10/04/2020

Patriarch Kirill addressed a message to the archpastors, clergymen, monastics and laypeople of the dioceses in the Russian Federation



At this difficult time, when the governmental authorities are taking all possible measures to prevent the spread of the coronavirus infection, I call upon the hierarchs, clergy, monastics and laypeople to intensify your prayer to the Lord for the deliverance of people from the harmful epidemic, and I call upon the arhpastors and pastors to continue to zealously celebrate divine services and especially the Holy Eucharist – the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ – even in the absence of the flock due to the authorities' respective recommendations. "Indeed, nothing is to be preferred to the Work of God" (The Rule of St Benedict of Nursia, chapter 43).

Today many of us are compelled to take upon themselves the feat of constantly staying in their homes. To them I am saying: let the place of your solitude become a desert of your personal and domestic work of prayer, according to the Gospel:

“But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly” (Mt 6:6). May in this feat we also be inspired by the example of the Venerable Mary of Egypt who had spent many years in the desert in solitary prayer.

These days we are losing an opportunity to attend together the Lenten divine service, which we all hold dear. Yet, we know that even the gates of hell cannot prevail against the Church of Christ (cf. Mt 16:18). “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? <…> in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us <…> neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 8:35-39). Even while in forced separation, as throughout history followers of Christ often found themselves scattered over deserts and mountains, caves and gorges of the earth, we remain the inviolable community of faith united by the prayer which we offer to the Lord Jesus in our heart. In this prayer we are not alone – standing together with us before God’s Altar are our holy kinsfolk, the saints of the Russian Church from all epochs of her historical being, inspiring and encouraging us. “Take heart, the Church of Christ <…> for the friends of Christ are taking care of you – those standing in the presence of Him and gathered round Him” (Sessational hymn after the Polyeleos during the Service to the New Martyrs and Confessors of the Russian Church).

Brothers and sisters, let us endure temporary privations in order to preserve the life and health of our neighbours. Let us patiently undergo the affliction which has befallen us in the firm hope that the Almighty Lord, Who took upon Himself the sufferings and death on the cross for humankind and Who by His Resurrection opened for us the path to salvation, will in good time change this affliction into the joy of the meeting in praising Him by our joint prayers in a church during the divine service, “and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth” (Is 25:8).

In these days let us lift up fervent prayers for those who are selflessly striving to put an end to the pestilent epidemic and those who are working to sustain the life of our cities, towns and villages. Let us be grateful to them and give them all the support we can. I also thank all of you, dear Vladykas, fathers, brothers and sisters, for your zealous service to the Lord, to His Church and to each other.

I am unceasingly praying for all of you.

+KIRILL

PATRIARCH OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA

— Source: mospat.ru