



Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Toronto and Eastern Canada
Українська Католицька Єпархія Торонта й Східної Канади

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March 20, 2020

**To the Reverend Clergy, Members of Religious Orders and Faithful of the
Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Toronto and Eastern Canada:**

For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.
(Matthew 18:20)

Dearly Beloved in Christ,

The Church is not a place, but a community. We are the Church! We are the Body of Christ! In these days when we are not able to gather for Eucharistic celebrations, the Body of Christ still gathers in our homes since He is present in us and in our families. During this difficult time, let us nurture the Body of Christ as Domestic Churches, in our own hearts and in our families, so that the true presence of the Lord, the Physician of our souls and bodies, is celebrated in each and every home. Let us read Scripture together, for the Lord makes Himself present to us in his Word. Let us use the technological means available to us to connect with one another and with the clergy of our Eparchy as they continue to pray and celebrate the Eucharist on your behalf. In longing to receive Him in the Precious Mysteries, we spiritually unite our hearts to Him through desire. Spiritual communion is available to all!

Through the prayers of the Mother of God and all the saints, may our homes be our churches, and may we grow in faith and strength, trusting that soon we will be able to celebrate again His presence among us together in our parish churches.

Since issuing the first directives for the Eparchy regarding the Coronavirus pandemic on 13 March 2020, the situation continues to worsen, forcing us to take drastic measures. In consultation with other Church officials, particularly with the Metropolitan of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church of Canada, the President of the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario and the College of Consultors, I am issuing the following directives, effective immediately.

1) GENERAL NORMS

- a) Everyone is to follow the regulations and directives of Canadian Federal and Provincial civic authorities, public health authorities and other medical sources given for the common good of society. Our directives are issued especially with due concern for the health and well-being of our clergy and faithful.
- b) Particular care is to be given in keeping all spaces and objects clean and sanitized.
- c) Special attention is to be placed on avoiding physical contact with other persons, keeping advised distances (so called physical distancing of at least two meters) from other persons, avoiding coughing, sneezing, speaking close to, and breathing upon other persons. These precautions are to be maintained in preparation for and during liturgical services.
- d) Obey and comply with current civil directives for all gatherings' restrictions These restrictions apply to all gatherings in our churches and on church property.

2) LITURGICAL SERVICES

- a) **The faithful are dispensed from the canonical obligation to attend Sunday and Feast Day Liturgies until further notice. Following the civic restriction concerning the gatherings of persons, all Sunday and Feast Day and weekday Divine Liturgies as well as Lenten services are hereby closed to the public, until further notice. However, the faithful should be assured that prayers continue inside of the Church Temple for their intentions by the clergy. This includes Lenten missions/ sermons which are only allowed by electronic means such as livestreaming or video. Spiritual communion is available to all!**
- b) **Clergy are to celebrate these liturgies** with limited assistants, such as cantors and a deacon, for the given intentions; for Domestic Churches; for Parishes; for the sick and medical personnel; for the deceased etc. Faithful are encouraged to make all efforts to unite in prayer with other Domestic Churches, during the time of Divine Worship being enacted in the Church Temple.
- c) **Special Instructions** will follow for services that are still a few weeks off such as Holy Week and Easter. Projections are that the status of the pandemic will intensify. Stay tuned for a more comprehensive explanation of “blessing”.
- d) **Electronic means to transmit liturgical services** for the sake of spiritual unity, include “live streaming”, and other uses of the internet to strengthen a focus on the Domestic Church. Pre-recorded services, homilies, catechesis and other similar presentations can be made available via “You Tube” or other social media platforms. Domestic Churches are encouraged to access available programming via the internet and other means, especially from within the Eparchy as well as those transmitted from Ukraine. Share what your Domestic Church is doing electronically so that others are encouraged. Further, updates as to available online resources will be given by separate communication from your parish priest and other online links. Finding resources online as a family is a great activity.

- e) **Funerals** may continue to be conducted in churches and funeral homes according to local regulations. Gathering restrictions must be followed, in consultation with relatives of the deceased. Persons who are at risk should not attend. Families may request immediate burial with a *Panakhida* and interment rites at the gravesite. At this time the funeral service should consist of the *Parastas* and/or *Panakhida*. A memorial Divine Liturgy can be planned for a later date. Receptions following a funeral are not to take place publically, especially on church property.
- f) **Marriages/ Crowning** are permitted with a priest, the groom and bride as well as two official witnesses complying with canon law and guidelines /directives from civic authorities. Other aspects of the wedding must be postponed to a later date or until civic directives change.
- g) **Baptism and Chrismation / Rites of Initiation** must be postponed to a later date, except in danger of death.
- h) **Sacrament of Reconciliation /Confession** will continue to be made available to the faithful only on an emergency basis and with the cleric taking all necessary precautions. Governed by a separate Decree that is forth coming, an option of General Absolution is available for clergy to administer, that is, one person at a time and not in groups, so that personal exposure to a priest and penitent is kept to a minimum. A regular confession of some length is acceptable in a large room or outside.
- i) **Ministry to the Sick and Shut-Ins** may continue but complying with the health directives of hospitals, health care facilities and private homes. While providing spiritual support to those in need, clergy are to avoid situations where they, too, can become carriers of the virus and thus endanger others. Precautions are to be taken with Reconciliation and the Anointing of the Sick.

3) SANITARY NORMS

- a) **Clergy should conduct themselves as if they are carriers that are infected but perhaps not showing symptoms.** Clergy and others assisting around the altar must wash their hands thoroughly before and after every liturgical service. Health directives of hospitals, health care facilities and private homes must be adhered to if assisting a priest, such as vesting.
- b) Clergy and laity must refrain from shaking hands and any other forms of body contact within the church. Again, keeping a distance between persons is also important.
- c) On the first sign of illness or feeling unwell, clergy are to self-isolate until such time as symptoms are not present or seek immediate medical attention and refrain from any pastoral duties including serving non-public Divine Services. This may be done with an *Antimension* at home if he is self-isolating or has difficulty traveling to a church.
- d) **Since public events are not allowed** it follows that when people visit a church privately:
 - i) Kissing or touching of icons, the gospel book, crosses and crucifixes or reliquaries are to be avoided.
 - ii) Sanitization of door handles, bannisters, pew tops, counters and other areas should be done frequently. Washrooms especially are to be kept sanitized.

iii) Chalices, other sacred vessels, hand crosses, gospel books and similar items are to be washed with sanitizers or warm soapy water. Purificators, towels and other linen are to be replaced with fresh ones after each liturgy.

We must remember that Christ was obedient to the Father's will. Obedience to the Holy Spirit and how the Holy Spirit is guiding us at this time is a way to unite ourselves to Christ.

"God is with us, understand this all you nations. And be humbled, for God is with us!"

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ Bryan Bayda, CSsR". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Bishop Bryan Bayda, CSsR

Apostolic Administrator of the Eparchy of Toronto and Eastern Canada