

THE AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND DIOCESE

OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE OF RUSSIA

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Statement Concerning Conducting Church Life During the Pandemic

To the Clergy, Monastics, and Laity of the Australian-New Zealand Diocese

"Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32).

In these last days, as the seals in the Book of Revelation are being opened (according to the word of St. Paisios of Mt. Athos), we must always hearken to these words of our Saviour spoken to His disciples and to all of us: "Fear not."

We have read about the various regulations being enacted in dioceses throughout the world in response to the severity of the COVID-19 outbreak in their regions and the restrictions being enforced by the local governments. Here in Australia we have just heard of the new restriction of having four (4) sq. metres of space for every occupant of a gathering of less than one hundred (100) people, with more than one hundred (100) being forbidden. Outdoors we are limited to gatherings of five hundred (500) people. We do not know if any kind of gatherings will be allowed in the near future. We ask all of our church communities to obey their local government requirements.

Concerning church services, if the space in your church is insufficient for you to comply to these rules, or if we are forbidden to have any indoor gatherings in the future, you may have outdoor liturgies and services, perhaps with the altar positioned in the entrance of the church.

We will continue to administer the Holy Mysteries as we have always done. Zapivka should be given with disposable paper cups, which should be burned afterwards. The veneration of icons and the cross and the greeting of the priest may continue as normal, alternatively it is also acceptable for the faithful to bow to the icons and the priest. The faithful may take the antidoron themselves at the end of liturgy.

As this is a contagious disease all the faithful should be encouraged to maintain good personal hygiene and avoid unnecessary contact in order to keep from passing on the contagion to one another.

The elderly, those who are sick and those whose health is compromised and are especially vulnerable to the disease are encouraged to stay at home until the situation improves. They

should contact their priest in order to receive the sacraments of Confession and Holy Communion. It is also now possible to watch the divine services via live-streaming. [At the present time the Pokrov Sobor in Melbourne (Slavonic/English) <https://youtu.be/9-EY3LkcgZ4>, the Vladimir Icon Parish in Rocklea (Slavonic) <https://www.viot.org.au/home/index.php/live-streams/>, and the Holy Annunciation Parish in Brisbane (English) <http://Facebook.com/HolyAnnunciation> are live-streaming their services.]

All Russian church schools should cancel classes until further notice and all Holy Unction services scheduled for this Lenten period should be cancelled.

Let us remember that everything is from the hand of God, and “all things work together for good to them that love God” (Rom. 8:28). In the third century, during a terrible pandemic, over 5,000 perished every day in Rome. Some cities lost more than 60% of their population. During that time people panicked and abandoned the sick and the dying, except for the Christians. They displayed great faith, compassion, and steadfastness as they cared for the sick, the disabled, and even strangers. Let us emulate these early Christians, showing that we are worthy of also being called Christians. Let us seek out those that may be in need and offer whatever assistance we can, whether it be physical or spiritual. “In your patience possess ye your souls” (Luke 21:19).



Bishop of Canberra
Administrator of the Australia-New Zealand Diocese
of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia

We ask that the following prayer be added to every liturgy and that copies of the prayer be distributed to the laity so that they may add it to their daily prayers.

Prayer for salvation from the coronavirus and other ills

O Lord Jesus Christ, our God!

Look down on all who are suffering from the viral contagion. Do not let them to be left without the hope of life ahead, give them courage and faith in Thy all-powerful help.

Lord, guard us all from serious illnesses.

Grant forgiveness and remit the sins and transgressions of all those who cannot be healed, who are leaving this world in mortal anguish. Send Thy Angels to receive their souls.

With Thy right hand, O Lord, purify the earth, the air and the waters from the destructive consequences of the current calamity.

Protect us through the prayers of our Most Pure Lady the Mother of God and of all Thy saints. Amen.