



The Orthodox Church in America
DIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA AND EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA
The Most Rev. Mark, Archbishop of Philadelphia

March 26, 2021
Leave-taking of the Annunciation
Synaxis of the Archangel Gabriel

**TO BE READ FROM THE PULPIT, PUBLISHED IN THE BULLETIN AND POSTED
ON PARISH WEBSITES**

Dear to God,

Christ is in our midst! Greetings as we begin the third week of Great Lent. I pray your Lenten Journey is proving fruitful.

The past year has truly been a rollercoaster ride for all of us and we need to be mindful and considerate of those suffering from isolation, fear, anxiety, depression, substance abuse and loneliness, as well as those who have lost loved ones. Additionally, divisions occurred as people lost the ability to discuss differing opinions on a variety of matters. Hopefully, we are encouraged by the drastic decrease in the number of hospitalizations and deaths attributed to COVID 19 since mid-January, even before significant numbers were administered the experimental COVID 19.

On January 22, 2021 the Assembly of Bishops issued a **Statement Regarding Developments in Medicine: COVID-19 Vaccines & Immunizations.**¹ The fourth paragraph explicitly states, “*We therefore encourage all of you – the clergy and the lay faithful of our Church – to consult your physicians in order to determine the appropriate course of action for you, just as you do for surgeries, medications, and vaccinations, in cancer treatments and other ailments.*”

Each person must prayerfully consider what the correct course of action is. As your Bishop, I insist each of you respect the **conscience** and privacy of your brothers and sisters in Christ. No one is to be asked if he or she has or has not received the injections. No one is to be denied full participation in the Divine Services or parish life regardless of his or her decision. No one should be judged or criticized one way or the other.

Let us continue the Fast focusing on drawing nearer to Christ the Source of Life and to one another.

Your unworthy father in Christ,

+ Mark

+ MARK, Archbishop of Philadelphia and the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania

¹ The text of which may be found at the following link,
<https://www.assemblyofbishops.org/assets/files/messages/AoB%20Exec%20Co%20Medicine%20Statement.pdf>



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“Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in Thee.” Augustine