

*Glory to Jesus Christ!*

My Dear Friends,

What a year 2020 has been! A woman told me she decided to skip the rest of the year and start her new year on September 1. On our calendar from the Eastern Roman Empire, we do start the year on September 1, so maybe we should all move on early. At a Divine Liturgy at the Cathedral I was admitting that I get confused about what order to do everything because our services are so disrupted by our sanitary processes. The priest said to me, "Don't apologize Bishop. We're all newly ordained priests this year, trying to figure out what to do." Thanks to your generosity, we really do have one newly ordained priest this year, but the rest of us are all beginners too.

Every year I enjoy sharing an icon with you from your collection here in Woodland Park. That's one thing we are still allowed to do. One of our most popular icons and most popular feast days is the Protection of the Mother of God, also called Pokrov. In the icon you can see the Mother of God in the center. She is holding her veil, spread out in protection for us. Her raised hands are the posture used for prayer by the early Christians. One of the most ancient paintings of Mary is in a catacomb in Rome and shows her in this posture. Our Lord Jesus Christ is above blessing with one hand and holding a book with his other hand. She is surrounded by four archangels and twelve saints. On the bottom is St. Romanos, the melodist, and the lower right corner shows the Mother of God giving St. Romanos his vocation while he sleeps. There is a complete description with all the names on our eparchial website. We certainly do need extra protection this year.

I am so inspired at how our people stepped up to take care of each other and their parishes during the epidemic, and how the priests reinvented ministry for our time. I know many people have lost their income, or had their lives disrupted in other ways. This year, I ask for financial assistance in the work of the Eparchy only if you can afford it. If you are unable to assist financially this year, I completely understand. You need to care for yourself, your own family, and your own parish first. Please pray for our Eparchy in any case. As you can see all around the country, people need the light of Jesus Christ more than ever before. Please pray as never before for God's mercy and blessings in our country. I pray every morning to the Mother of God for every one of you. May the Holy Virgin protect you under her mantle this year.

*Bishop Kurt Burnette*