

## **On the Feast of the Ascension, the parishes of Switzerland again opened their doors to the faithful**



5 / 28 MAY 2020: In connection with the easing of strict restrictive measures by the Swiss government on 28th May, which this year fell on the Great Feast of the Ascension of the Lord, it was possible for the parishes of Switzerland to reopen the doors of their temples, receiving the faithful in limited numbers at a time, throughout the Swiss Confederation. Festal services were thus held in Bern, Zurich, Geneva and other places.

Especially fervent participation in the Divine Services of this solemn Feast marked out the spirit at the Cathedral of the Exaltation of the Cross in Geneva, where Archpriest Emilian Pochinok, accompanied by Archdeacon Dometian (Redko) and Deacon Vladimir Svystun, served the All-Night Vigil and Divine Liturgy of the Feast.

Within the strictures of the eased governmental regulation, the Cathedral was able to receive a maximum of 25 people or families at a time, and thus the announcement of this possibility resulted in appointments filling to maximum almost immediately. Yet the Cathedral's large grounds permitted many more to be present in the courtyard, awaiting the departure of those before them and their own entry into the temple to partake of the Mysteries. Despite the fact that the Feast fell on a weekday, more than a hundred believers, thus praying 'at a distance', were able to commune in the Holy Mysteries of Christ on the Feast.

Given the longed-for nature of this occasion, no one hid their joyful emotions. A truly Paschal mood was prevalent in the temple, despite the Leavetaking of the Feast of Feasts having already taken place. The Clergy received many words of gratitude in recognition of their zeal and pastoral care in the conduct of continuous Divine Services throughout the ongoing fight against the coronavirus.

In his homily, Archpriest Emilian joyfully greeted all those gathered for this significant event — not only the Great Feast, but the return to a measure of public worship in the country — expressing a special feeling of the joyful anticipation of God's grace, which that day descended on the Geneva church, which that day opened its doors to the patiently-attending believers. 'Like the Apostles who said farewell to the Risen Christ in expectation of the Comforter, everyone now anticipates a special blessed joy from the Holy Spirit, praying on the eve of Pentecost, at the Divine Liturgy,' he concluded, looking forward to the next Feast. The Priest sincerely urged everyone, in looking upon the difficulties that the Church of Christ has to endure, to appreciate every minute spent in the Lord's House, and, in every moment of joy and sorrow, not to forget his parish temple!

It should be noted that even during the most stringent restrictive measures in Geneva, the regular services of the Cathedral, held of necessity behind closed doors, did not stop for a day. Hundreds of parishioners, using on-line communication tools, joined the Divine Services at a distance and communed by special visits and appointments; and on the eve of Pascha, faithful from the cantons of Zurich, St Gallen (350 km.) and other remote places of the Swiss Confederation arrived to partake of the Holy Gifts.

[Source](#)