

**УКРАЇНЬКА
КАТОЛИЦЬКА ЄПАРХІЯ
ПРЕСВЯТОЇ РОДИНИ
В ЛОНДОНІ**



**UKRAINIAN
CATHOLIC EPARCHY
OF THE HOLY FAMILY
OF LONDON**

To the Reverend Clergy, Religious and Lay Faithful of the
Eparchy of the Holy Family of London

Christ is born! Glorify Him!

Beloved Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Over the last few days the news media in the United Kingdom has reported that there has been a dramatic increase in the rates of infection from COVID-19, tragically resulting in increased mortality rates. We have, however, been given hope due to the vaccination programme that is being rolled out in the UK, as well as the recent approval of a third vaccine. Truly we are most grateful to our Lord that we were able to hold Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Liturgies. Although there is no new order from the Government authorities in England mandating the closure of places of public worship at present, we are receiving new guidance from our media outlets, that clearly states that one should “act as though you have COVID-19, Stay at Home, Save Lives and Protect the NHS”. This guideline could not be clearer.

Several other Christian denominations here in England have taken the decision to temporarily close their churches to public worship. Such decisions have not been easy for them. We feel that our churches are safe environments due to our strict adherence to the prescribed safety practices. However, many of our faithful are having to use public transport to attend services in our parishes and this is something that we are being urged to avoid in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

After speaking to many of our clergy and many of our faithful, as well as listening to medical professionals, I have come to the conclusion that we must take into consideration the health of our clergy and our faithful and view this as our priority. Therefore, as of Monday 11th January, public celebrations will be suspended in our parishes and mission points and we shall move as much as possible to online services until further notice. Our clergy will continue to celebrate the Divine Liturgy for our faithful daily. Those parishes that have the ability to offer online services should do so. To comply with safety measures, where clergy will be celebrating Divine Liturgy for online live broadcast, one cantor and one technical person may be present in the church with the priest.

The suspension of public services will not mean that our faithful are left without the pastoral services provided by our dedicated clergy. Funeral services may continue to take place, strictly following government guidelines. Nevertheless, Sunday and Feast Day services will continue to be available for our faithful to follow online from the safety of their own homes.

I hope that these measures will help to ensure the safety of everyone and support the current national efforts to prevent further spread of COVID-19. We shall review this directive periodically and provide you with an update.

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ, I know I am asking all of you to make huge sacrifices with regard to our common prayer in our parishes, as your Bishop it truly saddens me that we, for the near future have to sacrifice our attendance at church, but in taking this decisive action today in response to the recent COVID-19 related developments, will help to provide additional protection against this virus and save lives.

If possible, even at this late hour, our clergy should make a decision with regard to the celebration of public Divine Liturgy already for tomorrow, Sunday 10th January. If you and your volunteers are in a position to comply with the strictest of regulations, you may proceed with the public celebration of the Divine Liturgy. I ask you to keep in mind the directives issued a few days ago. As a reminder the main points are:

1. The celebration of Divine Liturgy should not last longer than one hour;
2. Funerals may take place with a maximum number of persons in attendance according to government guidelines and should not last longer than one hour;
3. The sprinkling of persons or objects with Holy Water is not allowed;
4. Until further guidance, there can be no home blessings or home visits by clergy;
5. While in our church premises, social distancing must be maintained at all times and strictly adhered to;
6. The wearing of masks in church premises is a compulsory requirement.
7. We are not permitted to have congregational or choir singing, only one person may sing the responses. Only one person is permitted to sing Christmas Carols in our church;
8. We are requested not to socialize in our church buildings or outside the church in car parks, etc.

From Monday 11th January our parishes that are able to follow the above safe-guarding COVID-19 guidelines may open their doors for a specified and limited number of hours daily for private and individual prayer only.

As we face this time of crisis together, I place you under the protection of the Holy Family, our newborn Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Most Holy Mother of God and ever-virgin Mary, and the holy and righteous St. Joseph the Betrothed.

The blessing of the Lord be upon you!

+ Kenneth

+Kenneth
Eparchial Bishop

Given on the Ninth Day of January in the Year of Our Lord 2021
At the Cathedral-Sobor of the Holy Family,
In the God-blessed city of Westminster, London