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His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios of Atlanta issues statement about COVID-19 (Coronavirus) protection



His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios of Atlanta has released a statement about COVID-19 (Coronavirus) protection. Read the full text below:

> To the Reverend Monastics & Clergy
> The Esteemed Archons, Parish Council and Philoptochos Presidents of the Metropolis of Atlanta:My brothers and sisters in Christ,
> I greet you with love and joy in the Name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, praying that you and your families receive His blessings of health, peace, and joy as we continue our Lenten journey!By now, all are aware of the recent outbreak of the coronavirus (COVID-19) throughout the

world, including the United States.The situation is, of course, one that can change quickly, but as your Spiritual Shepherd, I offer this message for reassurance. I echo the words of our His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America, who wrote, on March 6th: *"we counsel those feeling unwell physically to refrain from liturgical assemblies until they are certain of their diagnosis. Taking the basic steps of wellness as recommended by the health authorities is not only sensible, but wise and considerate of others. In truth, it is an act of love."* (To read the remainder of His Eminence's Encyclical, **click here;** for the official Archdiocesan Press Release **click here;** and for the instructions to clergy, **click here**.)
I also encourage all of us to observe safe and healthy practices, including:

- Frequent hand washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Clergy should also clean liturgical objects with the same care.
- Refraining from touching our eyes, nose and faces with unwashed hands. Additionally, the clergy will not offer their hands to be reverenced and will refrain from touching the faithful either through handshakes or an embrace.
- Frequently cleaning surfaces of we touch on a daily basis, including those in our churches
- And being mindful of our own health.

If in the event you are unwell and unable to participate in a Lenten service, several of our parishes offer live-streaming for those who cannot attend. Your Priests would also be more than happy to offer the Sacraments in your home, and please also call your parish office if you should need anything more.

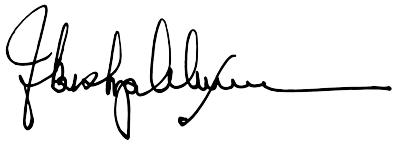
Additionally, when outbreaks such as these happen, one of the first questions we often receive is regarding the Communion Cup shared by all the clergy and the laity. It is important to remember that we believe the Eucharist is the literal sanctified Body and Blood of our Lord. Therefore, to be afraid or nervous considering the holiest of sacraments is not in the Orthodox ethos.

In fact, in times of worry and caution, the church encourages its faithful to participate in the sacraments, particularly Communion, for forgiveness of sins, and for our Lord's guidance and protection.

The season of Great Lent is one of vigilance: both spiritual–in terms of prayer, and physical–when we fast. As we await further developments concerning the coronavirus, this is but another way we can remain vigilant, caring for our bodies–the Temples of the Lord–and also for our family, friends, and neighbors.

May our Lord continue to bless us, protect us, and guide us, now and always. I remain,

Paternally yours with prayerful love in Christ



+ A L E X I O S
Metropolitan of Atlanta