



МОНРЕАЛЬСКАЯ И КАНАДСКАЯ ЕПАРХІЯ
РУССКОЙ ПРАВОСЛАВНОЙ ЦЕРКВИ ЗАГРЯНИЦЕЙ

DIOCÈSE DE MONTRÉAL ET DU CANADA • L'ÉGLISE RUSSE ORTHODOXE HORS FRONTIÈRES
DIOCESE OF MONTREAL AND CANADA • RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE OF RUSSIA

ЕПАРХІАЛЬНАЯ КАНЦЕЛЯРІЯ
DIOCESAN CHANCELLERY

EPISTLE

To the Priests, Clergy and All the God-Saved Flock of the Canadian Diocese

Dear in Christ Fathers, Brothers and Sisters:

As we approach the Advent of the Nativity, we one way or another strive internally to prepare to the great celebration of the Incarnation of the Lord, His arrival in our created world. We cannot help but remember how this world met the God-Child Christ: with human antagonism, wars, diseases and divisions. Today, in light of what is happening, one remembers the dread words spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ when His earthly mission was coming to an end. The Lord's words of guidance to his disciples were: "And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in diverse places. All these are the beginning of sorrows" (Matthew 24:6-8). Indeed, due to our sins, conflicts, local wars and rumors of conflict do not cease. And the onset of sickness goes on and on: the arrival of a deadly virus, whose very nature and source are far from clear to us, continues. "Many speak of these times as a time of crisis," said His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia recently. "I wish to recall that one of the meanings of the Greek word 'crisis' is judgement, the judgement of God. In crises is revealed genuine truth, especially truth about man himself... In crisis, from the fear that at any moment life can be ended, no more deceit exists in a person, no illusions, no posturing, but he is absolutely lain bare before Divine truth."

The history of mankind more than once endured epochs of crisis, such as that which we now experience. But the Lord, through His ineffable mercy, does not permit the destruction of the world He created. The words of the Creator of the heavens and the earth bear witness to us and are our greatest hope, known from the Old Testament book of Prophet Jonah: the Lord had mercy and accepted the repentance of the sinful people of Nineveh.

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In such times the greatest temptation for many is often that of division. This always leads to enmity and internecine strife, but “those who wish to impress people by means of the flesh” (Galatians, 6:12), defeated by this temptation, will always find cause for division. Today such a cause is one’s attitude towards vaccination, which could not but touch upon the Church, “Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all” (Colossians 3:11). Vaccination is in essence one of the forms of healing, as is all medicine prepared by mankind which cannot be perfect. Experts do not pretend it is. Moreover, the relationship between the vaccinated and non-vaccinated, differences of opinion on vaccination in the parish community absolutely cannot lead to enmity and discord, which violate the very principle of the Orthodox Christian parish. Especially forbidden are any quarrels between clergymen relating to vaccination, which could cause serious harm to parish life and even destroy it.

As has been said more than once, we must strictly adhere to the rules of civil authorities regarding the pandemic. At the same time we should add that we can concede no forced vaccinations, for that would violate both civil and Church laws.

And so, beloved fathers, brothers and sisters, let us remember the words of the great Apostle of the Gentiles Paul: “But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth” (Colossians 3:8). Let us prayerful place our hope in the Lord, that these troubled times pass, and that we by God’s mercy will be able to greet the day of the Nativity of the Lord together.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Archbishop Gabriel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

GABRIEL
Archbishop of Montreal and Canada

29 October/11 November 2021