



The Pandemic Upon Us

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<https://blogs.ancientfaith.com/morningoffering/2020/03/the-plague-upon-us/>

The State of Washington has greatly reduced the number of people who can be gathered in public places, including our churches. Given the lack of faith demonstrated by so many, blaming bishops and priests for the closure of churches, can we imagine how these same people would react should it become known that one of their fellow parishioners got the Coronavirus while attending the Liturgy?

We clergy need to protect our people, even though many of us must now suffer attacks from the very people we love and serve, while being accused of being fearful and unfaithful, as we close down our parishes to public

services, trying as best we can to be obedient to the rules put down by our federal government. One bishop I know has suffered greatly by having had to endure such attacks on his own faithfulness, as he “closed down the hospital”.

This pandemic should be a reminder to all of us that we should be in prayer, seeking an end to the epidemic. This whole time of church closures must not be seen as based on fear, or a sign that the Church is betraying her people, but rather, a time for all of us to go deep within ourselves, worshiping before the Holy Trinity, pleading to God not only dispel the pandemic, but to heal the souls of people who have turned our sights to earthly pleasures, while distancing ourselves from the things of God.

Let this plague that has come down upon us, serve as a call to reorient our gaze, as we turn away from things of a secular nature, and look towards the things of God. Our focus must not be toward the material world, but toward heavenly things, the things of God. We can even see this pandemic as a blessing, really, since we are now asked by our Federal Government to refrain from gatherings of more than ten people, and sequester ourselves in our homes. What better way to continue our Lenten journey towards the celebration of Pascha, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead!

With the closure of public gatherings across the country, including the closure of many churches, we now have been given the opportunity to turn from all secular temptations, such as concerts, sporting events, bars and restaurants, movie houses, and all other kinds of secular distractions, and focus on our inner life. We now have the opportunity of rekindling our personal prayer lives, joining other family members in using our prayer books, lighting lampada and candles before our family icons, and building up the “domestic church”.

This is not the time to simply spend hours playing Monopoly, or watching television, but a God allowed time to turn our collective gaze upon the Holy Scriptures, and building up our personal prayer life, something that has long been sidelined by earthly distractions.

Finally, let us see these trying times as allowed by God, for humanity’s sake. Let us see this pandemic as an opportunity to return our collective gaze upon the things that really matter, those things of an eternal nature. Let us repent, as a people who have long ceased to make faith central to our lives, and actively live as committed Christians.

Let us not place blame on those who lead us, but rather pray with earnest, “Heal us from our pride, which can make us claim invulnerability to a disease that knows no borders (Prayer in Time of Epidemic).” And let us remember that “the Lord seeks out the heart, not the appearance (Saint Paisius of Sihla)”.

Even if we are unable to attend services in our churches, we must remember that the grace imparted from the Bloodless Sacrifice is still efficacious, even if we are barred from the temple while the Divine Liturgy is being celebrated, just as we are blessed by the Holy Mysteries during those times when we are in attendance, but not receiving Holy Communion. Every time the Divine Liturgy is celebrated, grace pours out upon the people of God. Every time the Divine Liturgy is celebrated, the Church Militant here on earth, is united to the Church Triumphant in heaven. Every time the Divine Liturgy is served, we are united to Christ, and to each other.

Let us not give in to the lies of the Evil One, for God is with us, just as God was with His people during the Soviet persecution of the Church, when the services were forbidden, and churches were razed to the ground.

With love in Christ,
Abbot Tryphon