



Office of the Metropolitan

*312 Garfield Street
Johnstown, PA 15906*

August 27, 2020

Protocol No. 33/2020

Glory to Jesus Christ!

Dear Reverend Clergy and Faithful of our God-Protected Diocese,

Today I am writing to express my concerns about the importance of religious education especially in this time of the Coronavirus pandemic.

First, let me say that the most important time and place for the religious education of our youth, but also the adults, is while we are participating in the Divine Liturgy of the Church. When and where is there a better time and place to see, hear, touch, smell and taste our Orthodox Faith? All five of our senses are fully engaged. This is when we most experience the Faith as a family. It is an imperative to be in the Divine Liturgy on a weekly basis. This is the time and place where we will see the icons and hear the hymns commemorating the Saints and /or Feasts of the day. In addition we hear the Epistle and Gospel Readings for the day. This is the time and place where we normally venerate items of the Faith. This is the time and place where we smell the fragrance of the incense offered to God. This is the time and place where we receive and taste God's gift to us, the Eucharist, the Body and Blood of His Son Jesus Christ. This is the time and place where together as the Christian family we offer praises and prayers to God, thanking Him for His gifts and asking for His help with our needs. Our participation is crucial to our lives.

Second, let me say that the next most important time and place for religious education of our youth is in Sunday School. This is the time and place where our beloved teachers offer additional information about our Orthodox Faith, its practices and traditions. The lives of Saints and their icons are examined. Feast days of the Church are studied for their importance and relevance in our lives. Life issues are presented and morals are reinforced by presenting them in the context of the Orthodox Faith. This time is very important in the Orthodox understanding and the spiritual development of our children. It must take priority in their lives Sunday morning.

As we enter the Ecclesiastical New Year on September 1/September 14 we must renew our efforts to educate our young people. In this time of the Coronavirus it might seem easier to delay things until things get better, whatever that means, but we cannot afford this delay. Our children are most important to us. Let us do whatever is necessary not only for their spiritual development, but also their physical protection. Each Priest and those responsible for religious education should get together to discuss ways of "making it happen", in other words making sure that Sunday School begins as soon as possible. Each local area within our Diocese has various directives connected to the Coronavirus, try to interpret them and move forward as safely as possible. Already some of our parishes have made their

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plans including for the use of masks, social distancing, on-line classes, out-door classes as long as the weather cooperates, etc. Everyone should figure out what works best for your community and then implement your local plan. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to write or call me.

Looking forward to the Ecclesiastical New Year with much love,

+Metropolitan Gregory

+Metropolitan Gregory of Nyssa

This Protocol is to be distributed by all means available including emailing of parishioners.