



ΓΝΗΣΙΑ ΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΟΣ ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ ΤΗΣ ΕΛΛΑΔΟΣ

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΗ ΣΥΝΟΔΟΣ ΠΑΤΡΩΟΥ ΒΟΡΤΟΛΟΓΙΟΥ

ΔΙΕΥΘΥΝΣΗ: ΤΘ 1 - 190 11 ΔΥΛΩΝ ΔΤΤΙΚΗΣ

ΤΗΛ: +30 693 2426372 - ΤΗΛΕΦΩΝΙΟΤΥΠ: +30 22950 98507

March 1, 2020 (OS)/March 14, 2020

Martyress Eudocia

Encyclical on COVID-19 and Parish Operations

Beloved Clergy and Faithful of the Avlona Synod
in North America,

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit!

My beloved children in Christ, I write to you in this time of trial in our nation and the world, to remind you that even in this time of our Lenten struggle, our eyes are firmly upon the Cross of our Lord, reminding us of his voluntary death, his trampling down of death and Resurrection on the third day, granting us life eternal!

This promise is always a comfort to us, but moreso in times of trial when we see not only the suffering of people around the world, but the fear and concern of our brothers and sisters in our local parishes. We are reminded that the Church, from 33 AD forward, has faced all sorts of trial -- of plague and pestilence, of war and hostile authorities -- and it has persevered through them all. It is in the times of testing that the Church must be **more present** to minister to the needs of the faithful and assure them through whatever hardships they may face.

Toward that end, the parishes and missions of our Holy Synod in North America will continue with their regular schedule of services. The services will be served according to the rubrics without modification. In some heterodox circles, questions have arisen as to whether services should be canceled or the administration of the Eucharist (or what they call the eucharist) should be modified. My dear brothers and sisters, we approach the Eucharist with fear and love of God, not with fear of disease! During the Lenten services, we serve the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great. In the anaphora prayer, we are reminded of this when we pray, "He arose on the third day, having made for all flesh a path to the resurrection from the dead, since it was not possible for the Author of Life to be a victim of corruption." We utterly reject any suggestion that the Holy Eucharist, which is the True Body and True Blood of Christ may be rendered dangerous by this virus. The flesh of our Lord and the Blood which poured from his side is life-giving. It has never been and never can be the cause of illness. To the contrary, St. Ignatius the God-bearer called the Eucharist the *pharmakon athanasias*, the 'medicine of immortality'. That which heals does not also poison.

In our parishes we will take the normal precautions of disinfecting frequently touched surfaces and encouraging people to practice good hygiene and to not put themselves in a position to transmit any disease to others if they are ill. We will carry the Mysteries to those who may be confined to their homes or the hospital by disease. But we will not permit fear to shake our faith, alter our services, or close our parishes.

Wait for the Lord; be strong and let your heart take courage; yea, wait for the Lord! (Pss 27.1,14; 31.24). May He protect us, grant us His peace, and see us all to that day of His glorious Pascha.



Asking your prayers,

+ *Irineos*

+ Irineos
Vicar Bishop for North America

