



MESSAGE FROM THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS OF THE UOC OF THE USA  
ЗВЕРНЕННЯ СОБОРУ ЄПІСКОПІВ УПЦ США



COMMUNICATION OF THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS OF THE UKRAINIAN  
ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE USA CONCERNING THE TENTATIVE  
RELAXATION OF STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS AND  
RESTRICTIONS REGARDING COVID-19

TO: *ALL PARISH CLERGY AND BOARDS OF ADMINISTRATION AND ALL OUR  
FAITHFUL IN THE RISEN LORD*

RE: *DIRECTIVES FOR THE COMING WEEKS CONCERNING THE ONGOING  
PANDEMIC THREAT FROM CORONAVIRUS OR COVID-19*

*Dearly Beloved Sisters and Brothers in our Lord,*

**CHRIST IS RISEN! INDEED HE IS RISEN!**

Once again, we as your Spiritual Fathers and Hierarchs, write to you concerning the ongoing pandemic threat to all our lives. We want you to know that we have been very closely following activity in all areas of our country surrounding the "partial reopening" or relaxation of mandatory shut-ins ordered by state governors and heads of local cities and communities under their jurisdiction. The manner in which these actions are being taken seems to us to be

rather questionable. We say this because many of the proposed changes or relaxations do not seem to closely adhere to proposed [CDC](#) and federal government guidelines and in direct ignorance of the advice of the highest scientific and medical advisors to our governmental leaders. The medical advice is loud and clear—ending our self-imposed quarantine or isolation too soon will more than likely bring about a second wave of infection, which could become even worse than what we have already experienced, resulting in even more strict methods of mitigation to stop the wave. As these words are written, none of the states that have announced the broad reopening of businesses and other activities have met the standard of at least two full weeks of actual lowering of the numbers of people being infected, hospitalized or have died. In fact, in some of them, these numbers are still rising significantly.

As your hierarchs, we absolutely cannot in good conscience join in with the chorus of the vocal minority, which is demanding the immediate end to all quarantines and the complete reopening of regular daily life in our cities and states. There is still, quite simply, too much of a threat to all our lives for us to permit significant steps toward the reopening of our churches until we are convinced that the time is right. Our desire is to reopen all our churches at the same time, so that we can proceed with our announced plans for triumphant re-entry into them. Naturally, we would love to see this happen while we still sing "Christ is Risen" during the Paschal Season—and that may yet happen. Patience, however, is mandatory at the moment. We must simply observe what will happen in those reopened places in terms of the safety of their citizens. There may even be an alternative to opening all our churches at once, in permitting those located in states with significantly lower population and less infection as a percentage of that population. The next two or three weeks may very possibly provide answers to many of our concerns and we will notify you all of future decisions concerning such.

We have been moved beyond expectation by the numbers of faithful from the USA and around the world who have been

participating in the live streaming of our liturgical services from St. Andrew Memorial Church, St. Sophia Seminary and all our parishes who have also live streamed their services. There have been significant numbers more in attendances for the full length of these services—in the hundreds—but as each day passes, we have thousands and even tens of thousands of people tuning in to share in at least a portion of the services for their own spiritual welfare. We urge you all to participate, as well.

We pray every single day for your spiritual and physical well-being, dear brothers and sisters. We have people in the vast majority of our parishes who have been infected with the coronavirus and sadly, too many who have reposed from its extremely difficult physical effects. Among these is our Protopresbyter Nestor Kowal, pastor of St. Michael Parish, Scranton, PA for over 50 years. None of the parishioners he served so intimately all those years, were able to be present to bid farewell to their spiritual father. We were notified just the day before this letter by one of our priests in New York, that he has had at least 15 infections and several deaths in his parish family from the virus. It is because of facts like these that we will be very cautious. We ask for your prayers for not only the faithful of our church but for all affected by this pandemic and especially the members of their families who suffer just as much in the fact that they cannot visit them in hospital, be with them at the time of their repose and must follow very restrictive rules when it comes to funerals. It is almost as though they are suffering as much as those who are the infected victims.

As we have stated to you in our earlier communications: Throughout all this time of threat, illness, concern and anxiety let us remain faithful witnesses of God's LOVE and COMPASSION for us. Let us in all circumstances pray for His embrace of all humanity. Let us beseech the Mother of God for her protection and that she will intercede with her Son and our God beseeching His healing touch on all our lives. Let us contemplate the two new and greatest commandments of all: *"The first of all the commandments is:*

*'Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.'* This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: *'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'* There is no other commandment greater than these." (Mark 12:30-31)

Loving God and loving our neighbor are one and the same. We are not instructed to "love our neighbor as yourself" in terms of what we see in the mirror or whatever self-concept we have. We are called to love our neighbor as also being created "in the image of God", reflecting that image to the world just as we must do every second of our lives. If we love our neighbor, then ours is to protect our neighbor during the times of threat such as today. That means we must refrain from the physical contact through which a virus can be transmitted.

We have learned about many, many positive consequences in family relationships and even acquaintances during this time at home together. We have positive consequences from our Youth Ministry program in the "Faith, Hope and Love at Home" daily Zoom sessions conducted for young children, pre-teens and teens in three sessions each day from noon to 2:30 p.m. They are accomplished by our Office of Youth Ministry Director, Natalie Kapeluck and a team of wonderful volunteers. Please look on our Church website [www.uocofusa.org](http://www.uocofusa.org) for information and schedules.

Thank you all for your patience and for your love throughout this truly terrible ordeal. Yes, terrible, out of which we have seen so much love arise. May the Light that shines forth from the empty Tomb of our Lord, fill your hearts, your souls, your homes and your lives always and forever. We embrace you all in that TRUE LIGHT AND LOVE.

**+ Antony**

*By the Grace of God, Metropolitan*

**+ Daniel**

*By the Grace of God, Archbishop*