

Consultation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate regarding the Pandemic
“The Pastoring Church in the days of the Pandemic”

Summary

The Consultation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate entitled “*The Pastoring Church in the days of the Pandemic*” concluded its deliberations on the 10th of March. Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew had assigned the *Network of the Ecumenical Patriarchate for Pastoral Health Care* to organize the event. The Consultation began on the 16th of December 2020 and met approximately every two weeks. His Eminence Kyrillos, Metropolitan of Rhodes and President of the Patriarchal Network, presided over the meetings.

Those participating in the Consultation were representatives of the Eparchies of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and other Patriarchates, Autocephalous Orthodox Churches, Theological Schools, medical and healthcare professionals, together with others that in various specialized fields of service. Throughout the entire Consultation, approximately 250 joined in by way of Zoom and You Tube.

During the three-month period of the Consultation, an “online fellowship” was formed that concerned itself with the problems of the difficult period of the Pandemic. This “fellowship” also became a spring of comfort within the chaotic atmosphere that now prevails. A significant result of the Consultation is that those who are already involved in the *Patriarchal Network* were able to join together with new participants who also serve the needs of society.

During the eight sessions of the Consultation, twenty speakers shared the knowledge they gained through their experiences “*during the days of the pandemic*”. Their contribution has offered a rich resource of material to the *Patriarchal Network*

that will be useful to all as the Pandemic continues and beyond. All the presentations are available on the You Tube Channel of the Patriarchal Network in Greek and in English. Hopes are that they will soon be published in a special volume in both languages.

The topics of the sessions were:

- 1) *“What does it mean to be a “Church” during a lockdown due to a Pandemic?”*
- 2) *“Fear and Faith during a Pandemic”*
- 3) *“Caring for the sick who suffer from Covid-19 in a pastoral way”*
- 4) *“Bereaving those that have succumbed to the virus”*
- 5) *“Isolation during the Pandemic”*
- 6) *“Supporting and working with the Medical and Healthcare Professionals during the Pandemic”*
- 7) *“The Clergy during the Pandemic”*
- 8) *“After the Pandemic –Consequences and Challenges”*

Both the presentations and the various comments made by the participants verified that liturgical life and prayer are the major determinates of all pastoral initiatives. The difficulties encountered in facing death and how these difficulties try our faith were discussed. Real life-situations were shared, particularly from those that had suffered the virus, bearing witness to the fact that, in the midst of the shadow of death, when our human strength forsakes us, the love of God, together with the prayers and love of our brothers and sisters in Christ, embrace us and accompany us through our trials. This love and embracement is also necessary for those that care for the *“bed ridden, the sick, and the afflicted”*. The imperative need to establish an open line of communication with medical and health care professionals within a spirit of mutual respect and understanding was also greatly stressed. Throughout all the Consultation, the participants expressed their great concern regarding the dangers created by religious groups, particularly within the Church, that are based on fundamentalistic ideologies, and the need for the Church to deal with this in a more decisive way so as to protect its faithful. As a counterbalance to this phenomenon, what was underlined was the need to establish ecclesiastical communities that express the freedom and love of the Holy Trinity and a pastoral ministry that does not create “ghettos”, but that seeks out

the isolated and often forgotten and suffering fellow human-being, so that he and she can find comfort in the Body of the Church.

At the closure of the Consultation, His Eminence Kyrillos, Metropolitan of Rhodes, thanked all those that organized the Consultation, the speakers and all the participants for their exceptional contribution to the Patriarchate. He added that this effort has opened new avenues for the *Patriarchal Network* and invited everyone to come to Rhodes in October of 2022 for the *5th Consultation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate for Pastoral Health Care*.

*Network of the Ecumenical Patriarchate
for Pastoral Health Care*

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