



June 1, 2020

OUT-2020-131ENG

Glory Be to Jesus Christ!

Dear Rev. Fathers and Deacons,

In the last two months or more we have lived under a shelter-in-place atmosphere with restrictions that have caused our regular duties almost impossible to perform. The most painful experience has been that our faithful could not participate in Divine Liturgy services or receive the Holy Eucharist.

I extend my sincere gratitude to all the dear priests and deacons who have so steadfastly persevered in this period of the pandemic. You have endured this time with the help of prayer and the words of encouragement and support extended by your parishioners that have joined with you online. I would especially like to thank our priests who also serve as chaplains, and at the cost of risking their own well-being, have served the sick and the medical first responders.

Thank God, that news heard from around the world is showing a stabilization of the acute pandemic situation and is resulting in slow relaxation of quarantine measures that had been implemented for protecting humanity. Similarly, in many of the states of the United States the governing leaders have started to ease the shelter-in-place guidelines in phases for their communities which include churches. This progression of phases each with the easing of restrictions, is applicable to the faithful of the Eparchy of St. Nicholas, Ukrainian Catholic Churches and thus presents the following guidelines:

1. It is imperative that we follow all the regulatory guidelines of the government leaders for holding in-person church services.

- * Wearing of face coverings (masks)
- * Observing social distancing between people who come to church to pray.
- * Limiting the number of individuals allowed to be physically present in churches based on available space in the church.
- * The availability of hand-sanitizers at for use by the faithful at each church entrance.

2. People who have reservations about attending church services in-person, especially persons 65 years or older, have medical conditions that put them at higher risk should continue to partake in the Liturgy online until the government removes all restrictive guidelines.

3. The distribution of the Holy Eucharist shall take place, where possible in the usual fashion. As an additional safeguard, all individuals that come to receive the Holy Eucharist are instructed to have their mouth opened wide, so the spoon is not touched. The faithful that have reservations or insecurity and fears to receive the Holy Eucharist in the usual fashion should refrain from receiving it.

The priests of the St. Nicholas Eparchy had given several alternative suggestions as to the distribution of the Holy Eucharist. In consideration of all the priest suggestions the usual fashion of administering with a spoon shall remain. As an alternative it can also be given by the hand of the priest placing it into the wide, open mouth of the individual.

This alternative fashion shall require the priest to prepare the Holy Eucharist so that it is cut in such a way that the length of the host is not smaller than two centimeters (2cm) and the thickness should be such that it does not break in half.

At the time that he recites "Approach with the fear of God and with faith", the priest brings out the diskos with blessed longer hosts, and if needed a chalice of Sacred Blood. The diskos can be held in hand or set on the tetrapod, and from which can be picked up each single host and if requested dipped into the chalice or not. After the host is dipped in the chalice or not, the host is placed into a widely opened mouth of the individual receiving the Holy Eucharist. Under no circumstances is the host put into the hand of the individual receiving the Holy Eucharist, but only into the individual's mouth watchful not to touch the inner lining of the mouth. By this means of administering the Holy Eucharist please be careful to treat the Holy Eucharist with respect so that no crumbs land on the floor. It is also necessary to have hand-sanitizer placed on the tetrapod for disinfecting the hand when needed. I advise that the priests and deacons use face masks when distributing the Holy Eucharist.

4. Till the end of the year 2020 it is necessary to provide the opportunity for the faithful to go to Holy Confession so that they may satisfy their Easter Confession obligation.

5. Unless prohibited by governmental regulatory guidelines, funerals may be held in the traditional fashion with bringing the coffin inside the church.

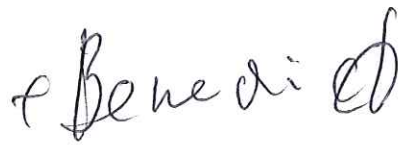
6. It is imperative that Liturgy be renewed in our parishes and missions in order to return to our original pastoral ministry as it was prior to the outbreak of the pandemic.

7. If parents, who are concerned with safety during this pandemic, wish to have their child Baptized and Anointed, can have it performed at their residence, after they have arranged so with a priest. The Holy Eucharist should be given to already Baptized and Anointed children, in church once the contagion ceases.

8. This year First Holy Confession and Solemn Holy Eucharist for children, with the consent of the parents, can be delayed until next year or held during the Fall of 2020 if the pandemic situation changes and it is allowed to hold large group gathering in church.

9. Online live-streaming of all services must continue to give opportunity for prayer and obligatory attendance at Sunday Divine Liturgy for people who are ill, elderly or disabled to attend otherwise, but is not a replacement for personally attending Divine Liturgy in church.

May the blessings of the Lord be upon you!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Benedict". The signature is written in black ink and is centered on the page.

Most Reverend Benedict

Bishop of St. Nicholas Eparchy