



Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East | ܩܘܪܒܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܒܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܒܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܒܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܒܢܐ  
Archdiocese of Australia, New Zealand & Lebanon  
Archbishopric: 25 Edinburgh Circuit, Cecil Hills NSW 2171 Australia  
(t) +61 2 9822 1134 (f) +61 2 9822 1132 (e) archbishop@assyrianchurch.org.au

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*Reverend priests and deacons and all faithful sons and daughters of the  
Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East in the  
Archdiocese of Australia, New Zealand and Lebanon:  
Prayers and Blessings Receive!*

It is with great difficulty and a heavy heart, and for the first time since 1985, that I write this Epistle to you all to advise that the churches in the Archdiocese will be closed effective this week. This applies to the celebration of the Holy Qurbana (Eucharistic Liturgy) on the following days:

1. Sunday of Hosannas (Palm Sunday)
2. Thursday of Passover
3. Friday of Sorrows (Good Friday) and attendance at cemeteries; and,
4. The Holy Qurbana (Eucharistic Liturgy) for the Feast of the Resurrection of our Lord.

These prescriptions are due to the spread and infection of many people with the novel coronavirus COVID-19 and to fulfil directives that have been made by government authorities, namely that gatherings of more than 100 persons must not occur; including in churches and places of assembly.

We also inform our beloved faithful that the celebration of Holy Qurbana for the Sunday of Hosannas (Palm Sunday) and the Feast of the Resurrection (Easter) will be broadcast on the Internet for you all to observe. These celebrations of the Holy Qurbana will be consecrated by us with the presence of parish priests but without the participation of any faithful whatsoever.

As you are aware, each Sunday our churches are filled with more than 1000 faithful individuals and this number increases to the thousands on the celebration of feast and festival days. In particular, for example, on the Sunday of the Hosannas (Palm Sunday), more than 5000 faithful participate in services at the Cathedral Church of St Hurmizd alone. Similarly, this is the case in Melbourne and New Zealand also.

Therefore, in fulfilment of the directive of the Department of Health we cannot fulfil these services for the faithful. We do not know when government authorities will amend their prescriptions which may remain in place for months.

We have but to listen to the words of Peter in his Epistle:

*“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:  
Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you” (1 Peter 5:6-7).*

It is vital that we pray and beseech Him to aid and protect us in these difficult times.

Our expectation of you all is that you remain always in prayer and supplication to God the Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ that He may allow this country and all countries to pass from this sorrowful time; and, that He turns it into a time of happiness and joy in the salvation He has given us through his Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. May we be patient and prayerful during all trials that we endure for through trials we become stronger and our faith grows in the love of God and His kindness and mercy.

*“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.” (Hebrews 13:20-21).*

Our expectation at this time of the Feast of the Resurrection is that you will not forget to help the poor and needy and that you support your church which is also experiencing difficult times from many perspectives.

May the grace and mercy of God be with you all and protect you under the shade of wellness at all times. May health be given to all those affected by this illness wherever they may be. And may you be blessed with health of body and spirit through the prayers of our Blessed Mother, the Virgin Mary and St Hurmizd. Amen.

A handwritten signature in black ink, featuring a small cross symbol above the first letter of the name. The signature is fluid and cursive, appearing to read 'M. Zaia'.

Mar Meelis Zaia AM  
Archbishop of Australia, New Zealand & Lebanon