

## Pastoral guidelines in time of health emergency

Reverend Fathers,  
Esteemed Members of the Parish Councils,  
Beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord,

Due to the rapid evolution of the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) worldwide and the necessary detection and prevention measures taken by the federal and provincial authorities of Canada, the normal course of liturgical and spiritual life of all of us has been greatly disrupted. Conscious of our spiritual but also social responsibility towards those amongst us, we also join the effort of the whole society - federal and provincial official authorities, - to lessen the impact of coronavirus contamination (COVID-19). The measures required by the actual situation reinforce our sense of human and social solidarity.

After consulting the Eparchial Council and aware of the need of a sustained and consistent effort in the sense of the spiritual and social responsibility we make the following recommendations with immediate effect:

### **Divine Liturgy and Holy Sacraments**

- All parishes and monasteries must comply with the directives issued by the federal and provincial authorities;
- **All religious services of this period (Canonical Hours, Divine Liturgy, Holy Sacraments, other blessings etc.) will no longer have a public character.** They will be performed only by the clergy, a chanter and a person or two who help in the altar or in the church. This is the time when we will need to adapt to this trying period creatively by encouraging us to search the online resources (see end of document);
- Priests will be available and in contact with the believers to respond to their urgent spiritual needs. They will **have to establish a program so that the faithful may receive the Holy Sacraments or benefits from the grace of various prayers, respecting the instructions given by the federal and provincial Canadian authorities (social distancing, etc.);**
- **Baptisms, Marriages and Funerals** will have to be rescheduled. In case the funerals cannot be rescheduled, they will be performed with the doors closed in the presence of the family, in accordance with the instructions of the local authorities;
- The monastic communities will be closed to visitors or they will follow the parish procedure in this regard (priest, chanter, one or two persons) performing religious services exceptionally in a no-public character;
- In the case of the Sacrament of the Holy Unction, by ecclesiastical economy, it can be performed by a single priest;

## **Pastoral guidance**

- Priests will respond to the spiritual needs of all believers, and in particular the elderly, who have a fragile health situation. They have to be available to offer Holy Communion at home as well as other prayers, individually, in accordance with the directives of the local authorities;
- The requests of the believers may be addressed in person, by telephone or electronically to the parish priest and these will be introduced in the petitions of the Divine Liturgy or other specific services during the Great Lent.
- The priests will find the most appropriate means to offer Anaphora, Holy Water (Greater or Lesser) and the Oil from the Sacrament of the Holy Unction;
- Priests and believers in the Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the two Americas are invited every week - **Tuesday and Thursday evenings - 9 PM-EST; 8 PM-CST and 6 PM-PST**, until the pandemic is over, to read at home the service of the **Paraclisis of the Mother of God. On Wednesdays and Fridays, you can follow the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts at the Metropolitan Cathedral in Chicago and broadcasted live on the biserica.tv starting at 5:00 pm - CET, and on Sunday, the St. Basil's Liturgy at 9:30 am-CET.**

## **Religious education and AROLA**

- All AROLA courses, meetings and events, as well as other public activities of the parish, such as coffee-hours etc. will be suspended for the present time;
- The Metropolitan Religious Education Department will provide weekly video recordings lessons as well as printed materials for parents and children;
- AROLA will also send short weekly interviews or lessons on spiritual themes from nuns, preotese or priests.

## **Financial concerns**

As you could see, all authorities - federal and provincial - are aware of the major financial impact that the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) will have on both personal and institutional level.

- We will have to be attentive and sensitive to the situations of financial fragility and to intervene to the extent of our individual possibilities or as parish/monastery;
- Some parishes and monasteries are engaged in loans and mortgages. The special situation of this period will also affect them. It is good for those in charge - the Parish Council - to pay attention to all the economic and financial and banking proposals, as well as to the different financial packages, the different periods of extension, delay, temporary exemption of payments in order to have a better perspective on the possibilities to go safely through this difficult period;
- Parishes or monasteries with more financial possibilities or without debt can contact the Eparchial Center to show their willingness to help. Also, the parishes or monasteries that have financial difficulties should contact the Eparchial Center for information. We hope that through faith, courage, solidarity and creative ingenuity we will succeed together and become stronger in this endeavor;

- The financial impact of this crisis will also be felt on parishes and monasteries because of the very limited participation of believers in Church services. Every believer is invited to think and help with the little or more to the expenses of the parishes and monasteries at this time;

**Let us use this time to get out of the vortex of the world to pause for a moment on God and on the reordering of our priorities and understanding of our essential needs as they arise from this divine purpose. The grace of God to the extent of our faith works in every circumstance as in this time of trial.**

**I thank everyone - clergy and faithful - for their effort, understanding and solidarity.**

We pray to the Good God that all - clergy and faithful - of the parishes and monasteries of our Diocese find comfort and healing of soul and body through the prayers of our Protectors - **the Mother of God, St. Andrew the Apostle and St. John Cassian.**

The faithful together, with the clergy of our Diocese, are invited to remain united in prayer for the whole world even if limited by '*social distance.*'

**With charitable love and hope in Christ our Lord,**

**†Ioan Casian**

*Romanian Orthodox Bishop of Canada*

*Saint-Hubert, March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020*

### **Online resources**

#### **English language**

Orthodox Christian Network (OCN)

<http://myocn.net/worship/>

Ancient Faith Radio

<https://www.ancientfaith.com/radio>

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese

<https://www.goarch.org/live-broadcast>

#### **Greek/english**

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Canada

<https://www.gometropolis.org/multimedia/live-broadcast/>