



**Українська Православна Церква в Канаді
Західна Єпархія**

**Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada
Western Eparchy**

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My dear in Christ Fathers, Brothers, and Sisters of the Western Eparchy, UOCC,

Glory to Jesus Christ!

With pain in my soul, I reach out to you all, during this fourth week of Great Lent, when all humanity suffers from an invisible enemy, COVID-19.

In just a few days, all human life suddenly changed. Everything that people thought was reliable and stable in their lives is no longer possible, and so many people are in panic and fear. But we, Orthodox Christians, must remember

“Our Hope is in the Father, our Refuge is in the Son, our Protection is the Holy Spirit”

and do not fall into fear and despair. The Lord said: “Whoever wants to follow Me, take his cross and follow Me.” May the Almighty Lord give us all spiritual and physical strength to carry our cross with faith and patience, because after the Golgotha, Resurrection awaits us.

Let us not forget that the lack of hope in God is a sin. It is also a sin to test the mercy of God by being irresponsible and ignoring the official advice of medical authorities. We must adhere strictly to the directives of our governing and medical authorities for the safety of our lives and the lives of others. As the Lord said: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's." (Matthew 22:21)

Dear Fathers, may the Lord help you to carry out your pastoral ministry of supporting your parishioners spiritually in the face of this Pandemic. In conditions where it is probably impossible to visit your parishioners, support them in other ways, by prayer, telephone calls, or any other electronic means common to them and to you.

Dear brothers and sisters, reach out to your spiritual fathers for spiritual support. Help and support one another, especially those people who have no one to help them. Let us always remember: “ that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer...” (1 Cor.12: 25-26)

Let us pray to our Lord that He comfort and heal those already affected by this virus.

May the Lord grant strength and wisdom to all levels of government and to all the medical authorities that are involved in combatting the virus.

May He grant comfort and peace to all who are feeling the effects of this Pandemic, whether in isolation or still in the work place maintaining essential services.

May God change the behavior of those who resist or ignore the wealth of advice that is offered to assist every person at this critical time.

May each person do his part to keep the virus from spreading further by adhering to official advice being offered at this time.

Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on Your world.

May the blessing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the Physician of our souls and bodies, be with all of you!

With Archpastoral blessing, fervent prayers for all of you,

+ Ilarion

+ Ilarion, Bishop of Edmonton and the Western Eparchy