



SYRIAN ORTHODOX PATRIARCHATE OF ANTIOCH AND ALL THE EAST

The Patriarchal Office



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بطيركية أنطاكية وسائر المشرق للسرطان الأرثوذكس - الديوان البطريركي

Statement

**Issued by the Syriac Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East
Concerning the Corona Virus
Damascus – March 10, 2020**

The fast spreading of Corona virus in many countries around the world created panic among the people; it necessitated the change of many daily customs and practices. Many faithful are raising questions concerning some ecclesiastical rituals and practices during the Holy Qurobo and church meetings.

Therefore, we issue the following instructions:

1- Participating in the Holy Qurobo on Sundays and Feast days is part of the duties of every Christian. Therefore, it is necessary to keep the churches open for the faithful - except when officially required otherwise by governments closing public places of worship. Caution should be taken and sanitizers should be made available in the churches. People are advised to avoid touching people, icons or the Holy Bible; in these current conditions, it is enough to bow the head as a sign of reverence and respect. Moreover, people showing symptoms of illness are advised to remain at home. They can call a priest to their house to pray for them and to give them Holy Communion.

2- Concerning the exchange of the sign of peace, the handshake should be replaced with bowing the head or placing the hand on the chest.

3- Replacing kissing the bishop's cross or the priest's hand with bowing the head before them.

4- Communion is an essential part of the Holy Qurobo; therefore, the faithful should not refrain from taking communion. We strongly believe that the Holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ is a source of bodily and spiritual healing; yet, one can examine the manner with which one receives communion in order not to contribute to the spread of the disease. In this regard, we advise to receive communion in the palm of the hand, which is an old custom that existed in our Syriac Orthodox Church in the first centuries, and spread from it to the church in the west, as we read in the writings of the Church Fathers like Mor Aphrem the Syrian and Mor Philoxenus of Maboug. In this case, the faithful comes forward for Communion with their right palm placed over the left in the form of a cross. Once the Eucharist has been placed upon their hand, it should be respectfully consumed before returning to their place.

We pray for the recovery of all patients, especially those who are infected with the Corona virus. We ask the Divine Providence to protect all.

