06/03/2020

Bishop Irenei of London and Western Europe addresses the faithful on Church Life and the Coronavirus



Bishop Irenei of London and Western Europe addresses the faithful on Church Life and the Coronavirus. Read the full text below:

To the faithful and beloved children of this God-preserved Diocese!

As we enter now fully into this lenten period leading to the bright Resurrection of Christ, we find ourselves also in a period where many are stricken with fear at the spread of a new virus (Coronavirus COVID-19), which is affecting people in many parts of the world — including several countries within the borders of our Diocese. Since many are asking how this situation is to be approached, within our Church consciousness, I write to you in this initial week of the Great Fast to share the comfort and solace of the Church.

The Church of Christ has endured through many centuries — in the course of which she has been confronted with countless illnesses and diseases, small and great — in solid faith and with peaceful hearts, each member of the Church knowing that he or she is part of no worldly or man-made institution, but the Harbour of Life that is Christ's Body. We are fed the food not of men but of angels; we are inspired by the truth, not of this world, but of God Himself; and we are ruled, not by worldly fear which grows and begets more fear, but by the peace of Christ which *surpasseth all understanding* (Philippians 4.7) and brings unfailing comfort, whether in times of peace or peril.

In the present moment, therefore, I urge you to *be not afraid* (Isaiah 43.1) nor let the concerns of the moment shake you from the firm foundation that is unhindered faith in the living God, Who heals the sick and restores the broken-hearted. The present situation may be a cause of great upset in the world around us, but in the Church, and in our Christian lives, we continue unhindered and undeterred in all that God has delivered into our hands for the salvation of our souls.

In the different nations comprising our Diocese, local governments will be issuing various instructions and protocols for managing and controlling the spread and effects of this momentary health challenge: we urge all our faithful to be acquainted with these practical instructions (which, for example, include a more frequent washing of hands and attentiveness to personal hygiene), and in such matters to adhere to these instructions from our local governments calmly and sensibly, carrying on otherwise in faithful peacefulness with the matters of day-to-day life. Should travel restrictions or other measures be set in place in various regions, we shall adhere to these in quietude and calm; in all such things we should be

examples to the world of pious trust in God that leads not to undisciplined alarm, but rather to a continuance of life in an untroubled spirit and undisturbed reliance on the Divine Will.

In our churches, we shall continue with the celebration of all our rites, customs, Divine Services and above all the offering and receipt of the Holy Mysteries in precisely the same manner as we have always done. No genuinely believing Christian can for one moment accept that the Holy Mysteries might bring or be the source of sickness or ill-health: by no means! The Mysteries of Christ are the true medicine of our souls and bodies, and bring nothing but life — and life eternal. Any whose hearts are troubled by present matters should pray fervently for an increase of faith so that fear can be cast aside; and the Church will continue her ancient witness to the love that is beyond fear, bringing the Holy Mysteries to the world, and to each of us, in a time when it needs them profoundly.

Do not be afraid! As we sing so frequently in these Lenten days, *God is with us!* And He is merciful and loving, quick to hear and heal and save.

With love in Christ,

IRENEI

Bishop of London and Western Europe.

— Source: pravmir.com & Diocese of Great Britain and Western Europe