

Orthodox Church Tells Worshipers to Stay at Home as Russian Covid-19 Infections Rising! - 31 March 2020

After weeks of uncertainty and mixed messaging while the coronavirus crisis escalates, the Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia has told his followers to pray to God from the safety of their own homes. Kirill, the Orthodox Church's Primate, instructed believers to avoid chapels. Speaking in Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Saviour on Sunday, the patriarch called for strict compliance with the orders of Russian authorities. Acknowledging that there is "a big risk of an epidemic," he noted how many citizens do not quite realize the full seriousness of the disease and its impact in other countries, especially Italy. Although Russia's numbers are climbing quickly, its confirmed cases are still way behind Italy's 97,689. In recent weeks the Church has come under some criticism for its handling of the outbreak, but has proceeded undeterred. On the 14th March, Metropolitan Hilarion, head of the Synodal Department for External Church Relations, told TV channel Russia-24 that they would "neither close churches nor cancel services." Furthermore, in the last few days, as containment measures have been ramped up across the country, Orthodox leaders continued to insist the institution would "fulfil its pastoral duty."