

Sunday, March 22, 2020

Dear Ones in Christ,

The Blessing of the Lord Jesus, the Physician of our souls and bodies, be with you all!

This morning at 9:00 a.m., as I have been doing every day, I will be at our church to pray the Service of Intercession “in the time of pestilence” on your behalf as well as on the behalf of your friends and loved ones and, indeed, for the entire world.

This morning already seems very odd to me. The ambient noise of the city is very quiet, almost silent, and certainly quieter than it is on most Sunday mornings. In addition to that, the usual Sunday routine we all share, preparing ourselves for the Divine Liturgy, getting the kids dressed and ready for church (in many cases), preparing food to share at coffee hour, getting ready for Sunday school, planning what we will do for the rest of the day after the Liturgy and coffee hour, etc., has also seen a drastic change. From a personal standpoint, it is extremely odd for me to be getting ready to drive to church knowing that I will not be with you, our dear parish family. Knowing that, for the time being, we are being asked to refrain from celebrating the Sacred Liturgy and thus to temporarily refrain from receiving the Life-giving Mysteries of the Holy and Precious Body and Blood of Christ, is particularly difficult for all of us, even painful. But this is the Cross we are being asked to carry at this time, notably on this Sunday of the Veneration of the Holy Cross. Let us offer this as a sacrifice in union with the sacrifice of our Savior for the sake of the health of ourselves and others.

This morning as I pray in our temple before the image of the Holy Cross, I ask that each and every one of you join me in prayer. I suggest that you pray the “Typica” service or the Reader’s Service for Protection from the Corona Virus which are posted on our parish website (sspeterpaulaz.org). Or pray any or all of the other prayers that are also posted there. Stand before the Holy Icons in your home or in the privacy of your rooms and ask the Lord to show us His mercy and turn away from us everything that is against us in these days.

Don’t forget to also read and reflect upon the Readings of the day: Epistle: Hebrews 4:14- 5:6; Gospel: Mark 8:34- 9:1. Additionally, you may also wish to livestream the Divine Liturgy from one of any number of monasteries or churches throughout North America: <http://liveliturgy.com/orthodox/north-america>

These alternatives are good, but not optimum; neither are they “normal” for us-- indeed, we wish we were together at church and hope to be so again soon- but they are one way, for the time being that we can be united in prayer, while not able to be physically present with one another.

Be assured that my thoughts are with you all today and every day- as are my prayers. May He Who rose from the dead and endured the Precious and Life-giving Cross, for us, **CHRIST OUR TRUE GOD**, through the prayer of His Most Pure Mother, of the Holy, Glorious, All-laudable Apostles Peter and Paul, of the Holy and Righteous Ancestors of God, Joachim and Anna, and of all the Saints, have mercy on us and save us, for He is good and loves mankind!

With my love and blessing, +Bishop Danie