



BISHOP GEORGE OF CANBERRA

AUXILIARY BISHOP OF AUSTRALIAN & NEW ZEALAND DIOCESE
OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE OF RUSSIA

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Pochaev Icon of the Mother of God

Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; (Philipp. 1:27)

Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. (Philipp. 2:3)

Dear Fathers, Brothers, and Sisters in Christ,

It has come to my attention in recent days that there have been disagreements among you, as well as behaviour unbecoming of Christians, due mainly to differing attitudes concerning the coronavirus and the inoculation being offered as a vaccine. This difference in opinions is understandable since there is also a difference in opinions among professional doctors, scientists, and even Church authorities, and the regulations given by government authorities are ever-changing and often contradictory. Each person believes the experts or Church authorities that they choose, and can often show articles and videos to prove that they are right. These disagreements are also exacerbated by our passions: fear and pride. Fear of dying, fear of the virus, and perhaps fear of one another, as well as our pride, and the desire to show that we are correct, can cause unseemly behaviour in people who normally behave as Christians. But as St. Paul writes to the Philippians:

Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; (Philipp. 2:14-15)

There are some Orthodox hierarchs who condone taking the vaccines, even though they contain fetal cells, or are derived from fetal cells, thereby being a direct product of abortion. In good conscience, as an Orthodox Christian, I cannot agree with this view and cannot condone it. However, considering that there are some Orthodox hierarchs who do allow these vaccines, and considering the great fear campaign that is being waged by the governments and the media, I can understand if people do decide to get vaccinated. People also need to know that many of those who are getting vaccinated are dying or experiencing severe side effects. We must be aware of what we are doing. Whatever our personal choice is in this matter, we must still live as Orthodox Christians, loving and encouraging one another, being an example of Christian love and piety both to those in our Church communities and to others. Let us re-focus our priorities and focus more on our own spiritual life, not just on preserving our physical life in this sinful world, so when the time comes that God



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summons us to the next life, we may be able to give a good account of our life here on earth, time in which we should be repenting and preparing ourselves spiritually for eternity. We should remember that whether we get sick from the virus or not is up to God, and when and how we die is up to God, not determined by a virus. Let us ask God to give us repentance, the “vaccine” for eternity, as Metropolitan Onouphry of Kiev has expressed it, so that we will be able to live and die as good Orthodox Christians.

*Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice...
And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (Philipp 4: 4,7)*

With much love in Christ,



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