



**Pastoral Message from
His Eminence Archbishop Angaelos
Coptic Orthodox Archbishop of London**

20 March 2020

In light of the unprecedented crisis we are all facing as a result of the Coronavirus outbreak, the heightened risk to life that gatherings currently pose, and the escalation today of Public Health England and Government measures, it is with a heavy heart that the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of London will temporarily, as of Sunday 22 March 2020, be conducting Liturgies without congregations, and with a priest and small number of deacons only. There will be no Liturgies held in any parishes on Saturday 21 March 2020.

These measures are being taken, not only to comply with advice received, but to proactively safeguard the well-being of countless numbers of people, both within and outside our immediate communities. This is an act of faithful obligation to safeguard the sanctity of every human life by mitigating the spread of infection, and to join the national effort to alleviate pressure on frontline NHS workers in the hardest-hit areas of the country, who are working tirelessly in nothing short of heroic ways to save lives. They, and those they care for, need our fervent prayers.

I am proud to say that many of these medical professionals are members of our own community, and I can assure you that what they are experiencing on a daily basis requires not only our admiration, but our prayers and determined efforts to support them, their colleagues, and those they are caring for, in their greatest time of need. We will be dedicating our Divine Liturgies this coming Sunday to pray for them and their colleagues.

While this is an incredibly painful decision to have arrived at, it has come as the result of weeks of prayer, informed discussion, collaboration, and deliberation with our Clergy Council and Medical Response Team. This decision has by no means been taken lightly, but as with the past weeks, as the situation changes, we are ready to respond immediately and appropriately to any new developments. The Eucharist will continue to be offered daily upon our altars, and I along with the Fathers, will continue to lift up our prayers for you, our Church and our World to our loving God, Who will not be silent to the pleas of all who call upon Him to bring this crisis to a swift end, and to comfort those who are inconsolable as a result of their loss. I once again encourage you to pray fervently for those directly affected, the suffering, their families, and the bereaved.

Now, during this Holy time of Lent, is the time for us all to demonstrate Christ-like actions of love and hospitality to those most in need in our communities and the wider society; it is now that we must do all we can to reflect our Lord Jesus Christ into the world that is so in need of His peace and comfort, and to pray fervently for God to comfort those in need.

Teams of people are working tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure that the Church remains at the core of our lives, even if through virtual means, with the livestreaming of Liturgies, Bible Studies, Sunday School Classes and more. Though not ideal, we will do all we can to do what we can in these extraordinary circumstances, so that distance does not lead to spiritual isolation.

Ἰμμοῦψουμ ἴτε σῖβακι χῶπ εεχη εἰχεν σῖτωσῖ | *A city set on a hill cannot be hidden*

I encourage you, where possible, to pray with me every evening at 9pm for God's healing upon our nation and our world, and give thanks with me for the inspiring selfless acts of so many on the front line, while praying that they are supported by His mighty hand.

I pray that our Loving God keeps you all safe and well, and I ask that you keep me in your prayers, as you can be assured of mine.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read '+Angaelos', with a large flourish underneath.

+Angaelos
Servant of the See of London