



УКРАЇНСЬКА ПРАВОСЛАВНА ЦЕРКВА В КАНАДІ
UKRAINIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OF CANADA
L'ÉGLISE ORTHODOXE UKRAINIENNE DU CANADA

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TO THE CLERGY AND FAITHFUL OF THE UKRAINIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OF
CANADA
REGARDING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

Glory to Jesus Christ!

Your Graces, Reverend Clergy, Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

At this time of Great Lent we are called to be more active in our prayer-life, fasting and alms-giving, pro-active in doing good works and more conscious of the world around us and how we inter-act with it.

The world's attention is focussed on the spread of the Coronavirus through the various populations and countries, the various efforts and strategies being employed by governments, medical and scientific agencies, to stay or slow-down the spread of this disease. We observe differences in the state of preparedness and the rate at which the disease is spreading, even on our own continent. In Canada the rate at which the disease is spreading is behind or slower than in other neighbouring countries, though this could change at anytime.

Orthodox Churches in affected countries are not passive towards the effects of this disease and the leadership of the various Orthodox jurisdictions are issuing similar directives to the Clergy and laity as to how they are to conduct themselves at this time in order to inhibit the spread of the Coronavirus. While maintaining and adhering to our theological beliefs and truths, particularly regarding the Holy Eucharist (that it is the Holy Body and Precious Blood of Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ and that it is consumed to give us life, not harm us), we need to adjust other aspects of our church practices and community life.

As individuals and community, we should follow the directives given and updated by our governmental authorities. If someone feels ill or exhibits symptoms of the flu they should not come to church, but remain at home and follow the advice of their doctor. Regarding travel by mass-transit, but particularly by air and internationally, people should also follow governmental directives.

We are informed, that the disease travels in the air as droplets and is also transmitted through contact with surfaces – hands, counter-tops, door-knobs etc. Frequent hand-washing and wiping of surfaces with disinfectant products and appropriate gels and liquids are a good practice to inhibit the spread of disease. Parishes should make these products available for use by the faithful near the entrance to the Narthex and Nave. Reverencing the blessing-hand, hand-shakes, embraces, and the thrice-kiss on the cheeks should be replaced by a slight bow. Honour towards the Holy Gospels, the Cross and Icons should be expressed through a slight bow. Antiseptic liquids and cloth should be nearby to wipe these surfaces in any event.

We bless the continuation of all regularly scheduled divine services. The Holy Eucharist will be distributed as usual: the faithful will hold their head back, with mouth wide-open, without touching the spoon, as directed by the clergy. Fellowships after church-services should be cancelled for the time-being. We will continue to monitor the situation and further directives may be issued limiting services and practices and clergy visitations to emergency situations.

Dear Clergy, Dear Brothers and Sisters, our faith and hope are in Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Events such as we are experiencing now, focus our thinking on what is important and less important in our lives, which may be at risk. But, is this not our prevailing condition, to which we are often very numb? During this Great Lent let us ponder over what we leave behind in this world and what we take with us into the next. As Christians, “Whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s”.

The world has known plagues and diseases far greater than the current one. We are armed with faith, knowledge and medicines to fight the spread of the Coronavirus. We must be resolute in our efforts, guided by our leaders in medicine, government and religion.

May God's blessing be upon all of you during Great Lent and throughout the battle with the current evil.

With love in Christ,

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Winnipeg, Canada

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