

Prayer at St Nicholas, during the Corona Virus pestilence.

March 4/17,2020, the 3rd week of Great Lent

Dear Faithful in Christ: news about the coronavirus is dominating our lives, and increasing restrictions are being suggested or even mandated. We are Christians, therefore everything we do we accompany with prayer. If there only are secular solutions for this virus, it will endure a long time and cause much suffering. We will pray at home and at church. You must pray! We are gathering in church to meet God and be entreating God. Only God can save. Only God can truly heal.

There is nothing wrong or evil about informed secular medical wisdom. The medical establishment has given us guidelines which our governments have told us to follow. We will follow all those guidelines that do not interrupt our prayer. We will gather for liturgy. We will gather for the Presanctified liturgy on Wednesday evening. We will pray to God and have special petitions in every service. We will also serve the Vigil service, and other prayer services.

If you desire to commune on Sunday and for some reason do not feel that you should go to the vigil service, then you must contact me for how to prepare for the Holy Mysteries. I will not tolerate people staying at home because of the coronavirus and then coming to the Liturgy in the morning unprepared. That is not good for your soul, or mine, since I am your pastor and I am responsible for you.

Throughout church history, there have been times of pestilence and tragedy, the church is gathered for more prayer at home and together. We will be doing this. You must be doing this in your home. I've already offered you suggestions, and to be honest with you, it is best for you to consider those suggestions to be commands. It's up to you whether or not you do anything, but I am telling you things that are necessary for you, and for me, and for society.

Let's be honest with ourselves! When we change our routine, often we become dissipated and lazy. If you stay home for any reason, that is not a reason for you to be slack in prayer, or watch Netflix instead of prayer. I'm quite serious about this! I want all of my parish to commune on Sunday and all of us to raise up our voices to God asking Him to shorten the duration of this pestilence, and help the infirm and spare those most at risk. However, it is not pleasing to God that people come to the Liturgy unprepared. Therefore, I will ask you how you prepared if you did not come to the vigil and you have not spoken to me about preparing for the liturgy.

There are churches all over the country that are literally closing their doors and locking them. We are not among those churches. Our chief hierarch, and our Archbishop has given us no such instructions. Until they are forced to give such instructions, if they are forced by the law, we will pray in the church.

We will take extreme precautions, in keeping with our faith. We will not do anything silly, such as using disposable spoons, which is blasphemy. We cannot get a disease partaking of Holy Communion. We will take other precautions. All of the things that we been doing such as sanitizing our hands, and wiping surfaces with bleach, and having only the bread in the after supper, will continue. I will appoint some people in the church to have hand sanitizer with them, and bring it to people that appear to have soiled their hands, or have not sanitized their hands

upon entering or reentering the church. There will be people wiping surfaces with bleach that have been touched. I am also asking the faithful to refrain from kissing icons. The reason for this is because the world is watching us, and obedience is higher than prayer.

This might seem oppressive to you, but we are trying to maintain our ability to gather before God in prayer. Our priority is that we are able to continue to pray to God together and to meet Him in the Liturgy especially. Everything else is secondary to this.

Effective immediately, I am canceling any church activity that is not prayer. Therefore, after the Divine Liturgy, we will not have trapeza or church school. On Wednesday evening we will serve the Presanctified liturgy and do prostrations before God when we say the St. Prayer of St. Ephrem, and we will be fed by His body and blood, and then we will go home immediately, with thanksgiving and rejoicing to God. We will serve the Vigil on Saturday evening, and prostrate before the cross, as is done all over the world on the Sunday of the Cross.

We will serve a Moleben, beseeching God to save us from this calamity, on Monday. I will also serve a Panikhida on Monday evening before the Moleben, because it will be the 9th day for a woman who reposed in Russia. We have an obligation to pray.

We are Orthodox Christians, and citizens of heaven but also citizens of the society in which we live. We will therefore be good citizens, insofar as we must protect our brother and sister. We will be good citizens of both societies in which we live. The heavenly society requires that we pray, especially the Divine Liturgy. The secular society has a different opinion about prayer. That is not their priority. They don't understand that prayer to God must come first, and during, and after everything. Some are so secular that they actually consider prayer together to be dangerous and reckless. We are Orthodox Christians, and we are not secular, therefore, we consider prayer together to be life giving.

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This Letter:

http://www.orthodox.net/articles/pastoral-letter-corona-virus-03_2020-03-17.pdf

http://www.orthodox.net/articles/pastoral-letter-corona-virus-03_2020-03-17.doc

Previous Pastoral Letter:

http://www.orthodox.net/articles/pastoral-letter-corona-virus-02_2020-03-14.pdf

http://www.orthodox.net/articles/pastoral-letter-corona-virus-02_2020-03-14.doc

Prayers to St Nikephoros:

<http://www.orthodox.net/articles/prayer-to-nikephoros-the-leper-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic.pdf>

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