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УКРАЇНСЬКИЙ ПРАВОСЛАВНИЙ КАТЕДРАЛЬНИЙ
СОБОР Св. ІВАНА

UKRAINIAN ORTHODOX PARISH OF ST. JOHN

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25 March 2020

To: The Faithful Members & Supporters of the
Ukrainian Orthodox Cathedral of St. John the Baptist

Beloved in the Lord!

GLORY TO JESUS CHRIST!

We, your spiritual fathers, address you in times unprecedented, unexpected, and quite extraordinary! We entered the season of the Holy and Great Fast a few short weeks ago singing, *“Let us begin the fast with joy! Let us prepare ourselves for spiritual efforts! Let us cleanse our soul and cleanse our flesh! Let us abstain from every passion as we abstain from food!” (Vespers of Cheese-fare Sunday Evening)*. Could we have imagined these words would prove to be so “real” in this year’s season of fasting? Who knew, on that quiet Sunday evening, during the Vespers which ushered us into Great Lent with the Rite of Forgiveness, that this would be one of the last times some of us would physically interact with one-another; that it would be not only the *first* but one of the *few* worship opportunities in Great Lent, this year?

Nonetheless, we are particularly challenged, this year, to consider the words of our Patriarch, His All-Holiness Bartholomew: *“... that which is at stake is not our faith – it is the faithful.”* The Holy and Great Fast always offers us an opportunity to turn inward and hear our heart, mute the voices of self-centredness and selfishness, and focus on Christ and our neighbour with our works of compassion, charity, and almsgiving. This year, we need to pay close attention to our own health and that of all those around us, strictly adhering to government regulations and restrictions *alongside our works of faith*.

Our archpastors are offering frequent and timely directives and pastoral guidance. Our Eparchial Bishop and Cathedral Rector, Vladyka Ilarion, has called us to *“help and support one another” (Epistle of 25 March 2020)*. Our Primate, Metropolitan Yuriy, has instructed us (in his *3rd Epistle, Regarding the Coronavirus Pandemic, 23 March 2020*) to form a *“communications network by internet and telephone... that no one feels alone and without aid.”* His Eminence has also reminded all of us to be concerned, in particular, *“with maintaining the material health of our parishes, eparchies and Consistory,”* so that, at the end of this current crisis – and let us be sure: this crisis *will end!* – the stewardship of the Church will remain in a healthy state and none of our ministries will be jeopardized by our lack of support *today!*

Heeding the instructions and council of our hierarchs, in addition to our continuing pastoral work and service to you, our faithful, we call on *your participation* in looking after one another and staying connected. To assist in this good work, we maintain a list of members who would certainly be comforted and thrilled by a phone call or check-in from their parish brother or sister. This list is available in the Administration Office – just email or call and **Marshall or Ed** will be


glad to share it with you! If you would *like to be contacted*, please contact the office to confirm your inclusion on the list.

Our Parish Council is also proceeding with electronic means for “planned giving” through PAD (Pre-authorized Automatic Deposit) donations. Detailed information and the related forms are included in the latest issue of *Cathedral Connection*, which should have already reached those on our email distribution list and will soon reach households by regular post. Please consider this method to assist the material needs of our cathedral *especially now, during these most challenging days!* If the PAD option is not your preference currently, please call the Administration Office to discuss other options for ongoing financial support of our cathedral operations.

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ! At Baptism we sing (as a Prokimenon before the reading of the Epistle), *“The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?” (Psalm 26)* Though we are engaged in a unique and particularly challenging fast, this year, it will *end with Pascha, NOT Golgotha* – as it does every year! By the will of God, let us meet the challenges before us with creativity, not submission; with courage, not fear; with an openness to new and unique ways to “be the Church.” Pray regularly with you families – especially the *Prayer in Times of Ruinous Pestilence (Epidemic)* blessed by His Eminence Metropolitan Yurij. Keep checking our cathedral web site, Facebook page, and the web pages of the UOCC and Western Eparchy for important updates. Join us on livestreams of our liturgical services. Reach out to your neighbours and continue to support our church. *Contact us* anytime – not only when you “need” us but because we are... WE in this! All of us stand and meet our current challenges together, guided by Christ, protected by His All-Holy Mother, and interceded on our behalf by all the saints!

As we began this letter, with reference to the hymns at the inauguration of the Holy and Great Fast, so we will conclude, by encouraging you to: *“...rejoice in virtues of the Spirit and fulfill them in love, that we all may see the Passion of Christ our God, and rejoice in spirit at the holy Pascha!” (Vespers of Cheesefare Sunday Evening).*

With love in Christ –
Your spiritual fathers &
constant intercessors at the Lord’s Holy Table,


Rt. Rev. Protopresbyter Stephan Semotiuk
Cathedral Dean


Very Rev. Archpriest Cornell Zubritsky
Cathedral Associate Priest

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