14/06/2020

His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios of Atlanta issues important COVID-19 update



June 11, 2020

To the Reverend Clergy & Monastics of the Metropolis of Atlanta:

My beloved Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

I greet you with love and joy in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! I pray that this message finds you well, as our hearts continue to dwell with the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

While most of our churches have been open for almost two weeks (May 31 st, 2020), many have not. As such, I encourage you to maintain safe social distancing measures, while adhering to the detailed safety guidelines of May 13th, as well as the supplemental guidelines of May 22nd. We have already seen the importance of these safety guidelines, as our Metropolis has received word of the first confirmed case come from within our jurisdiction. Therefore, these measures are vital if we are to continue to practice the sacramental life, while also being mindful of the

health of our newly re-opened communities.

Of course, the Metropolis is mindful that local and state ordinances are subject to revision, based upon the number of cases. For example, in the state of Florida, it is now considered no longer necessary to wear a mask, even, while continuing to maintain six feet of distance. **Should major changes in your state or local orders arise, such as the wearing of masks, the Metropolis still asks you to adhere to the above-mentioned guidelines of May 13th and May 22nd . At the end of the month of June, we will re-evaluate based upon the growth or reduction in cases.**

Additionally, I am aware of the widespread response to an essay concerning changes to the distribution of Holy Communion written by the Rev. Dr. Alkiviadis Calivas, a noted professor of Liturgics. As I have written a response to Dr. Calivas' thoughts and suggestions, I offer to share them with you here , so that you may understand my serious reservations with undertaking a discussion on a sacred topic that warrants great spiritual care and examination.

In such an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty, we are seeing a great many opinions that are different from that which our Church has practiced for hundreds of years. Regardless of the motivation of these thoughts, I would like to also refer to you an article from our brother clergyman, the Rev. Dr. Panayiotis Papageorgiou, as well as a beautiful article, by Dr. Eugenia Constantinou so that you, and all the faithful, may better understand the tradition of the common spoon, which is the way the Orthodox Church teaches.

My concern for the ability of our faithful to go to church and to receive the Holy Eucharist is critical. As a Bishop and a spiritual father, I have given my life to the Church since I was sixteen years old, and I share these articles, so that you might better understand my point of view.

In these unprecedented times, it is necessary for us to put aside our personal opinions, instead working together and supporting one another, so that we might better protect our brothers and sisters as they continue to receive spiritual food. Here, I speak not only of the laity, but especially of our clergymen, who—regardless of the circumstance, must consume what remains of the Lord's most Precious Body and Blood. Therefore, the intention of this letter is not to intimidate, but rather to encourage and uplift all of you, my brothers and sisters, as we continue to fulfill the Lord's Gospel.

Having celebrated the descent of the Holy Spirit, we know that, as St. Paul says, *"If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit." (Galatians 5:25).*

May the illumination of the Holy Spirit enlighten our hearts, helping us to support one another, as our Lord instructed us, I remain,

Yours with paternal love and blessings in the Lord,

+ALEXIOS
Metropolitan of Atlanta

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