



Church of the **G**enuine **O**rthodox **C**hristians of **G**reece
Holy **S**ynod

Communiqué of the Holy Synod **Concerning the Present Situation**

Athens, March 11/24, 2020

Beloved Fathers and Brethren;

Beloved Children in the Lord:

In the middle of the Great Fast, with the Precious and Life-giving Cross, the very symbol of sacrifice, love, and victory, exalted first and foremost in our hearts, we convey our paternal wishes to the sorely afflicted flock of our Church.

It is well known to all that what we are experiencing in the present Lenten season, assuredly on account of our sins, is something entirely unprecedented, although our martyric Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians passed through fire and sword some decades ago and has known long and protracted Lents with closed Churches, imprisoned Hierarchs and Priests, exiled celebrants, Priests in hiding, struggling monks and nuns, and heroic and faithful laypeople deprived of going to Church. Back then, our faith was steeled, and we emerged stronger and more resolute, even though the losses were significant.

Today, when we are supposedly not persecuted for the Faith, everyone, and indeed even the New Calendarists, our erstwhile persecutors, is affected, because the government of our country, on account of the coronavirus pandemic, has decided to take stringent measures to safeguard public health by prohibiting Divine worship in Churches for all, without exception. This is improper from a spiritual standpoint, and we are expressing our sorrow and displeasure, earnestly seeking that we be permitted to conduct public worship, with meticulous observance, to be sure, of the specifications for hygiene which have already been laid down and which we are scrupulously upholding.

The involuntary confinement of people to their homes is not only something negative, but also has its positive aspects. To begin with, the atmosphere externally has cleared up and has become truly Lenten: turmoil and commotion, insults and conflicts, have ceased, as has every kind of public degradation and corruption, both moral and otherwise.

And if in houses the families who dwell in them look upon one another with understanding and love, if they come closer by cutting off their wills and through an attitude of self-sacrifice, if they resolve their differences and acrimonies and forgive each other, and chiefly if they pray together, then their loose and enfeebled bonds will be strengthened, and the blessing of God will return once more to their domestic environment. Divine services can be celebrated at the Icon corner of one's home. It is also possible to hear the services from our Churches over the Internet. Moreover, the reading of good books, creative activities undertaken together, and edifying recreation are helpful from many perspectives for both young and old. Let us bear in mind that what we give to God and to others we will also receive back.

Let us discover our inner self, let us manage our relationships better, let us give love, trust, security, peace, and optimism, and we will receive these back many times over, sooner or later.

Yet do we perhaps, now that we have more time at home, instead of using it in a creative and God-pleasing way, squander it in foolishness? Necessary information is one thing, but there is also an excessive searching for the most improbable scenarios that supposedly uncover all the truth that most people conceal regarding their intrigues, and thus it is that an uncontrollable farrago of conspiracy theories and doomsaying is incessantly disseminated! Is this helpful for our souls, and does it do any good to others?

Brethren, there is need of repentance, prayer, humility, and compassion, and also of commemoration of the reposed, of the suffering, of all who struggle in hospitals, and of all who strive to assist their fellow men in whatever way, materially and morally. And let us not forget those who guard our territorial and maritime borders from incursions of foreigners, so that we may live in peace and security.

Let us also reflect that a microscopic virus, invisible to the naked eye, has exposed the weakness of modern man and has made a laugh-

ingstock of his haughtiness and arrogance, his achievements and alleged omnipotence. It has humbled him, brought him to his knees, and threatens him with destruction. Will humanity learn its lesson, will it come to its senses, will it see reason, or will it continue its foolish course without restraint?

Certain contrary elements, even within the realm of the Church, in systematic opposition to the canonical Hierarchy of the Church, seek even in these critical moments reasons to criticize and reproach it for complaisance, inaction, and compromise. All who are animated by “foolish zeal” are incapable of attaining peace or of making room for the Holy Spirit in their turbulent souls. We pray that they will come around and understand what a true Confession of Faith is and that if it is not preceded by genuine obedience, humility, love, and prayer, Divine Grace does not grant the gift of Confession.

We urge our Christian flock to keep away from disorderly and unstable persons and to be secure in the knowledge that our Hierarchs, from the Archbishop to each Metropolitan and Bishop, as well as our praiseworthy clergymen, are all solicitous, in every way and by every means, on the basis of the restrictions that have been imposed, to provide for Church life, for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, and particularly in our monasteries and convents, and also for the support in every possible way of our flock collectively and personally. The means of communication today are many.

However, let us not forget our primary contact with the Fount of Life, our Lord and God Jesus Christ, the *Panagia*, and the Saints. The empathetic and paternal prayer, full of love and concern, of our Shepherds for their flock also yields wondrous results. If we ourselves do not pursue this, so as to form a mighty army of prayer, as a spiritual shield and force, then we deserve a worse tribulation and a more severe “punishment.”

For, along with the rest, all of us, clergy and laity, now take up a “Lenten rule of prayer” for the sake of our sins, and may it be that we come more fully to our senses, that we correct ourselves, that we each of us learn our “lesson,” and that we make the most prudent and God-pleasing decisions.

The Psalmist exhorts us, giving us courage and strength: “Be of

good courage, and let your heart be strengthened, all ye that hope in the Lord” (Psalm 30:25).

And daily at Great Compline there resounds our supplicatory petition and assurance: “O Lord of Hosts, be with us; for beside Thee, we have no other helper in afflictions. O Lord of Hosts, have mercy on us”!

With much spiritual love, concern, and closeness of heart we greet you, blessing each and all, and exclaiming: “God is with us!”

† Archbishop Kallinikos of Athens
and all the members of the Holy Synod

