open to 25% of their seating capacity by this upcoming weekend of All Saints. In areas where there are fewer restrictions and the reported numbers of new cases are decreasing, parishes may open to the highest capacity allowed while maintaining social distancing according to our Archdiocesan directives – at least six feet of distance between worshippers not of the same household and keeping an empty pew between occupied ones. These updated guidelines apply to the celebration of all sacraments as well. The situation in some of the provinces in Canada is unique, and we will continue to monitor the situation and continue to look for a means of redress there.

I would like to take this moment to reiterate a few important things about these difficult days we have experienced. We did not ask our faithful to worship from home out of a fear of death or a belief that our churches or sacraments are carriers of disease. Our world was confronted by a novel virus to which no one had yet been exposed and no doctor had yet learned to treat. In addition to those factors, the virus could be spread before the onset of

“The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch” (Acts 11: 26)

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symptoms by people unaware they were sick. We were asked to join our local communities in slowing the spread of the virus by not gathering in crowds. This was to prevent an overwhelming of the healthcare system, allowing the doctors and nurses to give adequate care to the sick and thus avoid unnecessary deaths. We saw examples of hospitals in New York and New Jersey becoming quickly overwhelmed, tragically resulting in the sick being left on gurneys in hallways and the dying having to say goodbye to loved ones over the internet on tablets. As your father in Christ, I felt a heavy weight of responsibility and immense pain in asking our faithful to cooperate in this effort, and I hope all of you understand my desire to spare the rest of the Archdiocese from experiencing the disaster that we witnessed unfold here.

As of the writing of this letter, there is so much good news in which we can rejoice. After a month of states reopening, the nationwide curve has remained mostly flat, and while testing has gone up, the percentages of positive tests have gone down. Instead of thanking God for the good news, we see recriminations and anger flowing from some quarters. We understand that this has been immensely hard for us to remain at home during the height of our Church year. We also understand that as the situation improved, some of our civil authorities either refused to loosen their restrictions in a commensurate way or created reopening plans that did not take the churches into equal consideration. We have been working for weeks through the Assembly of Bishops to petition those civil authorities to reconsider their unfair placement of the churches in their phased reopening plans. With this letter, we believe that any further restriction of our churches in the United States below 25% capacity is an undue burden on the exercise of our freedom of religion, and we grant our blessing to our parishes to open to this level nationwide. Let our joy this weekend of All Saints be full!

We have stated throughout these difficult days that Holy Communion is the “medicine of immortality” not a vector of disease. We have also consistently stated that our method of distributing the Holy Gifts is not open to question. With great pain and heartache, we cooperated with our civil authorities in the limiting of gatherings of the faithful, but our cooperation ends with any infringement on the traditional practices of our Faith. As we welcome you back to the churches, we call on you to draw near to receive the Holy Gifts, not with the fear of a virus, but with the fear of God, faith, and love.

While our desire for our people to return to the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church is foremost on our minds, we also want to allow for a cautious and wise return to other aspects of parish life. We are hesitant to grant our blessing to returning to in-person meetings and social gatherings, but if parishes are in areas where these are permitted, we encourage any in-person meetings to be held in small numbers with adequate social distancing. We grant our blessing for parish social events to be held outdoors and replace summer fundraising events with curbside pick-up sales if all the guidelines of the local health departments are strictly followed.

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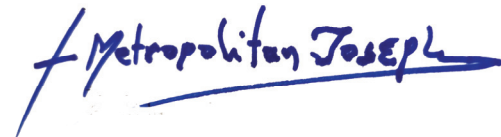
We strongly prefer parishes to continue with practice of using two chanters chanting opposite one another on different sides of the solea to reduce the chance of spreading the virus through aerosolization. There have been competing studies on the issue of singing, so we grant our blessing to parishes in areas with decreasing numbers of new cases with large church buildings with good ventilation to use choirs of no more than six members with increased spacing between one another than the usual six feet. In all these areas that we have mentioned above, we expect our priests and parish councils to exercise their good judgment and practice all the health and safety measures dictated by their local health departments.

We have experienced tumultuous days that have required many difficult decisions based on rapidly changing and sometimes contradictory information. Everything we have done has been based on much prayer and deliberation, and we have and will continue to do our best to balance our responsibilities to our people and our wider communities. I continue to ask your prayers for myself and my brother hierarchs as we navigate our Archdiocese through these times of anxiety and civil unrest and be assured of our fervent and heartfelt prayers for you.

This weekend of All Saints is a wonderful reminder that the Passion of our Lord, Third-Day Resurrection, Ascension, and Sending of the Holy Spirit have all taken place that we may become holy as our Lord is holy, as perfect as He is perfect. Through the life of the Church, we are called to be one with our Lord and with one another as He is with the Father and the Spirit. Let us strive to pray more, forgive more, and serve more that we may attain lives of holiness and be joined with our Lord together with the choir of the Saints unto the ages of ages.

With paternal love and care for all, I remain,

Your Father in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Metropolitan Joseph" with a stylized flourish at the end.

+JOSEPH

Archbishop of New York and Metropolitan of all North America

"The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch" (Acts 11: 26)

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Dear to Christ the members of St. George Church,

Greetings in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are happy to announce to you the opening of our church next Sunday June 14th, the Sunday of All Saints. We will follow the Ontario guideline of using only 30% building capacity for places of worship. The number of maximum individuals that will be allowed is 130. The doors will be closed after we have reached our maximum capacity. Father is planning **if necessary**, to have another liturgy next week. The streaming of the Liturgy on Facebook and from our website will continue as usual.

Here are the guidelines:

- 1. We will follow the province of Ontario distancing recommendation by keeping 6 feet apart.**
- 2. Hand sanitizers will be available at the entrance door.**
- 3. You are encouraged to wear a mask, but it is not enforced.**
- 4. Follow the Ushers direction on where you can sit.**
- 5. We will exit at the end of the Liturgy from the side doors keeping the distancing rule.**
- 6. There will be no social gathering, coffee, or congregating downstairs in the basement.**
- 7. If you have traveled outside Canada in the last 15 days, you must isolate yourself.**
- 8. If you have a fever, flu like symptoms (cough, congestion, headache, muscle ache) **you must stay home**. You will be asked few questions at the door before entering the church, do not be offended.**
- 9. Elderly people, the sick and high-risk population will be asked to NOT come to any services.**
- 10. Donation: there will be no tray collection but bring your donation envelop with you and place it in the box by the candles. No exchange money for the candles allowed.**
- 11. Communion: Father is asking everyone at the request of our Metropolitan to open your mouth big, put your head back, and do not close on the spoon.**
- 12. Father will be available after Liturgy to give communion to those who could not come in the church.**
- 13. Those who already attended on Sunday are asked to give the chance to someone else who did not attend yet for the Sunday after.**

We are asking you to call and inform one of the following individuals that you are attending the Liturgy this Sunday, if your family last name falls within the following letters call:

A-F= Colette El-Hajj 416/558-8865, G-K= Ramzi Shnoudeh 647/500-2081, L-P=John Dahdaly 416/569-9900, Q-U=Samanth Nassar 416/523-5414, V-Z= George Boutros 416/688-9994.

Looking forward to seeing all of you on Sunday.

Fr. George Dahdouh, Pastor

Mr. George Boutros, Chairman of the Parish Council