

УКРАЇНСЬКА  
КАТОЛИЦЬКА ЄПАРХІЯ  
ПРЕСВЯТОЇ РОДИНИ  
В ЛОНДОНІ



HOLY FAMILY  
UKRAINIAN  
CATHOLIC EPARCHY  
OF LONDON

**PASTORAL LETTER  
IN RELATION TO THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC**

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

19th March, 2020

Glory to Jesus Christ!

*I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38)*

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ

You are all well aware that the global spread of the coronavirus, COVID-19, and its impact on our daily lives is currently at the forefront of our day to day living. This is of great concern for all of us. This pandemic has caused us to think and act differently as we go about the practices of our daily lives. Even the things that we take for granted have changed and will continue to change. No aspect of our lives will remain unaffected. For even in the church we see that there is a need to change and consider new ways to approach what have been very longstanding practices and traditions.

I hope to be able to offer you all the spiritual encouragement you need and advice on how to continue to keep God and his church at the centre of our lives. I pray daily for us all, that the Lord blesses us with both wisdom and strength to overcome the trials of these difficult times. Our common concerns are very real, especially when we see lives of loved ones being lost and people we know being affected by this pandemic through no fault of their own. We must remember that God gave us life, and although we fear the clouds of death over our communities and countries and indeed our world, our mission is to proclaim life in Christ. In His unbelievable way God enters into His creation through Jesus and by taking on our nature and by doing so he divinizes it by destroying the power of sin which is death.

As your pastoral leader and shepherd, I would encourage you to use your own God-given grace of wisdom in determining what would be best for you in your own circumstances and to follow the numerous guidelines, advice and good health

practices being delivered to you on a daily basis. I ask that you reach out to those whose wisdom you trust and do not be afraid to make necessary changes. I also ask that you look out for those around you and support those who are isolated and undoubtedly frightened. Make phone calls and online contact with the vulnerable. “For the word of God and the commandment of love for one’s neighbour is valid even during the pandemic” (Patriarch Sviatoslav). I ask that we all become good shepherds and share in God’s Love, which he bestows upon us. Please keep everyone in your prayers, especially those already suffering and all our NHS, emergency and social care staff.

Yesterday saw the need for our Eparchy to implement changes, which meant that until further notice all public services, meetings and public gatherings in our churches and premises are to be suspended. This will be particularly difficult for you all to understand and accept, especially as our coming together in common prayer and celebrating the Divine Liturgy is at the heart of our Catholic faith. Nevertheless, where possible, we have asked that some churches open their doors for short periods, so that those of you who wish to come and pray privately, may do so. Yet I fear that this privilege may also soon be curtailed. You should also be assured that, due to the current circumstances, you are all temporarily released from the obligation of attending the Liturgy on Sundays and Holy days of obligation.

I know that your priests will continue to pray and celebrate the Divine Liturgy on a regular basis, albeit in private, and I invite all of you to take part spiritually, thus keeping the heart of our prayer beating strong. On Sundays especially, please join them with your spiritual presence as they celebrate the Divine Liturgy, by lighting a candle at home and reading your prayers from your prayer books. Online, there are a number of Catholic websites, both Ukrainian and English that will be transmitting live streams of Divine Liturgies. Although we will not be able to attend a church service physically, we can unite with our Lord through an act of spiritual Communion and sincere prayer. I encourage all of you, especially the young and more technologically aware generation to help the more elderly in your families to keep in touch spiritually with our church. Let us not allow the social-distancing requirements of today to dampen our faith and our resolve to keep the heart of our Catholic faith beating strong. We must ensure that we use all the resources we have available to us at this difficult time to maintain our spiritual union with Christ through devout prayer. As we learn to pray at home together with family members or alone in isolation, I ask that the Lord blesses you all and helps you in this task of maintaining the regularity of prayer in our lives, day by day, week by week, so we do not become disheartened, but become stronger through prayer and devotion. May our resolve to pray daily for his blessings bring strength and nourishment to the roots of our faith that will allow us to blossom with His Love for us all.

Having taken these most recent developments into account, I ask that you allow me to update you on the situation regarding my enthronement as your Eparch – Bishop of the Holy Family Eparchy of London. This was planned to take place on 7th April on the feast of the Annunciation in the Cathedral in London. and I was to be enthroned by our Patriarch His Beatitude Sviatoslav Shevchuk. Having consulted His Beatitude and taking into account the need for Episcopal pastoral leadership of our Church in the United Kingdom during this troublesome period, it has been decided that my enthronement and official taking office shall take place this Saturday 21st

March 2020 in our Cathedral. To comply with the restrictions that are currently in place, the ceremony will take place in private with the minimal number of personnel involved. I am deeply honoured and most grateful to His Eminence Cardinal Vincent Nichols of Westminster for agreeing to officiate at my enthronement in place of Patriarch Sviatoslav. Of course, I am very much aware that my enthronement is an historical and momentous event for our Eparchy, which is a cause for celebration and brings joy to all the Eparchy's faithful. This is not and cannot be simply a personal affair. I have therefore decided that the event will be streamed live over the internet direct through our Eparchial Facebook page [www.facebook.com/UGCC.GB](http://www.facebook.com/UGCC.GB) at 10:00am to enable as many of you as possible to join us in prayer spiritually. I pray that this will allow the warmth of God's light to shine upon us during this troubled period and that we be reminded of the Resurrection as we continue our Lenten journey together. As we place his cross before us this weekend, let us be reminded of our Saviour's own suffering, death and triumph over sin, which allows us to witness the radiance of his Kingdom in our lives.

Looking to a brighter future, I wish to share His Beatitude Sviatoslav's and Cardinal Vincent Nichols' personal messages of support and well wishes for our Eparchy and all our faithful. They have both indicated a wish to visit us openly and publicly in the near future and look forward to spending time with us in prayer and celebration.

At the start of this pastoral letter I assured you of my prayers for you all and your families. Likewise, now I ask that you offer your prayers for me personally, as I embark upon a new path in my life, as your spiritual shepherd and leader. I ask that you pray especially that the Lord blesses us all with wisdom, strength and forbearance, as we walk along the path to salvation together.

Again I ask that during these extraordinary times of trial and tribulation together we focus our attention on the Beatitudes that Jesus has given us as a guide to live by (see Mat.5:3-12; Lk 6:20-23), on the blessings that come with sacrifice, and the joy that awaits us.

I continue to place each of you under the protection of the Holy Family, our 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**