



ВОСТОЧНО-АМЕРИКАНСКАЯ ЕПАРХИЯ
Русская Православная Церковь Заграницей

EASTERN AMERICAN DIOCESE
Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia

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June 2/15, 2020

Holy Hierarch Nicephorus the Confessor
First Day of the Apostles' Fast

ARCHPASTORAL EPISTLE
of His Eminence HILARION
Metropolitan of Eastern America & New York
First Hierarch of the Russian Church Abroad
to the Clergy & Flock of the Dioceses of Eastern American and Australia & New Zealand

Dear in the Lord father-concelebrants, brothers and sisters!

I lovingly greet you all with the concluded days of the Paschal period, when we hear the most beautiful, instructive, and contemplative hymnography at the divine services, dedicated to the great work of our salvation!

God's love toward fallen man led the Savior to the Cross and down into hades, to the very center of mighty evil, in order to deliver mankind from the power of that evil. The power of that sacrificial love accomplished Christ's Glorious Resurrection, when Life vanquished death, and the Lord's Ascension, when our human flesh and our human nature were raised up to the realms of eternity and to the Throne of God. God's love sent down upon mankind the grace-filled gifts of the Holy Spirit, establishing the Church in which we delight in communion with God, as once Adam did in Paradise. After the miraculous descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles, man once more received the opportunity to commune with God, with His Beauty and Holiness, through the Sacramental and prayerful life of Christ's Church.

How then must we, a fallen people, answer this love of God? The answer is very simple: with sanctity. Thus, on the first Sunday after Pentecost, we celebrate the memory of all the saints. Sanctity – holiness – is the natural result of the establishment of the Church. Every one of the saints acquired this great gift not only by way of communing with God in the Church, but by enduring their own ascetic struggles and the cross placed upon them by God. It is for this reason that we fast during these days, which lead us to the feast of the Supreme Leaders of the

Apostles Peter and Paul. We fast also in memory of the apostles who, girded about with the power of the grace of the Holy Spirit, went out to preach with the staff of fasting and prayer, and enlightened the whole world.

Our forebears, in their tradition, considered the Apostles' Fast an opportunity to finish what we did not have a chance to accomplish during Great Lent. Glory to God, it is during these same days that the normal course of the ecclesiastical and liturgical life is gradually being restored in our parishes and monasteries. On this Friday of the week of All Saints, we will celebrate the feast of the Kursk Root Icon of the Mother of God, the Protectress of the Russian Diaspora, which is observed triumphally in Kursk with a cross procession from the Diocesan Cathedral of the Sign to the Kursk Root Hermitage. June 10/23 is the feast day of the Holy Hierarch John (Maximovitch), Metropolitan of Tobolsk, the great forebear of the Holy Hierarch John, Archbishop of Shanghai & San Francisco, the Wonderworker. The latter reposed in the Lord on June 19/July 2, 1966, in the presence of the above-mentioned icon. June 24/July 7 is the Nativity of the Forerunner and Baptist of the Lord John, the great teacher of repentance. Thus, in returning to the liturgical life, let us make full use of this salvific time to renew our work on ourselves, the work we began during Great Lent. Let us remember the days of Passion Week and Holy Pascha, when many of us were deprived of shared prayer and interaction. During this time, many worshippers in our churches were simply starved of the Divine Liturgy.

Making use of this opportunity, I call on the parish and monastery rectors who are opening their churches for public services to follow all hygienic norms and local guidelines, remembering that the first Christians, despite persecutions, were always law-abiding citizens of their countries. We bless the communing of the clergy and laity, as always, in the usual fashion, which we called for even during the period of strictest quarantine.

Let us pray to all the saints, especially to the saints who shone forth in the Russian land and in the Diaspora, that they might confirm in us the Faith, teach us to live virtuously, and help us to bear our cross with humility and patience and to love, treasure, and hold fast what we have, unto the salvation of our souls. Amen.

Asking your holy prayers,
with love in the Lord I remain the first servant of our Diocese,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a plus sign followed by the name "Hilarion" in a cursive script.

Metropolitan of Eastern America & New York
First Hierarch of the Russian Church Abroad