

30 July, 2021

Great-Martyr Maryna (Margaret) of Antioch

**TO: ALL CLERGY, PARISH BOARDS OF ADMINISTRATION AND ALL FAITHFUL  
OF OUR HOLY UKRAINIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE USA**

**RE: *Changing Metrics Associated with the Covid-19 Pandemic and the Necessity of  
Responsible and Measured Means to Combat Them***

*Dearly Beloved Brothers and Sisters in our Loving Lord,*

**CHRIST IS AMONG US! HE IS AND ALWAYS SHALL BE!**

We had not expected the necessity of writing to you once again concerning necessary responses to the COVID-19 PANDEMIC because of the seemingly positive numbers of people getting vaccinated. Perhaps the initial success throughout the early months of this year convinced us all that the greatest danger had passed and that “normal” life could, step by step, return. Obviously, however, the new and far more dangerous variant(s) of the virus have changed the perspective of not only the medical and scientific communities, but most of the general population of our nation that we are far from “normal” and that “normal” may now become something very different from that we knew back in December 2019 before the wide spread of this disease throughout the world.

When we study the current maps of the spread of the virus in the USA, we once again see massive concentrations of the color red, indicating that the rates of infection, hospitalization and death are rising at rates very near the worst part of the pandemic in April of this year. The areas on these maps that show the highest concentration of these changing and rapidly rising metrics are without doubt in the states with the highest concentration of people who are NOT vaccinated. However, the rising metrics can be seen in significant areas of even those states with high rates of vaccination. We will not attempt here to make this message into an attempt to convince people to get vaccinated because we believe that our President, Governors and other civic leaders are making powerful arguments in this regard. We are also convinced that there will always be a portion of our population that will never accept vaccination and it is for this reason that we write to you this day.

None of us can control the decisions of other members of our society. We must be concerned for and about them and we must, above all, pray for them and respond to them in ways that will be protective of ourselves and our loved ones. We can only pray that we do not have to continue viewing and reading about individuals who refuse vaccination finally regretting their decision because they themselves have suffered greatly from the virus or they have watched helplessly as they lost parents, spouses, brothers and sisters or their own children to the virus.

**THE MOST OBVIOUS RESPONSE THAT WE ARE NOW CALLING YOU ALL TO IS TO RETURN, AS PER THE INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL, TO THE WEARING OF MASKS DURING ANY LITURGICAL SERVICES OR IN ANY PARISH COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES.**

The greatest consequence of this decision will be to protect everyone worshipping in our parish churches and participating in our activities without the impossible task of trying to identify those who are vaccinated and those who are not. As Ukrainian Orthodox Christians, it is not our responsibility to be the “Vaccination Police” in forcing anyone, parish members or not, to prove to us that they have been vaccinated. Anyone who is vaccinated is protected quite well from serious consequences of the virus. There is a small number of those vaccinated who have been infected with the new variants of the virus, but most of the time they exhibit no symptoms and require no hospitalization. They are, however, capable of infecting others during this time. Of course, those who are unvaccinated are very capable of infecting others whether they exhibit manifestations of the disease or not. Let us all be concerned for one another by acting responsibly with the use of masks.

*“O Lord Jesus Christ, in Your loving care, You traveled through towns and villages ‘curing every disease and illness.’ At Your command, the sick were made well. Come to our aid now, as the global spread of the coronavirus intensifies again, that we may experience Your healing Love anew. Be with us as we continue to experience the consequences of the coronavirus pandemic, whether we have survived the disease, lost loved ones or have felt helpless with no ability, because of severe but necessary medical and physical restrictions, to comfort those who continue to suffer. Help us to respond to the devotion of doctors, nurses, researchers and all medical professionals who seek to heal and help those affected and put themselves at risk in the process with our continued prayers for their safety. Help us, O Lord, to comprehend that we all are vulnerable to this virus and that we must take all necessary measures to protect one another. For You are a Merciful and Loving God and to You we give glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen”*

*In our Lord’s All-Encompassing Love,*

**+ ANTONY**

*By the Grace of God, Metropolitan*

**+ DANIEL**

*By the Grace of God, Archbishop*