



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

March 24, 2026

## KNEELING IN THE CHURCH

Dear to clergy and faithful of the Diocese,

Christ is in our midst! He is and ever shall be. I pray your Lenten Journey is fruitful. Please forgive the delay in addressing the issue of kneeling in the Church. There are matters of Church decorum that are universal, such as not crossing your legs, not chewing gum, not moving around or entering and exiting the Church during the reading of the Gospel or during the censuring of the Church.

As Sunday is the Day of Resurrection, kneeling is prohibited in many of the Orthodox Churches as it is considered penitential. In Carpatho-Rusyn tradition, people kneel during the anaphora and the Lord's prayer. Either is acceptable. The Antiochians introduced kneeling on Sundays when they were not celebrating Feast Days during the week but transferred them to nearest Sunday several years ago. Now that they resumed weekday festal liturgies kneeling on Sunday is declining and they are returning to their authentic tradition of only kneeling at a weekday liturgy. I mention these things to underscore that there remains a distinction between Tradition with a capital "T" and traditions with a small "t," sometimes referred to as local pious customs.

As we approach Holy Week, I want to remind you that kneeling during the Passion Gospels on Holy Thursday is a local custom. Both kneeling and standing are, however, acceptable. If kneeling is too painful and distracts you from hearing the Gospel, then remain standing. We must be reasonable and realize that if all we can think about when kneeling is how much pain we are in, then we are not able to hear about the sufferings of our Lord.

Sincerely,

+ Mark

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

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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

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