



# SS. Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Cathedral

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March 17, 2020

Dear Faithful Stewards of Ss. Constantine and Helen Cathedral,

Peace be with you.

To say that the times are uncertain is an understatement. With each passing moment, the worldwide crisis of the spread of Covid-19 becomes more and more serious, threatening the very fabric of society as we know it. In these moments of anguish of spirit, we turn to the words of our Lord, who before His Living-giving Passion told His disciples:

*"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*

*John 16:33*

Our challenge as Orthodox Christians to discover this godly peace became more difficult this past weekend, as all worship services in the Metropolis of Chicago were temporarily suspended. Whether you feel these measures were necessary or over-precautious, please know that the decision was not taken lightly. At this time, the Metropolis of Chicago feels that the most important thing is the safety and well-being of the faithful in the face of a global epidemic and that this is the only way to ensure that.

We, as the clergy of this parish, were crushed when we found out we would not be able to offer the Holy Eucharist to all of you. The Eucharist is the highest expression of our living faith in the living God for which there can be no substitution. Now, we find ourselves without the ability to offer these mystical gifts to spiritually nourish our flock as the result of an unforeseen catastrophe. We are still wrestling with this and struggling to navigate the stormy waters of a new reality of church life for us, and we ask for your forgiveness for any missteps we may take during this time.

Even so, we will not allow fear and anxiety to paralyze us. We are exploring a variety of new means of ministering to you that we will hopefully be able to communicate to you very shortly.

Neither should you, as Christians of true faith, be spiritually paralyzed by what we are facing. Yes, the times are tough and getting tougher, but "if God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31). Our first recourse, then, should be to turn to God, the Panagia, and all of the saints that comprise our spiritual family in fervent prayer from your heart. Pray for the health

and safety of the world. Pray for our leaders -- civil and ecclesiastical -- that the Holy Spirit may guide their every decision. Pray that God may drive out this pestilence from our world. Pray that our churches will be able to open their doors once again to receive the faithful people of God. You will find a prayer specifically for the COVID-19 crisis on the final page of this communication.

We cannot forget that as Orthodox Christians, our families belong to two churches. One is the church community where we gather to pray and receive the sacraments. The other is the "little church", the church of the home where we first learn the faith, live out its practices, and begin our journey to salvation. We encourage you to take this time to engage in the spiritual life of your little Church through Lenten fasting, the study of the Holy Scriptures, reading spiritual books and lives of the saints, family prayer, forgiveness, and mercy towards others. Though you may not be able to gather as the body of Christ sacramentally, it is through these Traditions of our Church that we make Christ present no matter where we are. In the words of St. Paul, "I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow -- not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below -- indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39).

We also exhort you to take this opportunity to experience the life-giving process of holy repentance. Our Church teaches that human sin is what introduced sickness and death into this world. Now more than ever, we are called to repent of our own sins as a means of overcoming the brokenness we suffer from today. Holy Confession will also be offered to those who seek it.

As we conclude our thoughts in this difficult time, we fill our hearts with the firm belief that in Jesus Christ we will be triumphant in all things. "We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed." (2 Cor 4:8-9). No matter what circumstances and difficulties present themselves throughout our time on earth, our faith is alive in our hearts and can never be taken from us.

In Christ,



Fr. Theodore Poteres  
Protopresbyter



Fr. Dimitrios Burikas  
Presbyter

## Prayer During the COVID-19 Epidemic

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Lord Jesus Christ our God, You traveled through towns and villages “curing every disease and illness.” At Your command, the sick were made well. Come to our aid now in the midst of the global spread of coronavirus, that we may experience Your healing love. Heal those, O Lord, who are sick with the virus. May they regain their strength and health through quality medical care. Heal us from our fears, which prevents nations from working together and neighbors from helping one another. Heal us from our pride, which can make us claim invulnerability to a disease that knows no borders. Lord Jesus Christ, healer of all and physician of our souls and bodies, stay by our side in this time of uncertainty and sorrow. Be with those who have died from the virus. May they be at rest with You in Your eternal peace. Be with families of those who are sick or have died. As they worry and grieve, defend them from illness and despair. May they know Your peace. Be with the doctors, nurses, researchers and all medical professionals who seek to heal and help those affected and who put themselves at risk in the process. May they know Your protection and peace. Be with the leaders of all nations. Give them the foresight to act with charity and true concern for the well-being of the people they are meant to serve. Give them the wisdom to invest in long-term solutions that will help prepare for or prevent future outbreaks. May they know Your peace, as they work together to achieve it on earth. Whether we are home or abroad, surrounded by many people suffering from the illness or only a few, Lord Jesus Christ, stay with us as we endure and mourn, persist and prepare. In place of our anxiety, give us Your peace. For You are the Physician of our souls and bodies, Christ our God, and to You do we offer glory, thanksgiving, and worship together with Your Eternal Father and Your All-Holy, Good, and Life-giving Spirit now and forever unto the ages of ages. Amen.