

# The Evangelical Orthodox Catholic Church in America

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From the Office of the Patriarch

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RE: Coronavirus Information

My dear brother Bishops, EOCCA Parishioners and Guests,

The celebration of the Most Holy Eucharist is the source of life for the Christian faithful. In the sacrifice of the Holy Mass, we do not re-sacrifice the Lord, but rather, we call to mind Jesus' life, the Last Supper, and the sacrificial death on the cross at Calvary. We are also reminded of our redemption through the saving grace of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, this is also a time in which we are all nourished by the Word of God, and receive the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ.

Due to the importance and reasons stated above, the Church places a grave obligation for all the faithful to be present at Holy Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation. Thus, in doing so, we fulfill our Lord's command to "keep holy the Sabbath."

Because of this now pandemic of the COVID-19 virus, President Trump has declared a National State of Emergency as well as our own states and municipalities. Here in Oregon, Governor Kate Brown has also declared a State of Emergency. With this said, bishops and pastors may release the faithful from any obligation of attendance to Holy Mass, out of the concern for the health and wellbeing of the faithful of God entrusted to our care.

I will say this however, because each bishop and pastor knows their own people above all others, I also ask the discretion be used in the dispensing of the Most Holy Eucharist.

Each State is different in their calling of a State of Emergency as well as each state having their own set of prescribed guidelines for keeping the public as a whole safe. Once again, with this said, Governor Kate Brown of Oregon has cancelled all public gatherings of more than 250 people, including public school systems, colleges, and universities. The fact that many of our own congregations are less than this number, there is no reason for cancelation of services unless each bishop and/or pastor deems it necessary.

The Evangelical Orthodox Catholic Church takes this pandemic serious, and we are taking all necessary measures to ensure the wellbeing and safety of those who attend our Cathedral here in Milwaukie, Oregon. If bishops and pastors do decide to hold Holy Mass, please keep in mind the following most common safety precautions:

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1. Anyone 60 years or older are encouraged to consider not attending Holy Mass since they are the most vulnerable to this virus. They therefore, would be dispensed from the obligation of attending Holy Mass. However, if you feel able, strong and healthy enough to attend, you may do so at your own discretion.
2. Anyone with an underlying medical issue that may put them at risk, or individuals with compromised immune systems, are asked not to attend Holy Mass. These individuals likewise, will be dispensed from the obligation to attend Holy Mass.
3. Individuals who are not feeling well, no matter how mild any of their symptom may be, are urged to stay home. They will be dispensed from the Holy obligation.
4. A general dispensation is granted to any of our Evangelical Orthodox Catholic Church members who sincerely feel that they might be at risk. The dispensation is granted to anyone of any age.
5. The faithful who do attend Holy Mass are reminded to avoid all physical contact with others, keeping a safe distance.
6. Also, hand sanitizer and disinfectants wipes are available in the vestibule of the Church for your safety. Feel free to sanitize your hands as well any area of the pews in which you plan to sit. All bishops and clergy personnel will wash (*scrub*) their hands with hot soapy water for at least 20 seconds as well avoid touching unnecessary surfaces.
7. At this time, The Archdiocese of Milwaukee (Cathedral) will not use the Common Cup or have intinction, only dispensing the Holy Body of Christ. With this said, the handling of the Sacred Body of Christ will be dispensed into the parishioner's hands and not on their tongue as normally would be done, only during this pandemic period of time. Once again, this practice is up to the discretion of each individual Archdiocese or Diocese of the E.O.C.C.A.
8. If you do not feel comfortable in receiving communion, you may elect to come forward, arms crossed, and receive a blessing from the bishop or priest.
9. Any bishop or pastor who has any sort of Hospital or Nursing Home ministry, be sure to follow the health and safety guidelines set forth in that institution.
10. Any parishioners who wish to stay at home for health and safety reasons, are again dispensed from any obligation. If electing to stay at home at this time, consider watching Holy Mass on television, or if any E.O.C.C.A. parish has the capability of Live Stream on the internet, consider watching the Mass in this manner.
11. Those who make use of the dispensation from the obligation of attendance at Holy Mass are encouraged to make an act of Spiritual Communion with our Lord. Here is an example of such Spiritual Communion Prayer:

O My Jesus,

I believe that YOU are present in the Most Holy Sacrament. I love YOU above all things, and I long for YOU in my soul.

Since I cannot now receive YOU sacramentally into my heart. As though YOU have already come, I embrace YOU and unite myself entirely to YOU; never permit me to be separated from YOU.

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12. Finally, use common sense when dealing with pandemic, and never put yourself at unnecessary risk. Once again, The Evangelical Orthodox Catholic Church takes this pandemic very serious.

This is an intense and trying time for us all. Let us remember to keep one another in continuous prayer, especially for those who are most vulnerable. Also, let us prayerfully remember those who have lost their lives to this virus and to their grieving families.

All things are possible through Christ Jesus. Let us now and always place our trust in Jesus, and may He be by our side in this time and always. Pray for our physicians and those who work in the CDC, that our Lord, Savior, and God Jesus Christ guide and inspire these healthcare workers to soon find a cure for this virus.

May the blessing of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all this day and forever more. In the name of the ✠Father, and of the ✠Son, and of the ✠Holy Spirit. Amen.

Faithfully yours in Christ,

*++ Allen W. Zaugg*

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Metropolitan Archbishop - E.O.C.C.A. Patriarch