

PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY

PRACTICAL MODELS OF SOCIALLY RELEVANT ACTIVITIES OF THE CLERGY OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH OF UKRAINE UNDER THE CONDITIONS OF PANDEMIC COVID-19 (BY THE EXAMPLE OF THE WESTERN REGION OF THE COUNTRY)

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Annotation. *The influence of the pandemic COVID-19 on church-religious life and state of public consciousness in Ukraine is considered, and the basic tendencies and contradictions of public reaction to pandemic threats are reviewed. The main focus is on the Orthodox Church of Ukraine and its practical actions to prevent this dangerous infection. In order to study the views on the specifics of parish life and the role of the pastor in the conditions of the coronavirus pandemic, a detailed survey among the clergymen of the same denomination was carried out by questionnaire. The material has been processed within the framework of the project "Social Functionality of Religion in Conditions of Extreme Peril: Ideological-Theoretical and Practical Dimensions" under the state registration number: 0121U109446.*

Keywords: *pandemic, social consciousness, psycho-emotional state, risks, restrictive measures, worship services, functionality of the Church, communication.*

Introduction. Today the Church, as well as all Ukrainian society and the world, are facing the extraordinary and challenging phenomenon of a new coronavirus pandemic. At the same time, no one can deny the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a major upsurge, significantly affecting, without exaggeration, world politics, economics and, in particular, the religious community in the fullness of its confessional diversity. Indeed, many churches and denominations today face direct restrictions on their own activities. It is well known that these restrictions are specific to each country and are characterized by varying degrees of flexibility depending on the current situation. It is also quite understandable that the reaction of confessions to the relevant bans is also ambiguous and varies from understanding and cooperation with the authorities to acts of defiance and deliberate braking of the quarantine regime. It is therefore clear that the spread of the pneumotropic virus has prompted responsible religious organizations to implement new forms of communication with their followers on a large scale. And the trend today has become communication between church institutions and believers and the latter among themselves through online technologies. After all, the current pandemic has presented the world's largest churches with a difficult dilemma – to care about the health of believers or to remain faithful to established traditions in spite of everything.

The work aims to investigate comprehensively the practical models of socially significant activity of clergy of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (hereinafter - OCU) and study their views on the specifics of parish life and the role of the pastor in the pandemic COVID-19. To achieve this goal we need to solve several problems: to illuminate the nature and characteristics of church-religious life of our country in the pandemic; to analyze the specific activities of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU) in the context of the coronavirus pandemic and show its significant role in preventing the spread of a dangerous infection; on the basis of the results of the survey, reveal the practical features of the parishes, the nature of psycho-emotional state of believers, the level of volunteer activity of the parishioners, attitudes towards vaccination, etc. in the context of the restrictive anti-epidemic measures imposed by state structures in order to prevent the spread of coronavirus disease - through the eyes of a clergyman.

Problem and methodology. The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly been a major challenge not only for Ukrainian society, but also for all of humanity. Since the detection of this dangerous disease and the implementation of quarantine, we have begun to live under completely new conditions. In other words, we have been viewing the world from the perspective of new realities that are often perceived solely through the prism of large-scale threats. At the same time, changes are taking place both on the level of the individual psyche and on the macro-social level. Therefore, we must finally realize that future radical changes for the world are projected, completely new scientific approaches, completely different means of production and means of communication and so on are being formed. And these shifts, let us emphasize, encompass not only the material sphere, but also, above all, the spiritual sphere. It is quite obvious that research in various fields on the problem of the COVID-19 pandemic is being actualized today, since this issue is, indeed, the most exciting one. The world community is discussing this issue. However, the source base of the research in this area is mainly the results of the questionnaire survey among the clergymen, which allowed us to trace concretely the specifics of parish life and to clarify the role of the pastor in the context of a dangerous infection. Also, a significant set of sources of information on the problem under study is contained in the practical decisions of the meetings of the Holy Synod of the OCU [11-13].

The general ideological basis for the study were the works, reports and interviews of leading Ukrainian experts – theologians, religious scholars, psychologists, journalists, in particular: Blessed Epiphany (Dumenko) [4], Archbishop Evstratiy (Zoria) [16], D. Barcar [1], J. Gallagher [2], I. Gorokholinska [3], A. Kyrylenko [6], N. Konstantynova [7], M. Liskovych [8], L. Naugolnyk [9], L. Samokhvalova [16], M. Sliusarevsky [17], A. Khudyakova [18], etc.

Analyzing the status of the spread and ways of effective prevention of coronavirus infection in the context of church-religious realities, the basic general logical methods (induction, deduction, analysis, synthesis, analogy, idealization, etc.) were used. Therefore, in methodological terms, the key theological approaches, as well as the religious principles of research are of fundamental importance. Meanwhile, the element of scientific novelty lies in the implementation of an attempt to study the religious

situation on the example of the western region of the country in conditions of the spread of dangerous coronavirus infection. In particular, for the first time, the opinions of clergymen of the OCU on the specifics of parish life, the role and mission of the pastor in the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic were studied in a comprehensive way.

The suggested study is a part of a set of planned research, conceptually correlated with the themes of scientific-theoretical and practical tasks solved by a team of young scientists from the Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University as a part of the research project “Social functionality of religion in conditions of large-scale dangers: ideological, theoretical and practical dimensions”.

Results. The study of the nature and peculiarities of church-religious life under the COVID-19 pandemic allows us to state that the Church as a social institution is constantly included in the public space, taking an active position in the search for effective models to solve the pressing problems. It is clear that a special role in this aspect is focused primarily on the state power of the country as the supreme force in society. After all, it is important to realize that it is in the conditions of great unpredictability that people must feel and see the power not only strong, but also decisive and professional in making important decisions. However, the role of the Church, as one of the authoritative segments of Ukrainian society, becomes more evident today. Its influence on human consciousness is indeed of great theoretical as well as practical importance, expressed in society as a peculiar and effective marker of communicative capacity, and along with it, a great interest in direct and active participation in social life, the establishment of the Ukrainian state based on the rule of law and the development of civil society. Therefore, in religious and political circles the church, as a social institution, is increasingly called one of the main participants in addressing a number of problems of social development, which, of course, can't but have an impact on the national level. Indeed, according to a sociological study by the Razumkov Center (March 2021), the Church continues to hold one of the leading positions among social and political institutions (along with the UAF – 70,0% and volunteer organizations – 65,0%), and it is 64,0% of respondents [10].

An important message today is that many denominations are trying to respond positively to the calls of the Ukrainian authorities to fight the coronavirus pandemic, since all the restrictions imposed have directly affected religious life as well. Here it is especially worth mentioning the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, the Roman Catholic Church in Ukraine and some Protestant denominations, which indeed demonstrate a high level of social responsibility under quarantine, first and foremost by complying with the relevant recommendations. It is clear that the purpose of such restrictions is to exclude mass gatherings of people, which is a direct consequence of the practice of worship in religious organizations. And the strictness of quarantine measures was conditioned by a number of factors: the number of patients, the rate of spread of the coronavirus, the religiosity of the population, the approach of major religious feasts, the political regime, the experience of other countries, the WHO recommendations, etc. It is true that we can see, unfortunately, the other side here as well – when church institutions, in particular the representatives of the Moscow

Patriarchate in Ukraine (ROC in Ukraine), for one reason or another, often act as the main factor in braking the established quarantine norms, and this, of course, negatively affects the consciousness and psychological state of citizens. After all, in some regions some clergymen of this confession have nevertheless shown understanding in this situation of responsibility for their faithful and have treated the imposed restrictions loyally. We can therefore state that despite the generally satisfactory state of public consciousness, there is a clear polarization of public reactions to the pandemic. Part of the public has taken the epidemiological threat very seriously, feeling intensely worried about their own health and that of their loved ones. Another part, on the contrary, categorically denies and ignores the danger, sometimes deliberately exposing themselves and others to the risk of falling ill. It is therefore clear that both polarization itself and both extreme forms of response to the coronavirus epidemic may create some difficulties in the renewal of economic, social and political activity of the population in the long run [17].

Meanwhile, despite the significant role of many confessions in Ukraine to combat the dangerous coronavirus disease, the main focus of our research will be the activities of the OCU, which from the very beginning of the spread of COVID-19 tried to take all necessary measures to suspend this infection, and along with this, responded to almost all appeals of the relevant state authorities. Moreover, the decisions of the Holy Synod of the OCU, chaired by His Beatitude Epiphanius, Metropolitan of Kyiv and All the Ukraine, made by remote communication (teleconference), show this. Here are some of them: "On additional measures due to the ongoing pandemic of a particularly dangerous coronavirus disease (COVID-19), the introduction by the state, government and local authorities in Ukraine of new reinforced restrictions on freedom of assembly, movement, significant restriction or termination of public transport and other quarantine restrictions" of 24 March 2020 [13] and 9 April 2020 [12], and "Practical guidelines in relation to the pandemic of COVID-19 coronavirus disease supplemented by the decision of the Holy Synod of 24 March 2020 and 9 April 2020" [11] etc.

Each of the practical instructions that follow consists of appropriate clauses in which, among other things, the Synod calls for legal regulations, ordinances and quarantine restrictions to be observed and implemented by the state, local governments and health authorities, as well as instructions to avoid both ignoring real dangers and expressions of panic. In any case, one of the main and most problematic issues is the adoption of the format of divine services, something that was particularly emphasized during the first wave of the pandemic. With this in mind, the reasoning of Archbishop Eustratius (Zoria), who, commenting on the practical instructions adopted, is pertinent here: "Regarding the conduct of divine services, according to the decisions taken by the government, the Church adheres to a limit of up to ten people at a time, with respect to distance (this applies to funerals and baptisms). Accordingly, wherever services are held, wherever communal prayers are held, such a norm will be observed. Otherwise, the temples are open for private prayer. At the same time, we call upon our vulnerable groups to observe the quarantine as much as possible and stay at home. Primarily, this applies to the elderly, as well as those who have recently returned from abroad <...> so that the faithful who

remain at home on self-isolation and have the opportunity to join the service, many parishes, temples organize broadcasts through social networks, YouTube, Facebook" [8]. Along with this, citing the experience of other local Orthodox churches, the OCU also recommended the use of disinfectants to keep icons and other shrines clean. "At the time of the pandemic, especially in the presence of increased danger in specific localities," it is noted in the decisions adopted, "a sufficient manifestation of respect for the holy things (the Cross, icons, holy relics) can be worship / bowing before them, without kissing" [11, 13].

In addition, we know that the OCU, caring for the physical and spiritual health of people, in this context constantly monitors the situation in the country, sending appropriate messages to the flock and through sermons and instructions during the Divine Services, electronic platforms of information distribution, frequent video messages, printed publications, in particular the newspaper "My Church" and the magazine "Local Church", production of informational products (banners, stands, booklets), etc. All this (adopted practical instructions, information platform, etc.) is clearly highlighted in the official speech of the Primate of the OCU during the Council of Bishops on 15 December 2020. His Beatitude Epiphanius noted in particular that: "Thanks to these balanced and responsible decisions, we have been able both to avoid the mass spread of the disease among the clergy and the faithful, which occurred in those religious communities that initially underestimated the extent and seriousness of the threat, and to avoid a complete halt to the performance of services and the closure of churches. In a dialogue with the state, sometimes very difficult, we were able to find compromise solutions which ensured the continuity of divine services. Also, by using the ancient traditional practice of presenting Eucharist and by restricting the forms of veneration of relics and sacred images, we were able to largely ease the tension around the topic of the spread of infection in churches. I am convinced that in the current circumstances we, as a Church, have managed to maintain a 'golden mean', to demonstrate a responsible attitude to the challenges" [4].

It is important to say that today, this defining component of a number of constructive decisions taken by the OCU does indeed play a crucial role and continues to be an effective means of countering the coronavirus infection and preserving the proper psychological and emotional state in society in general and among its believers in particular. And this, indeed, is extremely important in such unforeseen situations. By the way, M. Slusarevsky stresses this point and makes serious reservations in his study, stating that today "Psycho-emotional stress in society, caused by although moderate but prolonged stress, tends to accumulate and therefore can cause the deployment of delayed maladaptive reactions to the pandemic and entail a set of undesirable medical, social and economic risks. <...> The source of stress is increasingly shifting from cause to effect. Already, for Ukrainians the main source of stress is not the disease itself, but the sheer uncertainty and doubt about their own economic future" [17].

In light of the above, in order to study the views of the clergy of the OCU, proper on the specifics of parish life and the role of the pastor under the COVID-19 pandemic, we were able to conduct a detailed survey (by polling on the Google forms platform) among

the clergy of the western region of Ukraine. Here it is important that from the total number of clergymen involved in the survey, 269 respondents (11.9%) took part, fully meeting the generally accepted norms for the minimum percentage, in the following age groups: under 25 years old – 7,8% of clergy, from 26 to 35 – 30,5%, from 36 to 45 – 37,2%, from 46 to 55 – 17,5% and 7,1%, 60+. In addition, the survey was conducted, in particular, in the following regions of Ukraine and dioceses of OCU: Volyn, which amounts to 14,1% of respondents (eparchy: Volyn, Volodymyr-Volynsky), Zakarpattia – 3,7% (eparchy: Zakarpattia; Mukachivsko-Karpattia), Ivano-Frankivsk – 14,1% (eparchy of Ivano-Frankivsk-Halytsky; Ivano-Frankivsk), Lviv – 27,1% (eparchy: Lviv-Sokal; Lviv; Drohobych-Sambyr), Rivne – 13,8% (eparchy: Rivne, Rivne-Volynsky), Ternopil – 19,7% (eparchy: Ternopil; Ternopil-Buchatsky, Ternopil-Terebovlia) and Chernivtsi – 7,4% (eparchy: Chernivtsi; Chernivtsi-Kitsman; Chernivtsi-Khotyn).

It is known that a significant number of people have nowadays contracted the coronavirus disease, having provided themselves for some time with what some experts claim is an acquired immunity. However, this by no means provides anyone with a complete guarantee against a recurrence of the disease. Moreover, individual cases of reinfection, even after inoculation with the appropriate vaccine, have frequently been observed, completely refuting the thesis – "COVID-19 is only contracted once". Important to us in this context is the explanation of University of East Anglia Professor of Medicine Paul Hunter, who states that: "The question is not whether immunity is produced in you, but how long it lasts. And it almost certainly won't last a lifetime. Based on experience with antibodies in SARS [severe acute respiratory syndrome – I.L.], immunity will last for a year or two, but we probably don't know that yet" [2]. So herein lies the need to find effective mechanisms and effective methods to control Coronavirus infection, as it is not yet known for us how long this pandemic will last.

Meanwhile, according to our survey, one in seven respondents (40,1%) had already had COVID-19 with confirmation of a positive PCR-based test. Another group of respondents, which is 29,7%, suggest that they had not known about their incidence of coronavirus infection. It is true that this should include those who had some form of mild infection, probably COVID-19, but this has not been officially confirmed. Just as telling is the percentage of clergy (30,1%) who are convinced they have never had the virus. For cases of particularly dangerous coronavirus for parishioners, the situation is somewhat different and more pronounced: 69,9% of clergy claim to have been exposed to a particularly dangerous coronavirus disease in their parishioners. For 21,6% of those surveyed, such information is unknown, and only 8,6% are convinced that no cases of COVID-19 have been reported in their parish.

Quarantine: survival and adaptation. Analyzing the question about the ways of using quarantine measures by clergymen during worship services, it should be emphasized that the vast majority of respondents adhere to the recommended preventive measures both at the national level and in the recommended norms of the OCU. Thus, 58,0% state that they conduct worship services without limiting the number of worshippers, but wearing protective masks with appropriate social distance between people and frequent

hand disinfection. Therefore, 13,0% of respondents state that quarantine restrictions on the number of people present in the church are applied. At the same time, holding divine services in the churchyard, as well as without quarantine, is 9,7%. Significantly fewer (3,0%) insist on conducting divine services entirely remotely, and 1,9% insist only for those wishing to confess and receive communion. Less than 1,0% point to the use of quartz lamps before the divine service, the prohibition of kissing the Cross, the Gospel, icons, the airing of the temple premises, and the like. In general, as we can see, the situation is controlled, protecting to a greater or lesser extent against serious health risks. It is true, here we should pay attention to the following reasoning of His Beatitude Epiphanius, Primate of the OCU: "We again address and urge our faithful to be wise and responsible, to observe quarantine, especially those populations that fall into the risk group. They need to be more responsible with their health conditions. And the Church will do all it can to meet the spiritual needs of our faithful, sometimes even without direct communication. For modern means of communication make it possible to do so" [5]. We can therefore now state that, if the necessary condition guidelines are applied correctly, there is no serious reason to adopt a generalized restriction on holding regular divine services.

On this ground, it is important to have reliable information about the coronavirus and its spread and, accordingly, effective means of prevention, acting in case signs of the disease are detected, in order to effectively counter the danger. In this context, it is important to know the answers given in relation to the restrictive anti-epidemic measures established by public authorities to prevent the spread of coronavirus disease. Thus, while 58,0% of respondents stated a positive attitude towards this type of restriction, 14,1% had a negative perception of such actions by state structures. However, 27,9% of respondents found it difficult to give a clear answer to the question posed. The last two percentages, in our opinion, indicate the creation of an artificial crisis of public health security at the beginning of the spread of the coronavirus disease, which emerged against the background of a crisis of dialogue between the authorities and the civil society. According to human rights defenders, "it is a lack of communication, a lack of civil society involvement, a lack of implementation of human rights. Some of the issues we observed in the country also show the approach to security in response to the pandemic, as well as attempts to build a dialogue between the authorities and the people. In some places it was impossible to get the necessary information from the authorities and judges. There were also abuses by law enforcement officials" [1].

Quite important in the context of our study is also the percentage of meetings-conversations with parishioners on prevention, the state of implementation of organizational and practical measures in relation to the spread of COVID-19. The largest number of respondents (37,2%) answered that they noted this after every Sunday worship service. This, incidentally, is a very important signal, because, firstly, it helps keep the situation under control, and secondly, it encourages responsibility, making it more likely that the established security norms will be adhered to. 23,0% of the priests claim that they do not give thematic talks, but certain aspects of counteracting the spread

of the infection, including coronavirus, and the Christian understanding of responsibility are communicated to the congregation during sermons. 17,5% of the respondents said that such meetings and talks had taken place only a few times during the quarantine period established by the state. The percentage of those who hold regular thematic talks with their parishioners on a monthly basis is also quite high – 16,0%. Only 4,1% of respondents consider such meetings and announcements inappropriate, causing panic in society. However, it is also positive that the smallest percentage of clergy (2,2%) did not have any meetings with relevant explanations.

It is important to understand that the implementation of such socially significant work with people by clergymen will undoubtedly contribute to positive dynamics of impact on the psycho-emotional state of people, and along with this, accelerate the process of rational adaptation in the difficult conditions of the spread of the coronavirus infection. His Grace Evstratii (Zorya) accurately emphasizes this: "We must learn to live under pandemic conditions, on the one hand, without panic, and on the other, without neglecting the risks" [16]. We may therefore note that the Church is trying to maintain a 'golden mean' in order to fulfil its mission. In fulfilling its mission and ensuring the safety of people from the risks of the pandemic, both the clergy and the faithful of the OCU in general are conscious of the current dangers.

It is undoubtedly important to conduct education and awareness-raising events on how to keep ourselves and those around us safe from disease and to counter the spread of coronavirus disease today. After all, each person perceives such appeals, both from the state and the Church, differently. Thus, when assessing the responsibility of the faithful in relation to the requirements of prevention, the state of implementation of organizational and practical measures in relation to the spread of COVID-19, the percentage of respondents' answers varies. Grading from 1 to 5, where 1 is totally ignored and 5 is always implemented, the highest percentage of answers (48,0%) of clergymen shows that the level of responsibility in relation to the pandemic in the parish is rated as "4", 26,0% as "3", 23,0% as "5" and 2,2% as "2". Therefore, it can be stated that the percentage of positive attitudes towards organizational and practical measures to prevent spreading of the coronavirus infection as a tool to protect public health is quite high, amounting to 71,0%.

It is also known that the COVID-19 epidemic has significantly affected various areas of life in Ukraine, highlighting a number of problems, including issues in the social sphere. Therefore, important in the context of our study is also the role of charitable activities, which the OCU constantly emphasizes. In particular, in one of his interviews, His Beatitude Epiphanius said that the Orthodox Church of Ukraine will provide facilities for coronavirus patients if necessary. "The Church is always with its people," says the Chairman of the OCU, "even in the most difficult times. The premises at my disposal as Metropolitan will be made available to receive the sick if necessary. Therefore, in the coming days, they will be prepared to receive those in need of examination or treatment. This is what we will do wherever there is opportunity and need, in eparchies throughout Ukraine" [18]. We also cite one paragraph from the practices adopted by the OCU

Synod, in particular: "At the request of the faithful, the priest visits them in their homes for spiritual conversations, confession and communion, using appropriate measures. Confession and communion for sick believers at hospitals are performed in accordance with the regulations of the hospital. If personal communication is forbidden, the priest may hold a spiritual conversation and pray for the health of the sick person, using means of communication, placing hope in the mercy of God" [11].

Charity in circumstances of the coronavirus. In terms of the impact and effectiveness of the organization of charitable activities by parishes in the western region of Ukraine, the answers of clergymen can be shown in the following percentages. When asked if your parish has conducted charitable activities to help local medical institutions and people who were victims of the COVID-19 pandemic, the vast majority of respondents (33,5%) reported a single event. A positive indicator in this context was 29,4% of responses attesting to the frequent arrangement of the activities towards these ends. The percentage of those who claim the absence of discussions / suggestions regarding charity events is 42,2%. As can be seen, the practice of charity in parishes is rated above average, which is 62,8%. These indicators generally demonstrate the importance and necessity of charitable activities in preventing the spread of the extreme viral infection. As it turns out, the rate of those who do not organize this type of activities in the parish is fairly high. We assume that the main reasons are likely to be that some priests are of a higher age group and that they engage in other socially purposeful job in the parishes. Lack of interest, indifference and, at the same time, individual approaches to the issues at hand cannot be excluded. Consequently, in light of the data cited, it is also important to note the indicators related to activists and volunteers among the OCU believers in the western region of the country who are directly involved in the fight against the coronavirus. Thus, 49,1% of priests report those within their parishes who actively oppose the spread of the deadly disease. A somewhat lower figure (40,9%) shows that the respondents are not aware of people participating in related activities. And only 10,0% of respondents indicate the complete absence of such persons.

The Church's activity during the pandemic. According to the Church Teaching and Tradition, attending church and divine services is one of the keystones in the salvation of the immortal soul. After all, it is through the Church Sacraments that a person cleanses his/her soul of sins and unites with God, which is absolutely impossible without immediate participation in them. The implementation of quarantine measures since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic has brought significant changes in the life of Christians however, as we have repeatedly pointed out. These are restrictions both on participation in the Sacraments and on attending church or other religious institutions and worships. This is evidenced, for example, by the decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine № 211 of 11 March 2020 "On prevention of the spread in the territory of Ukraine of acute respiratory disease COVID-19 caused by the coronavirus SARS-CoV-2" [14], which has been repeatedly amended and supplemented. Unfortunately, these general directions have brought about many different understandings, explanations, and interpretations regarding restrictions on freedom of religion. But with the assistance

of the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations, this problem was soon resolved in a constructive way thus averting misunderstandings and chaos.

Meanwhile, despite the significant easing of the quarantine restrictions, we regret to note that today the percentage of church and services attendance by the faithful has significantly decreased. The Primate of the OCU commented on the situation: "Quarantine measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic have affected church attendance in Ukraine <...> The situation is now difficult. Because who is supporting the church? Our believers. And over the past year, almost two thirds of believers do not attend churches. Churches are attended by one third of them" [5]. Our study can attest to how the coronavirus pandemic has led to the percent reduction of believers attending church services. Thus, 51,7% of respondents report a rather significant decrease in the attendance of church services by believers; somewhat smaller percentage (39,0%) of believers attend church services depending on the epidemic situation, the introduction or cancellation of restrictive measures. For 4,8% of clergy, it was difficult to give a clear answer to the question posed, and only 4,5% of those interviewed were convinced that the spread of the pandemic had no effect whatsoever on believers' attendance of Sunday and holiday worship services in their parishes.

At the same time, in and of itself this impact is indicative of psycho-emotional stress, anxiety, and stressful situations related to the spread of the coronavirus disease. Today the words "social isolation" and "quarantine" have confidently entered the everyday language; this is the new reality. And therefore, quarantine measures aimed at stopping the COVID-19 pandemic have caused significant changes in the people's daily routine, including their church and religious life. That is why the common first response to uncomfortable existence in any new conditions are negative emotions that can become entrenched in psycho-emotional disorders (pathological anxiety, depression, etc.) and lead to other pathological problems on physical, social and spiritual levels. On the other hand, these changes at bodily level, whether we like it or not, should not be disregarded.

Psycho-emotional tension over stressful experiences. Given this, the respondents' assessment of the psycho-emotional state of believers under conditions of dangerous coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is quite revealing. The results of our study clearly show that people who live an active spiritual life more easily adapt to various dangers, unlike those who do not live a spiritual life or position themselves as non-denominational. The clergy were tasked with rating the psycho-emotional state of active parishioners from 1 to 5, where 1 is "very bad" and 5 is "in good condition". Thus, given the current circumstances, 63,2% of clergy rated the psycho-emotional condition in their parishes positively (23,8% – 5 and 39,4% – 4), 34,3% rated it as 3, a much smaller number (1,9%) rated it as 2 and only 0,7% gave it a 1. As an example, here are the results of a survey conducted by experts from Chapman University (USA) that showed the impact of the pandemic on mental health. It is reported that of more than 4,000 respondents, 61% said they perceived high level of stress, and 45,0% said they felt depressed or hopeless. More than half of the respondents said they were

very nervous about the coronavirus pandemic [7]. There is a clear need to justify this difference, even if the proposed approach would seem vulnerable to criticism. L. Naugolnyk's reasoning in this context seems astute and important to us: "Faith in God has a powerful psychotherapeutic effect. It offers relief from stress by changing the way one thinks about the situation itself, about the self- demands, about the possibility and significance of coping with these demands. Those who believe that God loves them perceive adversity much more calmly, as they accept it either as a deserved result of their actions or as a test. A study of over 40 believers and 40 non-believers found significant statistical differences between the two groups. Believers are characterized by greater emotional stability, greater resistance to stress, a high level of sympathy (empathy), the deeper sense of meaning of life, that is, they strive for more lasting and spirit-conditioned values compared to non-believers" [9, p. 259]. This opinion reflects the relevance, necessity and importance of the spiritual dimension of life for any individual, and along with this, protection from the possible fatal consequences of despair, disappointment, or depression. Here, I. Gorokholinska's opinion, which we fully share, is very useful: "It is essential both in secular and religious contexts to draw attention to ethical issues not just as an archival reservoir of "ancient wisdom" and "commandments", but as a living process of an individual's thought-action about actual improvement of oneself and the life space which surrounds the individual" [3, p. 267].

Given this, the psycho-emotional state of parishioners is especially valuable, which overwhelmingly depends on the effectiveness and relevance of the pastor's work among them, for this work lays the foundation for their spiritual attunement, stimulating productivity and purposefulness. Assessing from 1 to 5, where 1 is "absolutely unimportant" and 5 is "extremely important" , the significance for the clergy to provide psycho-emotional support to their congregations not only in the homiletical practice of the annual cycle of services, but also in specific conditions, in particular in the quarantine situation related to COVID-19, we obtained the following results: 63,6% of respondents claimed this aspect to be very important, giving it the highest point; such activities are rated with a 4 by 26,0% of the respondents; considerably lower mark of 3 was given by 8,6% of the respondents, and only 1,9% of the respondents gave the lowest mark of 2.

The issue of vaccinations. Another extremely important and pressing issue is vaccination. Given this, it should be noted that the OCU has already clearly voiced its position, stating that the Church has no objection to vaccination in general "as a medical procedure: it does not contradict either the commandments of God or the principles of Christian faith" [15]. Along with this, the OCU claims that the Church does not force « anyone to be vaccinated. The vaccination procedure must be voluntary and conscious. Each person is free to make their own balanced and responsible decision, which will be based on the conclusions and recommendations of doctors, physicians, and professionals, will take into account the health condition and other important factors. This position is consistent with the Church's general teaching on treatment: by calling upon the faithful to take care of their health, the Church encourages everyone to listen to doctors, to

use good means of treatment, but it can neither determine what that treatment should be in a particular case nor how it should be carried out" [15]. However, today, despite appeals from both the Church and the state, a significant number of people still refuse to receive vaccination. There are several reasons for this, one of which, according to His Beatitude Epiphanius, is "fear and distrust in vaccination due to a significant level of distrust in state institutions – and not only in Ukraine – multiplied by the abundance of fake information and conspiracy theories. People lack information hygiene skills. <...> it is necessary to remember that life is precious, and it is the negative cases that will receive the most attention" [6].

Our study showed that the largest percentage of respondents (42,8%) is those who could not clearly state their attitude to vaccination, which indicates the same "uncertainty" and "vagueness". Therefore, while 25,7% have a positive perception of the appeals to vaccinate, 17,5% responded about their negative attitude. The rate is not very high (11.2%) of the clergymen surveyed who were already immunized, and only 3,0% declare their passive attitude to either position. We are deeply convinced that in this situation it is important today to restore people's confidence in the anti-epidemic measures, and for everyone to realize their own responsibility to guard those around them from unpredictable and complicated effects of the pandemic.

Recommendations and suggestions. The suggestions and recommendations of priests on how to protect believers from the coronavirus (COVID-19) and to improve the overall situation in the society are quite valuable for our study. We divided respondents into two groups according to their attitudes toward quarantine requirements. The first group includes those who fully or partially support quarantine restrictions on the part of the Church and the state, and the second group includes those who are strongly opposing any restrictions. It should be said that the latter are many times fewer in number. So, we would like to highlight some recommendations of the first group of respondents, which boil down to the following arguments: "The official position of our Church is expressed by His Beatitude Epiphanius and is a reference point for the entire OCU", "State authorities have to monitor the observance of epidemiological rules not only in churches, but also, for example, in places of public resort and recreation", "We must adhere to the quarantine requirements of the Ministry of Health and at the same time put special hope in God, praying for the sick and doctors and helping the needy", "Avoid mass gatherings of people not only in churches, but in stores, markets and shopping malls. God's will for everything!", "Calm and support people psychologically. Try not to let the panic develop", "Constantly explain to believers the importance of caring for one's neighbors through anti-epidemic measures", "The Church has always been with the Ukrainian people, sharing joy and hardships, so when certain responsibilities and restrictions are assigned to all citizens, it is a conscious position of the Church to bear with the Ukrainian people those restrictions that are imposed due to the rapid spread of the deadly disease", "The urgent issue now is the return of the faithful to the churches, a kind of post-lockdown churching and relief from severe anti-epidemic restrictions", "As priests, we know that the cause of illness is sin, so we need to pay attention to the

people's state of mind, to support and reassure, and not frighten them with illness. It is important to convince people that faith, trust and hope in God will help in the fight against the disease, and of course, for the sake of physical health, to take care of themselves, observing medical norms", "In my opinion, everything is fine, except that Communion from the sacramental spoon is avoided, and plastic spoons and alcohol solutions are used. Man believes more in vaccines and pills than in the Holy Sacraments", "Come with the fear of God and faith". Where is our faith when we make such manipulations with Communion?", "Everybody get vaccinated", etc. Recommendations from the second group of respondents were summarized as follows: "No restrictions", "Do not forbid believers to go to church, but encourage them to turn to God and seek support in God", "Only prayer saves" and others.

Conclusions. Summarizing the above material, we can once again acknowledge and confirm the thoughts of many experts and social activists, as well as the concerned public in general, that the COVID-19 pandemic has indeed become a global problem and a serious challenge for the entire world. In fact, new challenges caused by quarantine restrictions have forced humanity to live in the completely new and not so comfortable conditions. Along with this, changes continue to occur both at the level of the individual psyche and at the macro-social level, disrupting the state of inner harmony. We are convinced that only a balanced approach and a psychologically well-grounded, reflective attitude toward one's own actions and global events should be the basis for the effective functioning and social development of society during and after the pandemic. Changes are inevitable, as the current existence of society confirms, and they have already significantly affected some traditions and conservative customs. Therefore, it is the rational decisions and the sound attitude of both the Church and the state that will determine how constructively these changes would affect both the highest values and the daily life of our people.

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