



HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH

Parish Newsletter

RESTON

New Parish Center: 20937 Ashburn Rd., #110, Ashburn, VA 30 May 2020

It's going to be a tad more difficult than one might think to re-open our church for divine services. See inside.

Readings for the Seventh Sunday after the Pasch

Reading of the Gospel concerning the Message (literally the Word) the Lord Jesus entrusts to the Church

READING FROM THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES:

A touching, instructive scene.

IN THOSE DAYS: ¹⁶Paul had decided to sail past Ephesos in order not to lose time in [the éparchy of] Asia, for he was hurrying to be in Jerusalem, if at all possible, for the day of Pentecost.

¹⁷From Milētos he sent [word] to Ephesos, calling together the presbyters of the church. ¹⁸When they came to him, he said to them: ²⁸Keep watch over yourselves, and over the whole flock of which the Holy Spirit has appointed you overseers, in which you tend the Church of God that he acquired with his own blood.... ²⁹I know that **after my departure savage wolves will come among you, and they will not spare the flock.** ³⁰And **from your own group,** men will come forward perverting the truth to draw the disciples away after them. ³¹So be vigilant and remember that for three years, night and day, I unceasingly admonished each of you with tears. ³²And now I commend you to God and **to that gracious Word of his** that can build you up and give you the inheritance among all who are consecrated. ³³I have never wanted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. ³⁴You know well that these very hands have served my needs and my companions. ³⁵In every way I have shown you that by hard work of that sort we must help the weak, and keep in mind the words of the Lord Jesus who himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

³⁶When he had finished speaking, he knelt down [the Council of Nikaia had yet to decide no kneeling during these Fifty Days—Ed.] with them all and prayed.

³⁷They were all weeping loudly as they threw their arms

around Paul and kissed him, ³⁸for they were deeply distressed that he had said that they would never see his face again. Then they escorted him to the ship.

PROKIMENON, Tone IV

Blest are you, Lord God of our fathers! * Praised and glorified be your name forever! [v.26 OCA/RESTON]

CANTICLE OF THE FATHERS

Daniel 3.26–45 LXX

NOTE: This Prayer of Azariah—missing from Hebrew and English bibles—is a penitential song reminiscent of Psalm 50; herein confession seeks forgiveness and restoration, and sues for communion.

²⁶**Blest are you, Lord God of our fathers! Praised and glorified be your name forever!** ²⁷You are just in everything you do to us; all your works are true; all your ways are right; all your decisions fair....

³⁴For your name's sake, do not desert us! Do not dissolve your covenant, ³⁵nor take away from us your favor: for the sake of your beloved, Abraham, for your servant, Isaac, and for Israel, your holy one!...

³⁹But a contrite heart and a humble spirit—may these please you ⁴⁰as much as burnt offerings.... Today, may our sacrifice, our open loyalty please you as much, for there is never any disappointment for those who trust in you.

⁴¹So now, we follow you wholeheartedly, filled with reverence and awe, straining to catch sight of you!

⁴²Never let us be ashamed. Instead, deal with us as you used to: with infinite and tender love and mercy....

⁴⁴As for those who harm your servants—let them scatter in confusion, covered by their own embarrassment! Let their strength fail them, and reduce their might to nothing! ⁴⁵Let them know that you alone are God and Lord, the glory of the entire world!

Reader: Blest are you, Lord God of our fathers! People: Praised and glorified be your name forever!

**READING FROM
PETER'S FIRST CATHOLIC EPISTLE**

(Remember that this epistle is a baptismal homily turned into a missive.)

BELOVED: ⁵I exhort the presbyters among you, as a fellow presbyter and witness to the sufferings of Christ and one who has a share in the glory to be revealed. ²Tend the flock of God in your midst, exercising oversight not by constraint but willingly, as God would have it, not for sordid gain, but eagerly. ³Do not lord it over the group in your care, but be examples to the flock. ⁴And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

⁵Likewise, you in their care, be subject to the presbyters. And all of you, clothe yourselves with humility in your dealings with one another, for:

*God opposes the proud
but bestows favor on the humble.*

⁶Bow down, then, before the strong hand of God, so that he may raise you up in due time. ⁷Cast all your cares upon him because he cares about you.

⁸Be sober. Be vigilant. Your opponent the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. ⁹Resist him, steadfast in faith, knowing that your fellow believers throughout the world undergo the same sufferings. ¹⁰The God of all grace who called you to his eternal glory through Christ will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you after you have suffered a little. ¹¹To him be glory and power unto ages of ages. Amen.

¹²I write you this brief letter through Siluánus, whom I consider a faithful brother, exhorting you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Remain firm in it.

¹³She who is in Babylon [*meaning Rome—Ed.*], chosen together with you, greets you, as does Mark, my son. ¹⁴Greet one another with a kiss of love.

Peace to all of you who are in Christ. Amen.

ALLELUIA, Tone V

PSALM 49

NOTE: Like the prophets of old, the psalmist Asaph shows the worthlessness of divine service when it is divorced from true morality. Religion for show and hypocrisy earn divine retribution; whereas the sacrifice of praise—a way of life that takes God into account—finds salvation.

The mighty one, God, the Lord, speaks: he summons the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting. From Sion, perfect in beauty, God shines forth; our God is coming and he will not fail to act....

He summons the heavens from on high and the earth below to the trial of his people. Let those devoted to him gather together before him; those who made him a sacrifice when they entered a covenant with him....

Listen, my people, and I will speak.... Make praise your sacrifice to God and fulfill your vows to the Most High. Then, if you call on me in time of trouble, I will rescue you and I will spread out a feast for you.

But to the wicked, God says this: What right have you to recite my commandments, or mouth the terms of my covenant? For you despise correction, and turn your back when I speak.

When you find a thief, you fall in with him; you throw in your lot with adulterers. You use your mouth to forge evil and harness your tongue to deceit....

You do all these things and expect me to say nothing!... You are unmindful of God; you had better take care, or I will tear you to pieces and no one will save you.

As for him who offers me a sacrifice of praise—for him I will give a feast for he prepares a way for me to show him the saving power of God.

**READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL
ACCORDING TO JOHN:**

AT THAT TIME: ^{17.1} Jesus raised his eyes to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come. Give glory to your son, so that your son may glorify you, ² just as you gave him authority over all people, so that he may give eternal life to all you gave him. ³ Now this is eternal life, that they should know you, the only true God, and the one whom you sent, Jesus Christ. [*There is a "nowness" to what we understand as eternal life.—Ed.*] ⁴ I glorified you on earth by accomplishing the work that you gave me to do. ⁵ Now glorify me, Father, with you, with the glory that I had with you before the world began. ⁶ I revealed your name to those whom you gave me out of the world. They belonged to you, and you gave them to me, and they have kept **your word**. ⁷ Now they know that everything you gave me is from you, ⁸ because **the words you gave to me** [*meaning the deposit of divine revelation—Ed.*] **I have given to them**, and they accepted them and truly understood that I came from you, and they have believed that you sent me. ⁹ I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for the ones you have given me, because they are yours, ¹⁰ and everything of mine is yours and everything of yours is mine, and I have been glorified

For Orthodox Christians and indeed all men who are victims of war and civil strife [and terror], of hunger and want, of intolerance and injustice.

For physicians, nurses, care-givers, and all serving those infected with the virus; and for the thousands who have succumbed to the disease—and for all who will die today.

PRAYER OF THE ÉKTENY

Lord our God, accept this fervent prayer from your servants, and have mercy on us according to the greatness of your mercy. Send down your compassionate help upon us and upon all your people awaiting the rich mercy that comes from you.

For you are God, merciful and loving to man, and we render glory to you—to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit: now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Father John Vitko, on Behalf of the Bishop, Responds to Our Application to Re-open.

Dear Fr. Paul,

Thank you for submitting your application to start the re-opening process for Holy Trinity. As you know, His Beatitude has asked me to take an initial look at this application. Overall, I think it looks good—but there are a few areas that I believe need clarification or additional attention:

1. The VA Phase 1 Guidelines (attached) specify a maximum occupancy of half the normal capacity of the church, but also require social distancing of 6 feet between parishioners. So **we do need to know the approximate square footage available** for parishioners in your church and the number of parishioners that can accommodate using the 6 foot social distancing guidelines.

2. Your plan says “we’ll do Vespers readily.” Is the plan at this time to do only Vespers or will you be serving Divine Liturgy as well?

3. In response to the question about the minimal crew, your plan says the Governor’s plan obviates talk about a minimum number of people. It’s important to realize that there are multiple sets of guidelines guiding the reopening of our parishes: the various civil guidelines, but also those of the Holy Synod and the Archdiocese. Both the latter two describe a phased reopening with a minimal cohort—the smallest set of people needed to serve a service: *e.g.*, the priest, one or two chanters, a reader, an altar server—and in

some cases a door keeper/warden to make sure no one else enters. So please do give consideration as to your ‘minimal cohort’ and revise your plan to reflect that. The idea behind the minimal cohort is for us to learn how to conduct services under these conditions. After a short learning experience then you can submit a new application to expand to the number allowable under the 6-foot social distancing limitations.

4. In response to the question as to who can attend your services, your plans says the community will decide. As you know, the guidelines say that those who are sick, have a fever, or have been in contact with those who might have been exposed are not permitted to attend—and those in the vulnerable population are encouraged to stay home. Will these considerations be built into deciding who can attend?

If you have any questions about this, please do not hesitate to contact me.

And, of course, I defer to His Beatitude’s call on any of these.

Hope you are doing well in these confusing time – both health wise and dealing with the challenges of isolation and the frustration of not being able to serve services as we normally do.

I’m also very much looking forward to when we can resume our periodic coffees – I miss them.

With love and prayers,
Fr. John

Phase 0 and Phase 1 Restrictions for Religious Services in NVA

[Public Health Restrictions Extended in Northern Virginia Until May 29](#). Due to the number of positive COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations in the region, and at the urging of public health and elected leaders of the region, the Governor announced that he will delay the first phase of reopening for localities in Northern Virginia until **Friday, May 29**. The order means the region will remain in **Phase Zero** of the governor’s [Forward Virginia](#) plan, while other parts of the state will move into Phase One beginning Friday, May 15.

Phase One Guidance:

Religious services must strictly adhere to the following requirements:

- Occupancy shall be limited to no more than 50% of the lowest occupancy load

on the certificate of occupancy of the room or facility in which the religious services are conducted.

- Individuals attending religious services must be seated at least six feet apart at all times and must practice physical distancing at all times. Family members, as defined in Executive Order 61, Order of Public Health Emergency Three, may be seated together. Mark seating in six-foot increments.
- It is recommended that persons attending religious services be encouraged to wear face coverings over their nose and mouth at all times (See CDC Use of Cloth Face Coverings guidance for more detailed information.).
- No items must be passed to or between attendees who are not family members as defined in EO 61, Order of Public Health Emergency Three.
- Any items used to distribute food or beverages must be disposable and used only once and discarded.
- A thorough cleaning and disinfection of frequently contacted surfaces must be conducted prior to and following any religious services.
- Post signage at the entrance that states that no one with a fever or symptoms of COVID-19, or known exposure to a COVID-19 case in the prior 14 days, is permitted in the establishment.
- Post signage to provide public health reminders regarding social distancing, gatherings, options for high risk individuals, and staying home if sick (samples at the bottom of this document).
- If any place of worship cannot adhere to the above requirements, it must not conduct in-person services.

**From the OCA Website:
What COVID-19 Means for Singing in Church**

by Mrs. Robin J. Freeman

The woman paints a dark picture. And I do not argue with the science. But I think there is some difference to be considered between a community of parishioners which has been in quarantine and individuals coming from just anywhere—a matter she does seem to address, but.... —Fr. Paul

The Orthodox Church is a singing church. We express our faith through song. For weeks or months now, many of us have been unable to attend services because of the COVID-19 pandemic. We miss hearing our hymns, and singing them—praying them—together. We yearn to enter our churches once again and lift our voices in song. But singing together may not be possible for some time—even after our churches re-open.

While research is rapidly changing what we know about COVID-19, mounting evidence strongly suggests that singing significantly increases transmission of the disease. [Scientists and medical professionals](#) classify singing as a high-risk activity due to the manner in which singing encourages aerosol spread. This classification is not new; singing has long been known to increase the spread of airborne diseases such as [tuberculosis](#). Singing (and even loud talking) [has been shown](#) to increase the amount of aerosol a person emits. Aerosol particles are light enough to remain suspended in the air for hours at a time, and can travel anywhere from three to twenty-seven feet from the “emitter.” When those aerosol particles carry COVID-19, they pose a serious risk for anyone unlucky enough to breathe them in. Singers are therefore considered “super-spreaders.” And exactly how far each person emits is unpredictable. Perhaps unsurprisingly, choral conductors are at particularly high risk of contracting the virus due to their customary position in front of the rest of the group.

On March 17, 2020, just less than a week after the WHO declared the coronavirus to be a global pandemic, sixty-one people gathered for a choir rehearsal in Skagit County, Washington. They took all reasonable precautions, using hand sanitizer and practicing social distancing as they understood it at the time (Skagit County Public Health had just issued new social distancing guidelines on the same

day as the rehearsal, but did not expect immediate widespread community knowledge of the recommendations at the time when the rehearsal took place). Although no one knew it at the time, one of the singers was COVID-19 positive. In the days that followed, 87% of the group contracted COVID-19, and [two people died](#). More recently we've learned that a [chorus of 130 singers in Amsterdam](#) performed a concert on March 8, five days before the country went on lockdown. After the concert, 102 singers fell sick with coronavirus, and four people associated with the chorus died. The conductor fell ill and was hospitalized.

It might be tempting to think that church services are safe from these dangers, particularly in relatively self-contained communities, such as monasteries. But recent headlines about outbreaks in religious communities in [America](#) and in Orthodox countries like [Ukraine](#) suggest that the high risks associated with choir rehearsals and concerts are present anywhere people gather and sing.

Recently, the choral community was rocked by a webinar co-hosted by the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS) and the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) entitled, "What Science and Data Say about the Near-term Future of Singing" (view the full 2.5 hour webinar [here](#), and an accurate written summary [here](#)). The medical experts laid out some difficult facts, concluding that there is no safe way for choirs to sing together until a vaccine is widely available or a 95% effective treatment is in place. Masks do not sufficiently contain the aerosol spread caused by singing. And because singers breathe deeply, wearing a mask increases the carbon dioxide they inhale. Nor does the customary 6-ft social distancing recommendation protect singers from the virus, due to the varying aerosol clouds emitted by singers. As such, these experts recommended that all in-person group singing activities be postponed through the

fall and perhaps longer. As a result, many choral groups around the world are now suspending their rehearsals, performances, and in-person singing, either opting to postpone gathering in person until it is safe (which could be 1-2 years, in the estimation of some experts), or choosing to pivot to online formats.

All this means that as we prepare to reopen our churches, we must carefully consider the high risks associated with choral singing. For Orthodox churches, such high-risk activities also include any form of chant, the exclamations of the clergy, the reading of scripture or other texts with raised voices, and even the faithful singing along with "Lord have mercy." This is difficult news for many of us. When we return to church, how will we strive to protect one another? Reducing the number of clergy and singers to a bare minimum seems like an obvious starting point. One isolated chanter replacing the choir will undoubtedly help reduce risk. Beyond this, will we embrace [more silence](#) in our services? Will we [suspend congregational singing completely](#), as others have done? Will we utilize microphones to avoid raising our voices and amplifying the aerosol spread? Can we encourage paraliturgical activities to supplement our services, such as singing at home with our families or gathering with parishioners online?

This is a time for robust dialogue and creative thinking. We Orthodox often speak of the beauty of our churches, icons, and sacred music. But during this difficult time, let us also seek beauty in our love for one another. For "if I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal" (1 Corinthians 13:1).

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