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THE ASSYRIAN CHURCH OF THE EAST:
 DIOCESES OF WESTERN USA, CALIFORNIA AND EASTERN USA



UPDATED ARCHPASTORAL LETTER FOR ALL THE PARISHES OF THE ASSYRIAN
 CHURCH OF THE EAST IN THE UNITED STATES

*Beloved Clergy and Faithful of the Assyrian Church of the East, in the United States:
 Grace, Peace and Blessings in Christ Jesus the Lord!*

Beloved in Christ: On March 17th, just two days ago, we jointly addressed all of the parishes of the Assyrian Church of the East in the United States regarding our common pastoral and liturgical prescriptions for our Church in regards to the present pandemic in which all the citizens of this country are suffering and dealing with, namely the novel coronavirus COVID-19.

It is with a sorrowful and heavy hear that we inform all of our priests, deacons, parish committees and the beloved faithful that due to the present circumstances of a great health risk to the faithful, we are suspending the public celebration of Holy Raza and the distribution of Holy Communion to the faithful as of this Sunday, March 22nd. This is, therefore, an adjustment of the liturgical prescriptions of our earlier circular letter of March 17th. This suspension of Holy Raza for the public will include the holy feast of Palm Sunday-Oshane (April 5th), Holy Thursday of the Passover-Peskha (April 9th), Friday of the Sorrows/Good Friday (April 10th), and both the Easter Vigil-Shaharta (April 11th) and the morning of the Feast of the Resurrection (April 12th). We will notify all of our parishes when this suspension is lifted, in sync with the general health provisions and mandates of our government.

This decision was not easy for us to take, however, our great sense of duty and care for the health and physical welfare of our faithful has left us with no other recourse, as we are informed particularly that in many areas a governmental mandated ‘shelter-in-place’ is in force. In the meantime, we ask that each parish priest, assisted by his deacons, parish motwa and lay ministers, continue to broadcast the closed celebration of the Holy Raza on their parish’s internet media in as much as possible. Also, the programs

of Youth Bible Study and Children’s Ministry should equally continue via the technologies available to all of us today. It is of the utmost importance that contact between the clergy (particularly the parish priest) and the parishioners is kept during this unknown period, in as much as possible. Should you have an urgent/emergency pastoral need, contact your parish priest.

We would also like to remind the clergy and faithful regarding the liturgical directive given with regard to funerals, namely: a funeral in any given parish is to be conducted by only a very few number of clergy, in an abbreviated format, with only the immediate family members present. No funeral luncheons may be held on any church premises at any time. We also highly discourage any condolence gatherings at the home of the deceased, except for the immediate family. Rather, contact the family via phone and keep them in your prayers.

These are difficult times for all of us, however, by the grace of God and with the prayers of the clergy and faithful, we firmly believe that the Lord will have mercy on all of us—even as he did on the Ninevites who fasted and prayed for their deliverance—while submitting always to His holy will for us, and offering thanksgiving to Him in all things!

Finally, please remember, beloved, that the Church will suffer not only by not having the faithful present, but also materially. We want to carry the burden of our faithful, both spiritually and materially, but in as much as possible do not forget to support the Church’s ministries and monetary obligations as well.

In closing, let us continue to supplicate the Lord our God during this pandemic, which is affecting all of mankind. Let us seek the prayers of the holy and blessed Saints to accompany us—particularly of St. Mary the Blessed and Ever-Virgin, the Mother of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ—that they too may supplicate with us. May the Lord bless each and every one of you, as we carry you in our hearts and prayers. Remember also to pray for one another.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all; Amen+++

Issued on this 20th day of March, in the year of Our Lord 2020:-

✠Aprim Khamis
Bishop of Western USA



✠Awa Royel
Bishop of California



✠Paulus Benjamin
Bishop of Eastern USA

