



# GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF CHICAGO

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## ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΣΙΚΑΓΟΥ

May 16, 2021

Beloved clergy and stewards of the Holy Metropolis of Chicago,

Christ is Risen! Indeed, He is Risen!

For more than a year, our faith in Christ and our love for our neighbor have been tested in unimaginable ways. Perhaps only a handful of people across the world could conceive of a scenario where a virus would lead to a global pandemic, crippling longstanding institutions and traditions. As we reflect back on our experience of the COVID-19 pandemic, we offer thanksgiving to our Lord Jesus Christ for His loving grace during these difficult times. We also keep the countless men and women on the frontlines, especially our doctors, nurses, and other medical workers, in our prayers and thank them for all they do to help keep us healthy and safe.

I personally express to you my gratitude for the patience, humility, and love-for-neighbor expressed by our clergy and laity. Recognizing that the care of one's soul is as important as the care offered to one's body, I thank you for finding new and creative ways of providing spiritual nourishment for our people. As many have openly stated, the clergy and ministry leaders of our parishes are indeed frontliners because their calling and vocation is grounded on unconditional sacrifice for those in need.

As we rejoice in the Risen Lord, we are grateful for the ability to return to many of our practices prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. On May 13, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced that “*fully vaccinated people no longer need to wear a mask or physically distance in any setting, except where required by federal, state, local, tribal, or territorial laws, rules, and regulations, including local business and workplace guidance.*” With the latest developments in the effort to end the pandemic, effective immediately, subject to orders and directives of applicable state or local authorities, ***all parishes of our Holy Metropolis may cease requiring fully vaccinated people to use facemasks and observe social distancing.*** Individuals who are not fully vaccinated are encouraged to continue wearing a facemask over the nose and mouth and observing social distancing.

When entering a church or any parish facility, individuals will not be asked as to their vaccination status and parishes will not maintain a record of one's vaccination status. ***However, as part of our shared responsibility to reduce the spread of the virus, individuals will be required to sign in for contact tracing purposes.*** To this end, each parish must either continue using their reservation system or take contact information upon the arrival of the faithful.

To assure that all are welcome in our churches, each parish must set aside a portion of the Nave for individuals who wish to wear a facemask and practice social distancing and/or for individuals who are not fully vaccinated. Individuals who prefer to be seated in this section of the Nave must alert an usher upon arrival to request such seating. Individuals in these seating areas will be required to wear a facemask over the nose and mouth at all times and must practice social distancing.

As a reminder, according to the CDC, individuals are considered fully vaccinated 14 days after their final dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. The final dose is defined as the second dose of a two-dose vaccine (i.e., Pfizer or Moderna), or the first dose of a one-dose vaccine (i.e., Johnson & Johnson).

In addition to the change in our facemask and social distancing safety measures, all parishes are encouraged to resume regular programs and ministries, including, but not limited to in-person coffee and fellowship hours, meetings, classes, choirs, ministries and all other programs.

Moreover, with the changing pandemic landscape, we have revised our liturgical protocols and directives concerning the celebration of the Divine Liturgy and other holy sacraments and services. These are to be used in conjunction with other Metropolis Directives ([chicago.goarch.org/reopening-parishes](http://chicago.goarch.org/reopening-parishes)) and special Orders and Directives issued by local authorities.

Beloved fathers and stewards of our Holy Metropolis of Chicago, we can certainly see the light at the end of the proverbial tunnel. Nonetheless, the pandemic has not ended, and I pray that we may remain vigilant. During this time of transition, I especially pray that we may all exercise the virtues of patience and humility. Let us not judge, criticize, or shame others, thereby continuing to grow stronger as an Orthodox Christian family.

With paternal love in the Risen Christ,



+Metropolitan Nathanael of Chicago