

SYNODAL COMMUNIQUÉ

Concerning the Present Situation Resulting from the Coronavirus Epidemic and the Measures Being Taken

The Holy Synod of the Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians of Greece requests Her Christian flock to intensify its prayers during the difficult circumstances of the time through which we are passing.

We especially in Greece, more than our other brethren, must be spiritually vigilant and avoid the national scourge of discord, since we indeed are already experiencing a more severe threat, one of military actions from the east on the part of the age-old barbarian enemies of our people. We urge the Christ-named people of the true Church not to participate in dissensions, but to maintain a sober attitude in all matters.

With regard to the aforementioned coronavirus disease and its consequences for life in society more broadly, the Holy Synod paternally urges its flock not to adopt extreme positions. On the one hand, it is not right to say that the virus in question is nonexistent and that, consequently, there is no need for safety measures; on the other hand, we must not succumb to panic. Now, panic takes two opposing forms: there is a panic from fear of illness that leads to extreme behaviors, and there is the panic deriving from the suspicion of ulterior motives behind safety measures. Whatever happens, we must remain steadfast in the Faith, fearless in spirit, and unperturbed in soul, "rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer" (Romans 12:12). Admittedly, some of the measures that secular authorities are taking may well be excessive and may even be faulty, or at least impractical, especially considering that no human being is infallible; yet even physicians do not agree as to the form and breadth of the necessary safety procedures. Moreover, the same scientists, in the past, have at times adopted varying views regarding the problem and ways to confront it.

Therefore, whether we be clergy or laity, our positions on every non-dogmatic issue (as in the present case) must be not only sober, but also circumspect. Of course, whenever the local secular authorities have attempted to interfere in the internal affairs of the Church through the imposition of their decisions in purely dogmatic issues (as, for example, the iconoclastic ideas concerning the avoidance of venerating Icons, or the dispute over the Mystery of the Holy Eucharist), then assuredly the Apostolic dictum, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29), has applied and still holds true. Thus, neither complete indifference nor the adherence to ideas antithetical to the Orthodox Faith and Tradition is permitted. Our Holy Synod follows these issues closely and gives general directives to its Bishops, who must apply them in ways appropriate to local circumstances and guide their Priests concerning what must be done in each specific case, avoiding harmful public pronouncements.

In conclusion, our Holy Synod reminds her spiritual children that all trials that the good Providence of God permits are due to our sins and that, consequently, we must confront them through blessed repentance.

To those who are suffering from the disease and to their relatives, as well as those suffering under the aforementioned measures, we express our prayerful support, praying for the healing of souls and bodies, that the Grace of our all-good God may bring a favorable end to this trial that humanity is undergoing on account of our sins. Our return, through repentance, to God-pleasing ways will bring relief and peace to all of us; may this happen as soon as possible!

From the Chancery of the Holy Synod
Athens, September 5/18, 2020