



ANNUNCIATION GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

FR. JAMES RETELAS, PRESIDING PRIEST

Beloved Stewards of Annunciation,

Regarding the pandemic, His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew reminds us, "That which is at stake is not our faith – it is the faithful. It is not Christ – it is our Christians. It is not the divine-man – but human beings."

As we struggle with this global crisis, it is the local Church that is on the frontline to meet the spiritual needs of the faithful. We the faithful of Annunciation comprise the fullness of the Church in Sacramento but let us remember who the Head of our Church is. He is the God-man Himself, Crucified in the flesh and Risen from the dead. As we struggle day after day being confined, let us look forward to the new day He promises:

He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away. Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new. (Revelation 21:3-5)

You recently received an update from the Parish Council evaluating the significant financial impact of the COVID-19 crisis. It was a review of our current financial status but what I found most inspiring was, and I quote: "we ask you to prayerfully consider how you can help to sustain the life-giving work of our Church and its ministries."

Indeed, the life-saving work of our Church continues. At every Divine Liturgy, Father Timothy and I pray for you by name. We are being creative in connecting online but also focusing on calling you personally. The Philoptochos has recruited letter writers to send "thinking of you" notes to our homebound parishioners. No doubt in the days ahead you the faithful will discover new and creative ways to connect with each other. Please don't hesitate to share those ideas. Continue to worship at home together via live-stream, and please continue praying for God's mercy and healing of our world.

Together, we will navigate this crisis. Together, we will overcome any financial challenges and, by God's grace, continue to thrive and grow. Finally, may our gifts in support of the God-saving message of the Gospel be offered not out of any sense of obligation but as a privilege (philotimo). It is an honor to bear the name of Christ. May we all prove worthy to be called "Christ-bearers" (Χριστοφόροι).

With love in the Risen Lord,

Father James Retelas