29/03/2020

Communique of the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church



Regarding the latest recommendations of the Government of Serbia, in order to suppress the spread of the COVID-19 virus, “religious services in churches and in the open air are to be performed without the presence of the faithful”, with the clarification that the aim of these recommendations is a safe way of worship and the protection of public health, all the while enabling worship to continue, we inform all our clergy, monastics, and faithful that the Serbian Orthodox Church will implement these recommendations, as it has already done in those countries of the Serbian diaspora and other regions where such protective measures have been taken a few days ago. The Church will not interrupt the serving of the Divine Liturgy or cease communing the faithful, because this is a matter which cannot be debated: it is the basis of our faith in the Living God. Specifically, this means that during the services in the church there is to be a priest (or priests) with a deacon, chanter, and an altar server (according to the need and circumstance).

We urge the faithful, 65 and older, as well as those of younger in weaker health and lower immunity, to refrain from coming to church for worship in the coming days and weeks and put themselves and others at risk.

We repeat: the risk is not in Holy Communion (on the contrary, we receive it, among other things, “for the healing of soul and body”), but the real danger of the

virus, unrelated to Holy Communion, is due to its recent spread everywhere, and the upcoming period has been deemed by both Chinese and our own experts as the most critical and see an increase of isolation as the only way to stop it from spreading and avoid the tragic experience in Italy and some other countries.

To our faithful we impart our paternal, pastorally responsible and loving blessing that they follow the divine services by television broadcasts and/or online, via church websites, and that they schedule with their parish priests communion at home in due time.

All other services, particularly Holy Baptism, should be postponed for a later date when the situation has been normalized, but when it is urgently needed it should be done according to the measures of the state of emergency. Funerals must be done with as few amount of people as possible.

We note particularly that we should not use church attendance as an excuse before one’s conscience and neighbors for disrespecting the measures of self-isolation.Thus, we once again call upon all our clergy, monastics, and faithful to abide by all the precepts of the state and directions regarding church life prescribed by the Holy Synod of Bishops.

From the Office of the Holy Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church

— Source: spc.rs