

March 20th, 2020 A.D.

Reverend Fathers, Dear Brothers and Sisters of the Eastern Eparchy of the UOCC

Glory to Jesus Christ!

“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2)

The spread of the coronavirus – COVID-19 infection is a human tragedy of the 21st century, to which the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Canada cannot fail to turn its attention or fail to offer her faithful children direction and support. In regard to this crisis many ideas and thoughts have been expressed to the primate of our Church, Metropolitan Yuriy, and the Metropolitan offered his directives and counsel this past week in his letters of March 13th and 16th.

I personally would like to again express my sympathy to the families of our Eastern Eparchy who are going through this difficult experience or, God forbid, in the future may become victims of the coronavirus which spreads so rapidly. I express my thanks to the family doctors of our eastern provinces of Ontario and Quebec who are selflessly fighting this new battle faced by contemporary medical science. I call upon all our clergy and faithful to avoid panic, because panic is never helpful, *“that I may cut off the opportunity from those who desire an opportunity.” (II Cor. 11:12)*, but I entreat all of you to follow the hygienic protocols which have been recommended by our medical practitioners.

I wish to assure you that I may be adopting additional measures in the near future if the infection continues to spread. We strive to solve this problem which faces us with wisdom and understanding today, not putting it off till tomorrow, for tomorrow may be too late.

I call upon all of you - dear Fathers, Brothers and Sisters in Christ of our Eastern Eparchy – to increase your prayer, so that this pandemic would be defeated in Canada, in Ukraine, and throughout the world, and that the people of our planet, throughout the whole earth, would come to the correct conclusion and beseech forgiveness of God and neighbour for all their sins, committed either in knowledge or in ignorance.

In regard to the Holy Services, we are working on a plan to live-stream video of the Sunday Liturgy here in our Eastern Eparchy parishes, and you will be informed of this when the technical details are available.

We also request that all the faithful of our Eparchy, especially the elderly and those with compromised health, remain at home if you have been in contact with someone who is infected, or feel the symptoms of any illness, so that others might not become infected. I have faith that this simple advice will be helpful to all of you.

In accordance with the directives of our Metropolitan the temples of our Church will temporarily continue to be closed. I will inform you when services will begin again in our temples, this will be dependent upon the level of transmission of the virus and

especially upon the decisions and direction of the federal, provincial, and local authorities, as well as the advice and direction of professional medical personnel. The Church will not simply be a spectator to what is happening, but will always care not only for the spiritual, but also for the physical health of her faithful.

And so I call upon all of you, dear Fathers of our Eastern Eparchy, never to turn your back on anyone, but rather in this difficult time for all people to support them: the sick and the well, the old, the young, the children. Try not to be afraid when you visit the sick in hospitals or nursing homes. When doing so make sure to take all precautions and make use of all means recommended and required by the medical staff – donning masks, surgical gloves, etc. Strive to make sure that no one is left alone in their misfortune. Remember that **“inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these, My brethren, you did it to Me” (Mt. 25:40).**

Dear Fathers, Brothers and Sisters!

I ask all of you to increase and strengthen your daily prayers for the health of our Canadian and Ukrainian people, and for all the people of the world, especially for those who put their lives at the greatest risk of contracting this disease because of their commitment to save the life of their neighbour and to defeat the COVID-19 virus.

May the Lord help us to get through this difficult time of trial, and from today to live in accordance with the Lord’s righteousness, fulfilling the commandments of God and the Church with a clean conscience.

The blessing of our Lord, God, and Saviour Jesus Christ – the Healer of our souls and bodies – be with all of you!

+Andriy,
Bishop Eastern Eparchy, UOCC