



COPTIC ORTHODOX
PATRIARCHATE



DIOCESE OF MISSISSAUGA,
Vancouver and Western Canada



Date: April 19, 2021

Subject: Holy Week Service During Stay-at-Home Order - Ontario (Effective for April 25 to May 2, 2021)

“Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.” Philippians 2:4

Beloved Congregants,

We recognize that the timing of the Stay-at-Home Order, one week prior to the Holy Week, created a considerable mix of feelings and challenges to all of us, Coptic Christian congregants and clergy included. This is the second Holy Week since the onset of the pandemic during which our churches are significantly limited in their capacity due to the continued seriousness of the pandemic. This is a time when we need to remember the words of our late Pope His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, *“It will definitely come to an end soon.”*

H.G. Bishop Mina and Ontario clergy met to review and assess the situation and to agree on guidelines regarding Holy Week service arrangements. We recognize that the continued rise of COVID-19 cases is very serious. Ontario is under a Stay-at-Home Order until May 20 and our continued commitment is providing our congregants with spiritual revival that does not compromise their safety. Our commitment since the onset of the pandemic is your safety. Thus, we agreed on the following:

- We continue to strictly abide by all Public Health precautions for safety.
- As the Stay-at-Home Order states that the maximum attendance limit of religious services is 10 people, Holy Week services inside churches will be limited to clergy and lead deacons only, maximum 10 people in total. To control the transmission of the virus, the number of participating lead deacons will be kept the minimum required for each service.
- According to each church circumstances, a set group of lead deacons up to a maximum of 15 deacons will be selected to participate in the Holy Week services throughout this week. Only this group of deacons will be assigned services during Holy Week in order to limit exposure. Participants will be screened before every service.
- Churches will not be able to provide drop-in Communion.
- Churches could organize a schedule for other deacons to participate in services virtually.
- If a deacon or clergy member who is assigned a service feels any symptoms or comes in contact with a suspected COVID-19 case, he needs to excuse himself from the assigned service.
- Pastoral care is to be limited to virtual and phone checkups. Home visits and drop-off of any items are **not** permitted.
- No distribution or selling of palm branches this year.

May Jesus Christ, our true God, who through His own goodwill accepted suffering and was crucified on the cross for our sakes, bless us with all spiritual blessings, support us, complete for us the holy Pascha, and bring forth upon us the joy of His Holy Resurrection for many years and peaceful times.

Diocese of Mississauga, Vancouver and Western Canada