



## ANNUNCIATION GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

FR. JAMES RETELAS, PRESIDING PRIEST

May 28, 2020

Feast of the Ascension of Our Lord

Beloved Parishioners of Annunciation:

We have been apart far too long, but finally after more than two months, we are planning, by God's grace, to reopen our beloved Church as of June 6 (Saturday of Souls) and Holy Pentecost on Sunday, June 7.

The reopening will be done in a safe and health-conscious manner, following all the protocols from our Metropolitan and Sacramento county directives. Please read carefully the "Welcome Home" material. I especially ask you to be patient as we begin this process. There are many "moving targets" and our faithful volunteers will be learning and adjusting going forward. If you have underlying health conditions, which put you in the high risk category, please do not come to Church right away – rather, call the Church office, and either Father Timothy or I will personally visit you. Or if you just want to talk, call us: (916) 443-2033.

Let us anticipate with much joy our reunion as a Church family, and with St. Paul let us say: *"Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."* (Philippians 4:4-7)

With Love in Our Ascended Lord,

Father James Retelas



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## Welcome Home!

*"Bless God in the churches, the Lord who springs out of Israel. Save us, O Son of God, Who did rise from the dead, sing we to You, Alleluia!"*

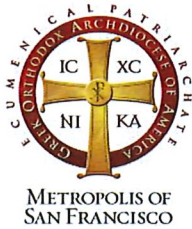
This hymn is sung by the clergy at the Small Entrance from Pascha to the Ascension. While the past few months have not been what we expected, we have been practicing and growing the *Κατ'οίκον Εκκλησία*, the church in the home. From lighting candles and incense in our homes, to participating in the live broadcast of the many weekly services, we have hopefully been brought closer to each other, and ultimately, to God.

Having received permission and direction from our Metropolitan, and in accordance with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), we are pleased to announce the reopening of our Annunciation parish for services! We welcome you home to "Bless God in the churches," beginning on **Saturday, June 6<sup>th</sup>** for the Orthros and Divine Liturgy for the Saturday of the Souls and for the scheduled upcoming services. For updates, please refer to the "This Week at Annunciation" e-mails or call the Parish Office.

Please be aware that while we are reopening our church doors for services, things are still yet not "back to normal." We will be adhering to strict social distancing protocols for all services. All parish ministries, catechism, and fraternal organizations will still be holding virtual meetings at this current time.

### ***How is the Parish Preparing for Our Return?***

- The Clergy and Parish Council leadership have met several times to discuss the necessary steps to safely reopen our churches and have formed a "Reopening Committee" as advised by the Metropolitan.
- We will be following stringent protocols for preparation. This includes direct contact with local authorities, adherence to directives from the CDPH, CDC, and full compliance with the Metropolitan Readiness Guide for the reopening of our parish.
- Our parish will continue to accommodate those who are unable to attend church through the continuation of live streamed services.



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## *How Should I Prepare?*

- Be patient! We want you to return, but we want it to be accomplished in a safe and organized manner.
- Those who have pre-existing health conditions and those who are over 65 are requested not to attend services.
- If you are exhibiting any signs of illness, even symptoms not related to COVID-19, we ask that, for your own safety and those around you, please do not attend services.
- **If you do not have a mask, please obtain one. Masks are required to be worn at this time when inside the church.**
- You may bring hand sanitizer with you. There will also be hand sanitizer available in the Narthex to use upon your arrival to church.

## *What Should I Expect When I Come to Church?*

- Attendance will be limited, based on the seating capacity of the church, per the guidelines of local authorities. **We can accommodate approximately 100 people in our church; that includes the Clergy, Parish Council, chanters, acolytes, and parishioners.**
- Only the main doors of the church will be open (on Alhambra).
- Before entering the church, expect to have your temperature checked and to answer a symptoms-questionnaire by our Parish Council and reopening committee volunteers.
- Your attendance will be recorded, name and current phone number, so that if there is an outbreak and contact tracing is necessary, the parish will have a clear record of who was present for each service.
- Masks are to be worn by parishioners during church services. Parental supervision is required for children over the age of 3 who are wearing masks. Children under the age of 2 are exempt from wearing masks.
- Veneration of icons should be done by bowing before the icon and making the sign of the cross; it is not necessary to kiss the icons at this time.
- Please no handshaking, hugging, or physical contact.

## *What Should I Expect When I am in Church?*

- Please understand that due to occupancy limitations and social distancing, seating will be clearly marked and carefully monitored.
- An usher will direct you to a seat in the church. Most likely, this will not be the pew where you usually sit. Please do not move to a different seat. This is a temporary situation.
- You will be seated with your immediate household (people living in the same space and who arrived in the same vehicle).



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- There will be specific directions for safely entering and exiting the church to maintain social distancing.
- Choirs may not resume at the present time. Chanters will lead the hymns and responses from the chant stand on the *Soleas*.
- Liturgical books are not permitted in the pews. Online resources are available for you to follow the services. Look for links in the Sunday Bulletin and e-mail communications.
- You will be dismissed and guided by a Parish Council member or volunteer for when to receive Holy Communion and Antidoron. Please follow social distancing practices when approaching for Holy Communion and to receive Antidoron.
- When receiving Holy Communion, please do not touch the Communion cloth. Give your baptismal name.
- When receiving Holy Communion, you are encouraged to lean your head back and open your mouth wide, so the priest may pour the Holy Eucharist into your mouth.
- Antidoron will be distributed only at the end of the Divine Liturgy by the priest, following strict protocols.
- Please refrain from kissing the hand of the priest.
- When the service has concluded, please promptly exit either the front doors or the side door of the church into the plateia/courtyard and parking lot.
- Parishioners are kindly requested not to linger on the church property. No social gatherings or coffee fellowship hour will be hosted at this time.
- After each service, the church will be thoroughly cleaned and sanitized.
- Our Clergy will offer additional Divine Services according to the Liturgical Calendar of the Great Church of Christ to accommodate parishioners.

We thank you for your patience, understanding, and for adopting these social distancing protocols at this time. We are extremely excited to see you in church and to hear your prayers. Even socially distant, we are still one body in Christ!

Prepared respectfully on behalf of the Annunciation Clergy, Parish Council, and Reopening Committee,

Efstratios "Yianni" Magoulis  
*Pastoral Assistant*