

12 March 2020

Effective Immediately:

Dear Clergy and Faithful of Holy Protection of Mary Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Phoenix,

Glory to Jesus Christ!

As you know, not only is it flu season, but we are also now faced with the spread of the novel Coronavirus, (COVID-19). While faith and trust in God coupled with faithful prayer are vital during all times and especially in times where we are faced with crises like these, we must also use our God-given reason to deal with issues that come up from time to time, especially when it comes to communicable diseases.

Individually this means:

1. Being respectful of others by not contributing to the spread of viruses:
 - If you are sick, stay home.
 - Do not return until you are fever and symptom free for 24 hours.
 - Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you sneeze or cough or cough into your elbow. Dispose of the tissue right away and wash your hands.
2. Taking steps to stay healthy:
 - Regularly wash your hands with soap and hot water.
 - Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
3. Staying informed and following the up-to-date guidance of government and medical professionals.

Within the churches of our Eparchy, we also need to take steps to limit the possibility of the spread of this virus. These concrete steps are outlined below.

Additionally, let us double our prayers for those who are ill in this season by using the following prayer:

O Lord our God, Who by a word alone did heal all diseases, who did cure the kinswoman of Peter, You who chastise with pity and heal according to Your goodness; Who are able to put aside every sickness and infirmity, do You Yourself, the same Lord, grant aid to Your servants and handmaids and cure them of every sickness of which they are grieved; and send down upon them Your great mercy, and if it be Your will, give to them health and a complete recovery; for You are the Physician of our souls and bodies, and to You do we send up glory: to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, both now and ever and forever. Amen.

The Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Phoenix

- 1) All parishes will provide the opportunity in the Narthex and/or Nave for the Faithful to disinfect their hands as they enter the Church.

- 2) Doors should be kept open throughout all liturgical services to minimize hand contact.
- 3) Signs will be posted at the entrance that recommend sick persons not attend the liturgical services; the sick may participate via television or the Internet (URL for the live streaming service), but are not required to do so.
- 4) The clergy will not offer their hands to be revered and will refrain from touching the faithful either through handshakes or an embrace.
- 5) Signs will be posted recommending that honor be shown to Icons, Gospel book, and the blessing cross by only bowing.
- 6) Special Petitions for the Sick to be prayed during the Litany of Peace and the Litany of Fervent Supplication (cf. Green Pew Book, pp 421-424).
- 7) Antidoron should not be distributed during this time until further notice.
- 8) In the case of the use of flowers/palms/pussywillows, ushers should distribute wearing food service handlers' gloves. On Holy and Great Wednesday (Holy Anointing), each priest will anoint each person using separate cotton-tipped swabs. Swabs should be burned and ashes buried in the grounds around the church building.
- 9) The Eucharist will be distributed as per usual with a deacon or celebrant instructing how to properly receive the Eucharist prior to the Communion Rite. Care should be taken to avoid contact with the lips, mouth and/or saliva of the communicant.¹
- 10) In concelebrations, the clerical "Kiss of Peace" will be through bowing to one another. In parishes where the laity exchange the "Kiss of Peace," they will avoid contact and bow to one another.
- 11) After every service, all liturgical objects and surfaces to be thoroughly cleaned. After ablutions, the communion vessels to be washed in soap and water.

¹ *If the spoon inadvertently comes into contact with a communicant's mouth or saliva, a new spoon will be used. The spoon touched by the communicant's mouth or saliva should not be ablated in the ordinary method. The spoon should be disinfected and washed in soap and water and the liquid poured in a sacrarium (if there is one). If there is no sacrarium, the spoon should be disinfected in a separate basin with soap and water and the liquid should be poured around the foundation of the church building.*

Precautions to Be Observed during Infectious Disease Period

More information may be found at *Resources for Community- and Faith-Based Leaders*

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/index.html>

- 12) Social events hosted by the parish should keep the same preventive principles in mind with regard to food, drink, and personal contact.

- 13) If a member of the faithful requests a sick call, the family and the cleric should observe all precautions outlined on the Center for Disease Control (CDC) website (**Resources for Home**, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/home/index.html>).