20/03/2020

# Serbian Orthodox Church Australia and New Zealand – Communique from His Grace Bishop Siluan regarding COVID-19



COMMUNIQUE

Metropolitanate of Australia and New Zealand

The Serbian Orthodox Church

**His Grace Bishop Siluan has released the following statement regarding Covid-19:**

*TO ALL CLERGY AND MONASTICS*
*CHURCH COMMUNITIES AND MISSIONARY PARISHES*
*OF THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX METROPOLITANATE OF*
*AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND*
**RE: Extraordinary circumstances caused by the virus COVID-19**
Very Venerable and Very Reverend Fathers,

In accordance with government guidelines and measures for the prevention of spreading and the suppression of viruses, and the decision rendered at the Serbian Orthodox Metropolitanate's annual Clergy Assembly, held on the 18th and 19th of March 2020, at St Sava Monastery New Kalenich near Canberra, we inform you of the following:

1. All parish priests are to convene an extraordinary meeting of their respective Church Committee to meet the compulsory current state protection measures, with an expectation that there may well be further measures put in place. In accordance with the current prescribed limits pertaining to the number of faithful (100) that are to be at any one time inside the church building, the Church

Committee will appoint ushers, who will control and coordinate the flow of faithful in and out of the church;
2. The same limitations for the number of faithful during worship, will likewise apply to church halls;
3. Folklore practice and pensioners group meetings are to be cancelled, whilst the operation of schools and hospital visitations conducted by clergy are to be executed in accordance with national/state regulations and recommendations;
4. The level of hygiene is to be raised across church communities;
5. Priests are to make themselves readily available to meet the pastoral needs of their faithful, to commune those who are sick and comfort those who are frightened; to “become all things to all people”, as St Paul instructs us (1 Cor. 9, 22) at this time of great calamity and spiritual assessment.
6. Regular weekday services which will attract smaller numbers of parishioners should be organised where possible. In the larger church communities where there is a need and the means, the Holy Presanctified Liturgy should be served twice a week. Likewise, apart from the regular service of Divine Liturgy on Sunday, an additional Divine Liturgy is to be introduced on Saturdays.
7. At Divine Liturgy, before the dismissal prayer, priests are to read a special prayer for the deliverance from the new virus;

We are obliged to care for the well-being of all those entrusted to us, to work in conjunction with the instructions and recommendations of government authorities and health experts, but at the same time, not to be found as those who have no hope (1 Thess. 4, 13), that no one will waver in heart because of us, to doubt the veracity of the promise given to us in Christ.

In a time when the world is overcome with great fear and panic, we as Christians are called to soberly stand on the solid Rock of our Faith and Hope, who is Christ Jesus.

With Archpastoral blessings,

**+ S I L U A N**

*Bishop of the Metropolitanate of Australia and New Zealand*
*The Serbian Orthodox Church*