August 14, 2015
Prophet Micah

To the reverend Clergy of the Holy and God-Protected Metropolis of Pittsburgh,

As a conclusion to our conversation which began earlier this year regarding the celebration of the Divine Liturgy in the evenings to allow the celebration of feastdays that fall during the week while also accommodating the busy schedules of our parishioners, I affirm that the only Vesperal Divine Liturgies that are permitted are those prescribed to be celebrated as part of the Great Feasts of Pascha, Great and Holy Thursday, Theophany, and the Nativity of our Lord. These Vesperal Divine Liturgies are specially crafted for those particular celebrations – setting apart these occasions as Baptismal feasts and allowing for neophytes to enter the Christian Church and celebrate the major Holy Days – and are not considered to be templates for further application according to the current practice by the Church of Constantinople.

For those priests who for pastoral reasons want to celebrate Divine Liturgies in the evenings, there are only three available options:

**Option 1:** A vigil that allows for the sequential celebration of Vespers, Matins, and the Divine Liturgy. *(This practice is preserved in monastic settings, with the addition in many places of other monastic rite services, such as Midnight Office and the Hours.)*

**Option 2:** The celebration of Matins and Liturgy successively in the evening *(Greek custom)* or the Hours and Liturgy *(Slavic/Monastic custom).*

**Option 3:** The celebration of the Divine Liturgy “alone” in the evening, without Vespers or Matins preceding it. The congregation may be led in the reading of the Service of Holy Communion** before the Liturgy, giving the celebrant ample time to take kairos, vest, and celebrate proskomede at the Table of Oblation while providing a prayerful preparation for the people’s participation in the Liturgy. *However, this removes the Liturgy from the greater context of the celebration of that particular Saint or feastday and should be considered an option of last resort for when there is no cantor available.*

The evening Divine Liturgy should be celebrated respecting the cycle of the Liturgical day rather than the calendar day – i.e. it should be celebrated on the evening before the day *(e.g. the feast of St. Euphemia falls on September 16; if an evening Liturgy is to be*
celebrated for her feast, then it should be conducted on the evening of September 15). No evening Divine Liturgies are to be celebrated on Saturdays or Sundays.

I also take this opportunity to clearly delineate my expectations regarding the canonical celebration of multiple Liturgies for the feasts of the Nativity of our Lord and Theophany. The Typikon of the Great Church of Christ calls for two Divine Liturgies to be celebrated for these feasts (these, plus Pascha, are the only days when multiple Liturgies are prescribed for a single feastday): a Vesperal Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great, and an Orthros and Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom. For many parishioners, the Vesperal Divine Liturgy is their primary celebration of the feast; this cannot be, though, for our parishes. The Vesperal Divine Liturgy is not a replacement for the liturgy celebrated on the day of the feast – the primary festal liturgy and the Synaxis par excellence of the Church for that occasion. Each community is expected to celebrate the Orthros and Divine Liturgy on both the Nativity and Theophany.

For each feast, when the feast falls on a Tuesday through Saturday, the Vesperal Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great is to be celebrated the evening before (December 24 for the Nativity, January 5 for the Theophany), and the Orthros and Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom is to be celebrated on the feastday (December 25 and January 6) in the morning. When either feast falls on a Sunday or Monday, then the celebration of that feast is altered from this pattern; the day before the feast (Dec 24 / Jan 5) features an Orthros and Divine Liturgy of St. John in the morning and a stand-alone Great Vespers in the evening, and the feastday itself receives a morning Orthros and Divine Liturgy of St. Basil. (If the feast falls on a Sunday or Monday, then the Royal Hours are celebrated in the morning on the Friday beforehand.)

I take this opportunity to extend my heartfelt gratitude to Fr. Stelyios Muksuris for his expertise and advice during the process of weighing the available options and proper liturgical practices.

Praying that the Lord continues to enrich the sacramental lives of your communities,

With Archpastoral blessings and love in the Lord,

+ Metropolitan Savas

** A monastic service observed in monasteries and recommended for the lay faithful to recite before attending church on Sunday morning. The service is divided into two sections: (1) the canon for Holy Communion is chanted or read within the context of the Small Compline on the eve of a eucharistic liturgy; and (2) the prayers before Holy Communion are read within the context of the prescribed Morning Prayers before attending the Divine Liturgy. (Definition by Fr. Stelyios Muksuris)