

THE DIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA & EUROPE

The Mar Thoma Church

Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos
Diocesan Bishop



Sinai Mar Thoma Center
2320 S. Merrick Avenue
Merrick, NY 11566
Tel: (516) 377-3311
Fax: (516) 377-3322

Email: marthomadiocese@gmail.com

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Blessings to the Members of all the Parishes and Congregations in the Diocese of North America and Europe of the Mar Thoma Church.

Dearly beloved in Christ,

For the last few months 'beginning with an epidemic that quickly became an emergency situation, COVID-19 has escalated into a global crisis, spreading fear and uncertainty everywhere'. In the present scenario, we as parishes of the Diocese of North America and Europe of the Mar Thoma Church should take it seriously in providing necessary pastoral care and support through our persistent prayers and spiritual help to all people who are undergoing this crisis. We especially pray for the elderly people, and those who are vulnerable. Moreover, let us gratefully uphold in prayer the commendable service of all our members especially health workers and all our medical support services staff. It would be desirable that parishes and congregations may find feasible ways of helping people with the spiritual support at this time.

The governments in our countries has already announced a number of measures that suggest the immediate need of avoiding gatherings in the confined spaces. For the sake of the parish members and the wider community, we must take seriously the 'social-distancing' recommendations of the government. In this unusual and painful time, we recommend that in-person gathering for public worship services in our parishes or group gathering at houses are suspended for the time being in line with the Government guidance. This proactive and pastoral measure is taken in order to reduce the risks of transmission of the disease. This affects not only our Sunday services but all other prayer/organizational meetings and fellowships, regardless of their size.

Though we have limitations to have congregational worship services, but we do have other alternative methods of community prayers and worship services. At this juncture it will be appropriate to use technological means with responsible and creative ways to connect with parish members and encourage them to become a virtual worshipping community. Kindly find out the possibilities of live streaming of the worship services if we have the resources to do so. It is also necessary to offer phone call support and arrange regular intercessory prayer through the same. Some of the parishes and congregations have already commenced to use WhatsApp, Zoom, and Skype calls for group prayers. We are planning to have live stream telecast of Passion Week Services which will be useful for the whole diocese.

It is a time to meditate on the suffering of Christ and be aware of our limitations and come closer to God for healing and reconciliation. May God Almighty help us to overcome this situation soon and enable us to grow in faith.

Yours in His Ministry,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Isaac Mar Philoxenos".

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