

УКРАЇНСЬКА КАТОЛИЦЬКА ЄПАРХІЯ  
СВЯТОГО МИКОЛАЯ



UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC EPARCHY OF  
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March 13, 2020

OUT-2020-63ENG

Glory be to Jesus Christ!

Dear faithful,

The Lord is with us...in times of happiness and in times of sadness, but especially now, when the whole world is engulfed in great fear and uncertainty because of the coronavirus pandemic COVID-19. We live with human limitations, and therefore, it can be very difficult at times to be steadfast during great tribulation, however, every test sent is by the will of God. It is important to remember not to panic in such situations, especially through the influence and dissemination of information through mass media, much of which is incomplete and/or incorrect. We are a people of faith, we believe in Jesus Christ, who is the Lord of all that is visible and invisible. We trust Him with our lives and the lives of our loved ones. That is why, in times of sadness and trials, we unite in prayer with Our Lord, the Conqueror of death. In God we will find His will and answers to all our questions and fears. Problems do not exist for God, they are with us because of the sickness of sin, of which we had taken ill, and of which only Jesus Christ is the true healer.

During a time of pandemic, a person may go to extremes, on one hand fearing for oneself and friends, on the other hand completely ignoring the reality of existing danger. We are people of faith which is based understanding God and His Will. Only then, in times of pandemic, we can stay calm and expressly follow the directives and instructions of civil departments of the local governments and maintain sanitary norms prescribed for the health and safety of the population.

What is the Church doing during this pandemic? The Church is constantly active in the world, carrying on its mission of salvation for every person. Even pandemics and quarantines become an opportunity for us to serve those in need and glorify the Lord. We can make adjustments in our Church and spiritual lives, in view of safety, but we will always bear witness to God's Love for humankind. Therefore, I charge the Reverend Fathers and Pastoral Councils to ensure that our Churches are places of safety and cleanliness, free from possible dangers to the health of our faithful. Please ensure that our Churches are cleaned with anti-bacterial products on a regular basis, especially before and after liturgical services and regularly wipe down icons and other sacred relics on display for the faithful.

Should Church be attended during a pandemic? The one, who is sick, or feels uncertain health wise, should stay home and not risk infecting others and should see a doctor. The one, who has a fear of attending Church for communal services, should also stay home. Let the person who is healthy, will abide by safety norms set in place, will not panic, and is not afraid of attending communal services come to Church. While in Church, avoid hand contact and hugging. It is recommended to suspend social activities after services for the duration. The Church, in times of



danger, becomes and special place of hope through prayer and supplication for the end of this pestilence, for healing and God's Mercy.

Is the Church to serve the Divine Office of Holy Eucharist? The Divine Liturgy is the culmination of Christian life, the center of our being, a point of God's intimate contact with each of us. That is why, we continue to serve our services according to liturgical texts and administer Holy Eucharist to our faithful. Receiving of Holy Eucharist takes place in the usual fashion: approach the chalice, stand straight, tilt your head back and open your mouth wide, not touching the spoon. The Priest, on his part, carefully administers the Eucharist, assuring the correct size of spoon used and size of the Host. We should not be afraid to receive the Holy Eucharist, because the Eucharist Christ is our assurance of eternal life and victory over sin and death. Approach Him with faith, for He is the Healer of our soul and body. The priest, who visits the ill and/or dying with the Holy Eucharist, is to adhere to appropriate hygienic and sanitary norms. He should prepare the appropriate measures in advance (mask, gloves, anti-bacterial wipes/gel). We encourage our faithful to use masks as needed, and for our clergy to use them, especially in the confessional. It is imperative to clean confessionals with anti-bacterial solutions. Priests should wash and disinfect their hands frequently. At the time of administering of Last Rites (Holy Unction), the priest should try to apply the Holy oil with minimum of contact to the sick/dying, avoid touching his own face afterwards, especially the eyes and tear ducts, without washing his hands.

Why, Lord? People ask this question every time suffering enters their lives. I believe that we need to spiritually comprehend the sense or current events. The contemporary person, who relies on his own self "me", on technological advances, might learn in times of tribulations, in a world created by themselves, may rethink and understand the "signs of the times" in these events and realize his/her relationship with God and to His Laws in the light of current excesses and challenges. We are a people of faith, and that is why we see God's Providence in this event which is teaching today's world to stop, listen and understand the language of God, the language of His Mercy and Love. We also have the unique opportunity to demonstrate and realize the second commandment of loving one another. Let us protect ourselves, not only from this virus, which can destroy our body, but also from the virus, that can kill our soul, through panic, anger, censure and confusion. May Christ, our Victor, become a support for each of us, may the Light of the Resurrection, to which we are going during this Great Lent, be our motivator for endurance and our hope for Victory.

May the blessings of the Lord be upon you!



*Бенедикт*  
Most Reverend Benedict  
Bishop St. Nicholas Eparchy

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Very Rev. Serhiy Kovalchuk  
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