

UPDATED 24<sup>th</sup> March 2020

## (A) The Holy Eucharist

In difficult times, such as we face now, the Church has a wisdom about relaxing its rules to adapt to new and challenging situations, (called “economy”) - particularly when the faithful cannot come to church. In these circumstances the Church has provided for the faithful to continue to receive Holy Communion by allowing those in good standing with the Church to take the Holy Gifts home with them, after prior consecration, to commune themselves as required. In times of persecution, or indeed in the present situation of the Coronavirus pandemic, it might be several months before the faithful at St Aidan’s can safely gather together in the temple. Here is what St Basil the Great says about this and what he blessed in his own time:

*It is needless to point out that for anyone in times of persecution to be compelled to take the communion in his own hand without the presence of a priest or minister is not a serious offense, as long custom sanctions this practice from the facts themselves. All the solitaries in the desert, where there is no priest, take the communion themselves, keeping communion at home. And at Alexandria and in Egypt, each one of the laity, for the most part, keeps the communion, at his own house, and participates in it when he likes. For when once the priest has completed the offering, and given it, the recipient, participating in it each time as entire, is bound to believe that he properly takes and receives it from the giver. And even in the church, when the priest gives the portion, the recipient takes it with complete power over it, and so lifts it to his lips with his own hand. It has the same validity whether one portion or several portions are received from the priest at the same time. (ST. BASIL OF CAESAREA: To the Patrician Cæsaria, concerning Communion, Letter 93)*

With this in mind, and until the pandemic has abated and is well under control, this is how we shall celebrate the Eucharist together:

1. **Fr Gregory will serve the Liturgy every Sunday at home with Kh. Helen, Reader Benedict and Acolyte David Green.**<sup>1</sup> This will be live streamed and retained on Facebook so we can pray together as it happens. Instructions for accessing the live broadcast are on the front page of the parish web site.

When Fr Gregory gets to the point in the Liturgy for the distribution of Holy Communion, you will receive yourself from the Holy Gifts reverently stored at home in your Icon Corner/Prayer Shelf. Fr Gregory reminds us how we should prepare the Holy Gifts for storage at home as follows:

*“Whenever you receive the Holy Gifts from me (by prior arrangement by calling at St Aidan’s, or by me bringing it to you), you will take the Gifts home in the container provided, in a prayerful and careful manner. Upon returning home, you will do what the priest does on Great and Holy Thursday when he prepares the reserved sacrament for communing the sick throughout the following year....*

*First, you will carefully cut up the small Lamb into smaller pieces. Next, you will place these carefully on kitchen foil and dry the Gifts on a very low heat in your oven. When thoroughly dry, and having acquired a small box for this purpose, you will carefully place the pieces (taking extra care not to lose any small crumbs) in that box, lined with the same foil. It is from this box in your Icon Corner that*

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<sup>1</sup> We shall not be serving the Liturgy in an empty Church. All that will happen then is that some people will break the Church quarantine and just turn up anyway, defeating the whole purpose of what we are doing here, which is to protect life for all.

**UPDATED 24<sup>th</sup> March 2020**

*you will commune yourself prayerfully at the appropriate point in the broadcast Liturgy. It is not necessary, by the way, for the wine to be consecrated. Our teaching is that the wine becomes the Holy Blood of Christ when the Body of Christ is placed in it. Please try to acquire a suitable fortified wine for Communion such as 'Mavrodaphne' for this purpose. If you cannot find this in your supermarket, let me know, we have plenty in Church. Do this prayerfully and with good attention.*

*Before and after Holy Communion, please use the usual prayers of preparation and thanksgiving. All online resources for these and other prayers will be provided. If you have these already in English or in your own language - if different and preferred - then that is fine."*

*Please explain to your whole family, including of course the children and young people, what is happening, why it is happening and the great honour we have to receive the Holy Mysteries at home when we cannot get to church. If you have any difficulties doing this, do let Fr Gregory know and he will visit you and help.*

2. Part of your preparation for Holy Communion is of course to confess, fast and pray. All of this you can continue to do at home. However, there will come a time when you need sacramental confession. (This also applies to services of anointing.) How will this work?

Fr Gregory (when asked) will **make an appointment** in one of two ways by your choice; the first and preferred option is for you to come to church at one of the appointed times. At the time of writing, this will be **Saturday mornings between 10am and 12 noon, but ONLY by prior appointment**. As the weeks go by, if there is a need, Fr Gregory will open up the Church at other times. These opening times are strictly NOT for the faithful to gather together in numbers. If no appointment is made in any given day and time slot by **6pm** the previous day, the Church will NOT be opened up and your journey will be wasted. Fr Gregory will open the Church up, not only for confession and anointing but also for spiritual counselling and use of the Church library for E-Quip students and others. If you cannot come to church, provided you are not in quarantine, Fr Gregory will make a home visit.

## **(B) Other Services**

The daily and weekly services of the Church during different fasts and feasts will mostly be offered in Christian homes and not broadcast but, occasionally and certainly on Palm Sunday and during Great and Holy Week, **some** services (to be announced in good time) will be broadcast with some reduced content and ritual from Fr Gregory's home. How these services, up to and including Great and Holy Saturday, will be celebrated will be announced and explained beforehand. They will all be broadcast from Fr Gregory's home. Sadly, we will not be able to have a Palm Sunday procession this year, but the blessed palms will be posted to you if you send me an email WITH YOUR ADDRESS requesting this. These are the services for Great and Holy Week and Pascha, all live broadcasted (streamed) from our house:

**Great and Holy Thursday: 10.00 am: Vespereal Liturgy of St Basil for the Last Supper**

**Great and Holy Friday: 3.00 pm: Great Vespers of the Deposition from the Cross**

**Great and Holy Saturday: 10.00 am: Vespereal Divine Liturgy of Christ's descent into Hades**

**Holy Pascha: Sunday morning as usual at 10.15 am. No Midnight service - not practical in our street!**

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### **(C) Care and Witness**

The mission of the Church continues through war, civil unrest, famine, natural disasters, persecutions and plagues. This is how it has always been. In Christian history the experience has been that many have come into the Church, who were not once followers of Christ, by being impressed deeply by the love and sacrificial service (even to the point of death) given by faithful Christians. Seven people have already approached Fr Gregory (as at 24<sup>th</sup> March 2020) offering to help with shopping, visiting lonely people and offering all kinds of help. Fr Gregory has now started a Pastoral Directory of parishioners who can offer this kind of service. Perhaps you can do something similar, or indeed quite different? Do let Fr Gregory know as soon as you can. Let's give this witness as a dedication to Christ, just as in any other aspect of our lives in happier times.

### **(D) The Directories**

There are going to be four Sector ministries of the "Domestic Church" going forward:- The Spiritual Directory (Broadcast services and prayer); The Pastoral Directory (Confession, Spiritual Direction and friendly chats over the phone); The Educational Directory (Published Bible Studies, All Age Christian Education including E-Quip and Followers) and The Mission and Service Directory (evangelism and service in the community – within public health regulations). These may take some time to develop and mature, but by God's grace, we will get there! If you can help with any of these, or make use of them, please email me at: [father.gregory@gmail.com](mailto:father.gregory@gmail.com)

For those who give to the work of our church by envelopes (which is ongoing) ... this method is cancelled for the duration of the pandemic. Please consider setting up a bank standing order to continue your contributions. This will be much appreciated. Please email me at [father.gregory@gmail.com](mailto:father.gregory@gmail.com) for the Bank details you will need.

### ***Finally ...***

I want to emphasise that not only will the Church continue to grow spiritually and in love during this crisis, however long it lasts, but also, both myself and Fr Emmanuel will continue to work and pray hard for the encouragement and salvation of us all. The most important thing is for all of us to keep in touch with each other, "maintain[ing] the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3). To that end, we should commit ourselves to regular communications by telephone conversations, email, WhatsApp etc. There will be conference calls between Fr Gregory and the parish council to ensure that the leadership of the church remains in good shape. Above all, we must pray without ceasing and love without limit.

*St Aidan's Orthodox Church*

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