

DIVINE LITURGIES FOR THIS WEEK**4th Sunday of the Great Fast, March 22, 2020**

9:00 AM - Lit. God's Blessings on Our Parishioners

Tuesday, March 24, 2020

7:00 PM - Stations of the Cross (English)

Wednesday, March 25, 2020**Annunciation of the Theotokos**

9:00 AM - Lit. for God's Blessings on Our Parishioners

Saturday, March 28, 2020

9:00 AM - Divine Liturgy and Lenten Commemoration

5:00 PM - Lit. + Joseph Kopi - Legate

5th Sunday of the Great Fast, March 29, 2020

Epistle - Heb 9:11-14; Gospel - Mk 10:32-45

9:00 AM - Lit. God's Blessings on Our Parishioners

Bishop Gabro School Endowment Fund\$100.00 - Luba Bilowchtchuk, in memory of
+ JOSEPH YURECHKO**Donation to Church**

In Memory of + ANTON J. MASSOPUST:

\$100.00 - Rozalia Czaban & Joe Britton

\$50.00 - Maria Alvarez

\$25.00 - Robert & Helen Cheloc

\$25.00 - Olga M. Yurechko

Taking precautions as coronavirus continues to spread.

Last week our cleaning crew went through extensive measures to clean our church. Thanks ladies for your dedication and service to the Lord and His place of worship.

Coronavirus and Church Services

Dear Parishioners and Friends,

All services will be temporarily celebrated by the PRIEST ONLY and WITHOUT the participation of the assembly of the faithful in the church. But, Church is not cancelled. I will celebrate ALL SATURDAY AND SUNDAY SERVICES for the intentions of the faithful, but sadly without your presence. All weekday Lenten Services will be celebrated by the PRIEST ONLY.

These temporary extraordinary measures find their basis not in lack of faith but in obedience to God, who commands that we care for the least of the brethren through self-sacrifice and obey our civil authorities and follow the directives of our Ukrainian Catholic Bishops in the USA.

This week, our church will remain open for Private Prayer on Saturday 11:00 AM to 4:00 PM.

Confessions by appointment only. For an emergency, please call the Parish Office 732-826-0767 or Fr. Ivan's cellphone 202-368-2408. For information, visit our parish website, www.assumptioncatholicchurch.net and see the latest posted bulletin. Rev. Ivan Turyk

Коронавірус і Богослужіння у Церкві.

Дорогі брати і сестри,

У зв'язку з поширенням небезпечного захворювання коронавірус, наш розпорядок богослужінь на час карантину буде змінений. Усі Великопосні відправи, тижневі та недільні Святі Літургії тимчасово будуть відправлятися у нашому храмі **ТІЛЬКИ СВЯЩЕНИКОМ і БЕЗ ПРИСУТНОСТІ ПАРАФІАН !!!** Прошу Вас із розумінням та повною серйозністю поставитися до цих змін, та рекомендацій які ми отримали від нашого Архієпископа Митрополита Бориса Гудзяка і церковної ієрархії нашої Церкви у Сполучених Штатах Америки.

Якщо ви бажаєте помолитися приватно, то церква буде відчинена у Суботу з 11 дня до 4 вечора.

Щоб приступити до Сповіді чи прийняти Тайну Оливопомазання, будь ласка дзвоніть до церковного офісу 732-826-0767, до о.Івана 202-368-2408 або відвідайте веб сторінку за інформацією яка буде обновлятися щотижня assumptioncatholicchurch.net

Assumption School Closed

Following our Perth Amboy Public School District and the Diocese of Metuchen recommendations:

ACS WILL BE CLOSED FOR THE NEXT TWO WEEKS due to the coronavirus outbreak. A sincere thank you our Principal and to all ACS teachers who worked most of the weekend preparing student assignments: both in books and on google classroom. ALL of our parents picked up books and materials and we are confident that we will work as a team and get through this trying time. We feel blessed to be able to continue teaching and continue to pray that everyone stays safe.

Annunciation

The feast of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary is the celebration of the announcing of the birth of Christ to the Virgin Mary as recorded in the Gospel of Saint Luke. Father will celebrate a morning Liturgy on Wednesday, March 25 at 9:00 am and NO Stations of the Cross at night.

Did you know that Catholics can make an Act of Spiritual Communion?

It has long been a Catholic understanding that when circumstances prevent one from receiving Holy Communion, it is possible to make an Act of Spiritual Communion which is a source of grace. Spiritual Communion means uniting one's self in prayer with Christ's sacrifice and worshiping Him in His Body and Blood. The most common reason for making an Act of Spiritual Communion is when a person cannot attend Divine Liturgy. Acts of Spiritual Communion increase our desire to receive sacramental Communion and help us avoid the sins that would make us unable to receive Holy Communion worthily. When unable to receive Holy Communion, pray the prayer below:

- «My Jesus, I believe that you are present in the Most Holy Sacrament. I love you above all things and I desire to receive you in my soul. Since I cannot at this moment receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace you as if you were already there and unite myself wholly to you. Never permit me to be separated from you. Amen».

Духовне Причасття.

В умовах карантину, в якому всі ми зараз знаходимось, слід обов'язково дбати про своє здоров'я та здоров'я інших. Коли неможливо бути фізично присутнім на Літургії можна скористати з ласки Духовного Причасття і помолитись цю молитву.

- «Ісусе, вірую, що Ти - в Пресвятих Дарах. Ісусе, люблю Тебе понад усе і бажаю Тебе всією душею. Я не можу зараз прийняти Тебе таємниче, прийди в моє серце хоча б духовно. Ісусе, обіймаю Тебе, не дай мені ніколи розлучитися з Тобою. Ісусе, моє благо, моя ніжна любов, поклоняюся Тобі кожно мить; Ісусе, Спасителю мій, благослови мою душу».

Stewardship Reflection St. John Climacus

This Sunday, the fourth Sunday of Great Lent, we reflect upon the teachings of St. John Climacus or St. John of the Ladder. In his famous work known as The Ladder of Divine Ascent, St. John writes how we can experience a true Christian perfection which is to live just as Jesus did.

The common theme we have heard throughout Lent this year is that we will be judged by our works. As we pass the mid point of Great Lent, let us refocus our Stewardship efforts on our Time, Talents and Treasures. Pray and consider how we can make a difference and let's remember St. John's guidance that we "live just as Jesus did" and exercise all of the gifts that God has provided to us. DURING THIS CRISIS THAT EVERYONE IS EXPERIENCING, WE NEED YOUR HELP. PLEASE KEEP SUPPORTING YOUR PARISH BY CONTINUING IN GIVING YOUR WEEKLY DONATIONS AND USING THE FOLLOWING OPTIONS: □ MAILING YOUR ENVELOPES TO OUR PARISH OFFICE □ DROPPING OFF THE ENVELOPES IN OUR MAILBOX AT THE PARISH OFFICE

Call to Prayer.

Since we cannot face this alone, we are entrusting this whole situation to our Blessed Mother, under her title of Our Lady of Guadalupe through her Son, and encourage you to join us in praying this prayer:

Our Lady of Guadalupe, mother of God: you always shine on our path as a sign of salvation and hope. We rely on you, Health of the Sick, you who, at the cross, united with Jesus' pain, keeping steadfast your faith. You, Salvation of God's people, you know what we need and we are sure that you will provide for us, as at Cana of Galilee, after the adversity of these days, may joy and celebration return. Help us, Mother of Divine Love, to conform to the will of the Father and to do what we are told by Jesus, who has taken our suffering upon Himself and has burdened Himself with our sorrows to lead us through the cross, to the joy of resurrection. Amen. Under your protection, Holy Mother of God, Our Lady of Guadalupe, we seek refuge, hear our prayer and intercede for us to the Father so that we may be free from every danger, Our Lady of Guadalupe, pray for us. Amen.



Memorandum of the bishops of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in the United States of America regarding the COVID-19 pandemic

“Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.” (Mt. 25, 40)

Dear clergy, religious, and faithful!

Responding to the outbreak of the global pandemic virus COVID-19, which has been spreading with lightning speed across the globe, we, bishops of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in the United States, united in solidarity, wish to address you with assurances of our joint prayers and efforts. Bound together in our care for the spiritual and physical health of our faithful, we would like to inform you about certain norms and practices intended to confirm us in faith and truth, safeguarding all members of our communities, especially the most vulnerable, and preventing the spread of disease.

Keeping in mind the fragility of human life and acknowledging with humility the limits of human reason and resources, we are called to do all that is possible to help the national government, local authorities, and medical personnel to fight the spread of the virus.

Medical workers and scientists are unanimous in warning that this fight will be protracted, one that will require the solidarity of all people across the globe. The speed of transportation and the globalization of today's world facilitate the spread of the virus. But the quality of our interpersonal relations and our solidarity—and it is Christ who grants these gifts—are able to slow down the contagion that takes more and more lives every day. The experience of the countries that squarely faced the consequences of the virus and acted quickly and decisively shows that it is possible.

“Love your neighbor!” These times call us to faith in God, trust in each other, focused efforts, solidarity and coordinated actions. Love, we know, entails closeness, even intimacy. In today's circumstances, however, a certain distance may be the proper expression of interpersonal love and civic responsibility. Thus, the Ukrainian Catholic Church supports governmental regulations and public health measures connected with the pandemic. We ask you, our dear faithful, to follow the advice of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and take care of your personal safety and hygiene as well as of those around you.

Christ is in our midst! Unfortunately, the necessary public health norms on social distancing, including restrictions on public meetings, make it impossible for the Church to carry on our usual rhythms. At the same time, despite the difficult situation, the Church does not stop Her activity and service. We are called to be creative in living our communion. We Christians continue to bear witness to the presence of God in the created world, to His action in the life of all people, to His love for every person. It is the hour to show our love and care for the elderly in our communities, who today are most at risk and for all who experience social isolation.

These times of trial are a unique opportunity to manifest our love for God and neighbor. Today, when we are limited in public liturgical practices, our life in Christ will

be measured by the authentic quality of our personal relationship with God and neighbor: in private and family prayer and in works of charity. In the midst of today's pandemic caring for one's neighbor calls for clear and immediate expression.

The experience of our underground Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (1945-1989) is a source of inspiration and faith for us. In recent memory having been deprived of all of its church buildings and all other infrastructure, the Greek Catholic Church in Ukraine and elsewhere in the communist world was led by God to find creative ways to foster the spiritual life of its members for two generations. Through excruciating suffering and great losses, our Church was forged, cleansed, and prepared for a new life in a new millennium. Now is the time to prayerfully reflect upon this salvation history. The Lord will guide us again in fortitude and flexibility to praise Him and foster communion and solidarity among us.

Public Services

All weekday and Sunday services will be celebrated temporarily without the participation of the assembly of the faithful. Our clergy will continue to celebrate and pray for you and with you vicariously. We will celebrate the Divine Liturgies and other services in behalf of and for all of you, especially for the sick and the healthcare providers. We will beseech the Lord for wise and prudent decisions on the part of government and medical authorities. We will pray for the eternal repose of the deceased. We are obligating our priests to be steadfast in prayer for their flock. Be as Moses, who raised his hands in prayer so that whole people of God could prevail over the enemy (cf. Ex 17, 11-12).

Our churches will remain open for private prayer at designated times. We ask the pastors to guarantee the safety and frequent disinfection of our churches. We renew and confirm the dispensation from the obligation to participate in Sunday services. At the same time, we ask you to pray as a Domestic Church (as a family or household unit) on Sundays and on Holy Days. We suggest making use of the ZhyveTV and internet resources of your eparchy or parish. Read prayerfully the Holy Scriptures, reflect upon the source and meaning of your life, on God's love and salvific action on our behalf. We encourage you to make best use of the quarantine time, which coincides with Great Lent, for personal prayer, reading the Word of God, and building a more profound relationship with Our Lord, our neighbors and in our families. We ask that all the Lenten practices—e.g., missions and spiritual exercises—be held with the aid of the internet and other means of social communication.

Sacraments and Sacramentals

We kindly ask that you postpone, in consultation with your pastor, the Sacraments of Christian initiation (Baptism and Chrismation) and Matrimony. The faithful can avail themselves of the Sacrament of Repentance (Confession) in church, taking all necessary precautions for social distancing.

In cases of grave illness or danger of death, priests are obligated to administer the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, while assuring safety for all involved. Priests will celebrate funerals with the participation only of the immediate family members of the deceased, according to local regulations regarding public assemblies.

Practical advice

Dear priests, religious, sisters and brothers! If you feel sick, we urge you to stay at home, call your doctor, and obey all medical and civil regulations. We encourage our pastors to maintain personal contact

with their faithful, especially with the elderly and sick by phone and via social media. Our priestly ministry continues without ceasing.

Confessions are to take place in the open, not in confessional. Safety of the penitent and priest must be assured.

Frequently sanitize with disinfectant whatever people tend to touch in the churches: pews, door handles, etc. During private prayer in church, maintain a safe distance from each other (6 feet or 2 meters).

Venerate icons and the Cross by bowing your head and with a sign of the cross or by prostrations. Do not kiss icons or the Cross.

Comply with the guidelines and prescriptions of governmental authorities (town, county, state, federal) regarding public gatherings and personal safety.

These norms are effective immediately after being published on Wednesday, March 19, 2020. We carefully follow developments, consult experts and will update our norms and regulations according to new information and circumstances.

God is calling us to a new and deeper spiritual awareness. We encourage you to stay united in the communion of the Holy Spirit! Pray! Stay vigilant! Sing, smile, and laugh! Exercise and read! Pay attention to your health and help people who are under risk in your family as well as in your neighborhood! Communicate and support each other in spirit and deed!

The blessing of the Lord be upon you!

+ Borys Gudziak
Archbishop of Philadelphia for Ukrainians
Metropolitan of Ukrainian Catholics in the United States

+ Paul Chomnycky, OSBM
Eparch of Stamford

+ Benedict Aleksyichuk
Eparch of St. Nicholas in Chicago

+ Bohdan J. Danylo
Eparch of St. Josaphat in Parma

+ Andriy Rabiy
Auxiliary Bishop of Philadelphia

March 19, 2020
from Metropolitan Cathedral of Immaculate Conception in Philadelphia, PA



Звернення єпископів Української Католицької Церкви у Сполучених Штатах Америки з приводу пандемії вірусу COVID-19

“Усе що ви зробили зробили одному з Моїх братів найменших - ви Мені зробили”. (Мт. 25,40)

Дорогі священнослужителі, монахи і монахині та вірні!

У зв'язку з пандемією вірусу COVID-19, який блискавично поширюється нашою планетою, ми, єпископи Української Католицької Церкви у Сполучених Штатах Америки, дбаючи про духовне і тілесне здоров'я наших вірних, бажаємо разом звернутися до Вас і запевнити Вас у нашій спільній молитві та солідарній дії. У соборний спосіб бажаємо донести до Вас інформацію про запровадження певних норм і практик, що мають на меті скріпити нас усіх у вірі і правді, захистити всіх членів наших спільнот, зокрема найбільш вразливих, та запобігти поширенню недуги.

Пам'ятаючи про крихкість життя та зі смиренням усвідомлюючи обмеженість людського розуму і ресурсів, ми все ж покликані робити те, що в наших силах, щоб допомогти урядам і державам, органам місцевого самоврядування та медикам боротися з поширенням вірусу.

Медики та науковці одногосно попереджають, що боротьба буде затьожною і вимагатиме солідарності всіх мешканців земної кулі. Швидкість транспорту та глобалізованість сучасного світу сприяє поширенню вірусу, але якість стосунків і солідарність – а їх нам дає Христос – здатні призупинити хід недуги, що забирає все нові і нові життя. Досвід країн, які першими зіткнулися з наслідками вірусу і змогли швидко та рішуче організуватися, показує, що це можливо. «Любіть ближнього свого!» Цей час вимагає від нас віри в Бога, довіри одне до одного, зосередженості, солідарності та злагоджених дій. Зазвичай, ми розуміємо любов як близькість. За нинішніх обставин, саме належна дистанція може бути властивим виявом автентичної любові до ближнього та громадянської відповідальності. Тому Церква підтримує цивільні норми та медичні приписи, які видає уряд та місцеві органи влади у зв'язку з епідемією. Закликаємо Вас, дорогі вірні, слідувати порадам Центру з контролю та профілактики захворювань, дбати про особистий захист та гігієну.

Христос посеред нас! На превеликий жаль, зараз діють обмеження на спільні зібрання, які унеможливають звичний ритм практик Церкви. Проте, вона, не зважаючи на складну ситуацію, не припиняє своєї дії і служіння. Господь кличе нас наново і творчо плекати єдність, солідарність і сопрічастя. Ми, християни, продовжуємо свідчити про присутність Бога у світі, про Його дію у житті людини, про Його любов до кожного. Особливим чином хочемо огорнути любов'ю та опікою старше покоління у наших спільнотах, яке сьогодні перебуває в найбільшій небезпеці, та всіх, хто гостро переживає соціальну ізоляцію.

Час випробувань є унікальною можливістю, щоб ми могли проявити нашу любов до Бога і любов до ближнього. Коли можливості на публічні літургійні практики стають неможливими, наше життя у Христі тим більше вимірюється якістю наших особистих стосунків з Богом і ближнім: в особистій та родинній молитві та ділах милосердя. Під час пандемії, з якою людство зіткнулося, турбота про ближнього набуває цілком чіткого і практичного виміру.

Досвід підпільної Української Греко-Католицької Церкви (1945-1989) є джерелом натхнення і віри для нас. Ще за свіжої пам'яті, позбавлена всіх церковних приміщень і взагалі будь-якої інфраструктури, УГКЦ в Україні та інших країнах комуністичного світу, під Божим Провидінням, протягом двох поколінь, знаходила творчі підходи, щоб плекати духовне життя своїх членів. Цим випробуванням, незважаючи на великі терпіння і болючі втрати, а то і завдяки їм, наша Церква гартувалася та очищувалася. Господь її приготував до нового життя в новому тисячолітті. Сьогодні ми покликані в молитві осмислити історію спасіння нашої Церкви. Віримо, що Господь знову нас попровадить, щоб мужньо і творчо Його прославляти і плекати солідарність і сопрічастя між нами.

Публічні Богослужіння

1. **Усі щоденні та недільні богослужіння тимчасово служитимуться в наших церквах без фізичної присутності громади вірних. Священники продовжуватимуть молитися за Вас і заочно з Вами.** Вони служитимуть Божественній Літургії та інші богослужіння в наміренні вірних, особливо за здоров'я хворих, медпрацівників, за мудрі рішення влади та за вічний упокій померлих. Як в час випробувань Мойсей піднімав руки в молитві, щоб цілий народ перемагав (пор. Вих 17, 11-12), так і ми зобов'язуємо наших священників бути стійкими у молитві за довірену їм паству.
2. **Храми залишатимуться у визначений час відкритими для особистої молитви.** Прохання до парохів подбати про безпеку та часту дезінфекцію храму.
3. Хочемо поновити і потвердити звільнення від обов'язку участі у недільних богослужіннях. Проте, просимо дбати про спільну молитву домашньої Церкви та спільнот у неділю та свята. Пропонуємо користати з Живого Телебачення, інтернет-ресурсів Ваших єпархій та парафій, молитовного читання Святого Письма та духовних розважань.
4. **Заохочуємо використовувати час карантину, який збігається з періодом Великого Посту,** для особистої молитви, розважання над Божим Словом та поглиблення стосунків з нашим Господом, з ближніми і в родині.
5. Просимо всі Великопосні практики, місії та реколекції проводити за допомогою сучасних засобів комунікації.

Святі Тайни та Таїнства

1. Просимо вірних, після консультації з душпастирем, Святі Тайни Християнського Втаємничення (Хрещення, Миропомазання) та Вінчання по можливості відкласти на пізнішу дату.

2. До Святої Тайни Сповіді вірні зможуть приступити у храмі, пам'ятаючи про запобіжні заходи.
3. У разі важкої хвороби та небезпеки смерті, священники зобов'язані уділяти Святу Тайну Єлеопомазання, подбавши про безпеку інших і власну.
4. Похорони заохочуємо священників служити за участю лише найближчих рідних покійного згідно з приписами місцевої влади щодо публічних зібрань.

Практичні поради

1. Дорогі отці, сестри і брати, якщо Ви почуваетесь хворими, наполегливо просимо Вас залишатися вдома, звернутися до лікаря та дотримуватися усіх приписів поданих медиками та цивільною владою.
2. Наше священнече служіння продовжується. Заохочуємо душпастирів підтримувати особистий контакт зі своїми вірними, особливо зі старшими та недужими, через телефон та засоби соціальної комунікації.
3. Сповіді радимо звершувати поза сповідальницею з дотриманням вимог безпеки.
4. Часто дезінфікувати лавки, дверні ручки та речі у храмі, до яких торкаються руками.
5. Під час приватної молитви у храмі, пам'ятайте про безпечну дистанцію у 6 футів (2 метри) один від одного.
6. Просимо віддавати шану хресту та іконам лише поклоном, утримуючись від цілування.
7. Радимо дотримуватися порад і вказівок федеральної та місцевої влади щодо зібрань та особистої безпеки.

Ці норми вступають у силу з моменту повідомлення, в середу 19-го березня 2020 р.Б. Ми уважно слідкуємо за розвитком ситуації, радимося зі спеціалістами та оновлюватимемо норми та приписи в залежності від обставин.

Господь кличе нас до нового, глибокого духовного усвідомлення. Заохочуємо Вас єднатися у сопрічасті Святого Духа! Моліться! Чувайте!

Співайте, посміхайтесь та жартуйте! Робіть фізичні вправи і читайте! Будьте уважні до себе і до стану свого здоров'я та допомагайте особам, що знаходяться у особливій зоні ризику, як у Вашій родині, так і тим, що мешкають поблизу Вас. Спілкуйтеся і підтримуйте одні одних духом і дією.

Благословення Господнє на Вас!

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Lessons from the underground Catholic Church about Spiritual Communion



***The LORD, my God
lights up my darkness.***

There is an interesting and inspiring parallel between the Soviet-era Ukrainian Greco-Catholic Church and today's situation, as Catholics are now observing their Sundays largely in the privacy of their homes.

Major Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk of Kiev-Halych, Ukraine, who is head of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, concelebrates Mass Aug. 8, 2018, during the 136th Supreme Convention of the Knights of Columbus in Baltimore. (CNS photo/courtesy Knights of Columbus)

For the first time in anyone's memory, Catholics in the United States last weekend were unable to attend a public celebration of Mass. Members of other religious traditions were similarly prevented from attending services. The COVID-19 pandemic had already led to the closing of churches in hard-hit Italy weeks before, and as American health officials and elected leaders struggle to control the spread of the virus here, more and more churches, synagogues, mosques and temples are canceling the regular gatherings for worship.

For Catholics, the decision by bishops to suspend the public celebration of Mass is practically unheard of. Many Catholics, particularly those of the Baby Boom and older generations, grew up being taught that to deliberately miss Mass on a Sunday or holy day of obligation was a mortal sin. Though that rule doesn't apply during a national health emergency such as this one, devout Catholics who rely on the grace of regularly receiving holy Communion, or the Eucharist, are lamenting the fact that they cannot now do so.

All of a sudden, Catholics in dioceses where public celebrations of the Mass have been suspended are finding themselves with a hole in their Sundays that was heretofore filled with ritual, carried out in communion with other people in their parish. Along with the prayers, Scripture readings, and reception of Communion, many Catholics were accustomed to weekly routines that included things like Sunday school for the kids, coffee hour with other families in the church hall, or a stop at the diner on the way home.

Catholics are now as "isolated" on Sundays from their parishes as many people are during the week, prevented from working in an office or going to the gym.

The last time churches were closed like this might have been in 1918, as the "Spanish flu" claimed hundreds of thousands of lives. What makes things different this time is the overwhelming availability of televised and live-streamed Masses, from local cathedrals or national shrines, or even from local parishes. Priests are still permitted—and indeed expected—to continue celebrating Mass, albeit privately. All a pastor needs to do to help keep his local flock connected in prayer is to position his cell phone and livestream the service on the parish Facebook page.

There are also multitudinous resources for those who wish to contemplate the day's Scripture readings or other spiritual material, whether in books or online, alone or together with the family.

The influenza pandemic of 1918 is not the only precedent for the current situation of Catholics not having access to their beloved Mass and Eucharist. Among other examples in history, there was a 43-year period when a branch of the Catholic Church was banned outright in Ukraine. After the Soviet Union defeated the Nazi occupiers of Western Ukraine in 1944, it found that it had to deal in a particular way with the Catholic Church. While Eastern Ukraine was and is predominantly Orthodox, Western Ukraine tended to be more Catholic—specifically, Byzantine Catholic. The Ukrainian Greco-Catholic Church, which maintains the traditions and spirituality of Eastern Orthodoxy but is in full communion with the pope of Rome, had about 3.5 million to 4 million members in the mid-1940s, served by about 2,400 priests.

For the Soviet leaders, the Church's loyalty to Rome—a "foreign power"—opposition to Soviet ideology, and support of Ukrainian nationalism were all problematic. The Church's bishops and many of its priests were arrested. In 1946, the NKVD, precursor to the KGB, orchestrated a meeting in which puppet "bishops" of the Greco-Catholic Church voted to renounce the 1596 Union of Brest that brought a number of Orthodox dioceses into full communion with Rome. The so-called Pseudo Sobor of Lviv, named for the Western Ukrainian capital in which the meeting was held, voted that the Church be dissolved and its members subsumed by the Patriarchate of Moscow of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Thus, from March 1946, the Ukrainian Greco-Catholic Church no longer existed—at least on paper. But it did continue to exist underground.

This is where there is an interesting parallel to today's situation, where Catholics are observing their Sundays—dispensed from the Mass obligation but not from the Fourth Commandment to "keep holy the Sabbath"—largely in the privacy of their homes.

Of course, we are dealing with a health crisis, not a draconian government prohibiting religious activity or targeting a particular

Church. But I do believe that the example of the faithful Catholics of Ukraine from 1946 until the Church was restored to legal status in 1989 can be a great inspiration to Catholics of America, as they try to discern what God is calling them to do in the present crisis.

Today's American Catholics are—hopefully only briefly—denied the opportunity to partake of the Eucharist, the bread and wine consecrated at Mass to become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, who promised to remain with mankind until the end of time in this sacramental form. Ukrainian Greek Catholics too were denied the Eucharist, unless they took the chance of attending an underground liturgy, either in a remote forest area or in a private home, attended to by a priest who could be arrested and imprisoned if caught. Other sacraments—Baptism, Confession, Marriage, and even Holy Orders—were carried out surreptitiously. Priests and bishops in prison, ever mindful of the call of Christ, who broke bread with his Apostles at the Last Supper and said "Do this in memory of me," fashioned liturgical vessels from scrap metal and used prison bread and homemade wine to secretly celebrate liturgies away from guards' watchful eyes.

But in many cases, everyday Catholics did something that many Catholics are doing today. They had their own version of electronic technology: it was called shortwave radio. With that, they could tune into Vatican Radio, which broadcast a weekly Byzantine Divine Liturgy in Old Church Slavonic from the Vatican, with a sermon in the Ukrainian language.

While American Catholics of 2020 need not hide themselves as they log onto their favorite internet broadcast of Mass, Ukrainian Catholics had to close their doors and pull the curtains as they tuned into the shortwave signal, turned down just low enough so that they could hear and respond to the prayers.

Listening to the Divine Liturgy this way "was an outstanding spiritual event," recalled Major Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk, patriarch of the Ukrainian Greco-Catholic Church, who was born in the western Ukrainian city of Stryi in 1970 and later studied for the priesthood in an underground seminary. Shevchuk told me about his experience when I was in Kyiv last year, doing research for a book about him. He recalls his elders "praying, kneeling, making a spiritual communion, listening to the homilist."

"We were standing around, like in the Church, facing our icons and listening, chanting a little bit," he said. The Vatican explicitly told the radio audience that if they were unable to attend Divine Liturgy in person, listening to it over shortwave would fulfill their Sunday obligation. "And we were aware that we were fulfilling our obligation not as a simple external obligation but as our spiritual need," Shevchuk said.

As a priest could not be physically present to consecrate the bread and wine, members of the family learned to make a "spiritual communion" at the point in the Liturgy when they normally would be going up to receive the Body and Blood of Christ.

Americans may now be finding they have a sort of spiritual connection with their forbears who suffered through the great influenza epidemic of 1918. And American Catholics, forced to watch broadcasts of Mass on TV and online and make spiritual communions, might well learn that they have a sort of spiritual connection with others in history who were denied the Eucharist by circumstances beyond their control.

But it's not just past history. There are still Christians in various parts of the world who must contend with government restrictions, based not on the need to stem a pandemic but on ideology. One need look no further than China, where, ironically, the COVID-19 pandemic originated. Just the year before, in 2018, Beijing implemented new Regulations on Religious Affairs, effectively banning "unauthorized" religious teaching, according to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. USCIRF reported increased repression of the so-called "underground Catholic Church," adherents who are faithful to Rome.

In nearby North Korea, USCIRF reports, the regime "treats any expression of independent assembly or thought, including religious practice, as a threat to its very existence." Any expression of religion outside the officially approved Christian groups "happens in secret."

The witness provided by faithful Ukrainian Catholics during the Cold War years continues to be an inspiration today. And knowledge that there are still faithful Catholics witnessing to their faith in repressive countries can be an opportunity for American Catholics to offer their prayers at home for co-religionists who are truly without church.

By John Burge, The Catholic World REPORT

Lord, You Have The Words
Of Everlasting Life.