



The Orthodox Church in America  
DIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA AND EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA  
The Most Rev. Mark, Archbishop of Philadelphia

May 17, 2020

Commemoration of the Fall of Jerusalem in 614 AD to the Persians,  
With the loss of the True Cross to Persia,  
Damage to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre by fire,  
And the martyrdom of over 65,000 Christians

## TO BE POSTED ON ALL PARISH WEBSITES, PARISH SOCIAL MEDIA AND PARISH ENTRANCES

### *THE TRADITIONAL PROTOCOL FOR ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS VISITING ANOTHER PARISH*

Dear to God,

Christ is Risen! Indeed, He is Risen! As we see the easing of restrictions and parishes begin to move forward with various approaches to reopening their doors, we must continue to be mindful of proper social distancing and the ability of our local parishes to accommodate the faithful. In some parishes this will not be as big a challenge as in others. Some clergy and parish councils will need to be fully engaged with responsible and creative approaches, especially if the CDC guidelines remain in place for an extended period of time.

As the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, we never want to see anyone turned away who seeks to offer themselves, their thanksgiving and praise to God for all He has done for them. God forbid! We will not deny any practicing Orthodox Christian in good standing the Life-Giving Mysteries, regardless of temporal matters, such as parish or jurisdictional affiliation, *if we have the ability to accommodate them*. Absolutely no one should be turned away simply because it presents an inconvenience or requires more work on our part. Christ gave His Life for the salvation of the Whole World, what is it for us to make adjustments for our brothers and sisters in Christ!

The historic practice of the Orthodox Church requires an Orthodox Christian who intends to visit another parish other than his or her own to contact the parish priest in advance. This is critical, especially now as we have implemented safety precautions to protect the most vulnerable within society. As we do not want to give offense, we must insist ALL ORTHODOX FAITHFUL visiting a parish other than his or her own, contact the clergy in advance so that he can inform you of protocols being implemented and to determine if the parish has the ability to responsibly receive you. Please access the directory for our parishes at the following link: <https://doepa.org/parishes>.

Yours in Christ,

+ Mark

+MARK, Archbishop of Philadelphia and the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania



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"Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in Thee." Augustine