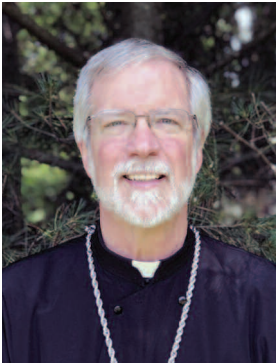




# PRIEST *to* PRIEST

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION FOR ORTHODOX CLERGY

Spring 2020



## IOCC and the Opportunity to Overcome Isolation

*Fr. John Shimchick*

As I write, the world, our country, local communities, and Orthodox parishes have been turned upside-down by the coronavirus. Ironically, it is caught by contact with an infected person and can only be overcome by maintaining isolation from others. That word's literal sense, evolving from the Latin *insulatus*, means "to become an island."

Isolation represents the path for physical healing, but it may prove to awaken sensibilities that will have spiritual consequences as well.

Christians in the first few centuries would risk their lives in gathering for worship, not just to receive Holy Communion (which, at that time, one could take and receive at home), but to "be present at the eucharist together and *regularly*" (Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, 152).

Obviously, because of the circumstances and requirements of civil authorities, we are unable to worship physically, and parishes have been doing their best to offer services and meetings through livestreaming, call conferencing, and the creative use of emails. Many have been required to work or study at home or have even been laid off from their jobs.

Our faith and the work of the IOCC affirm that isolation may happen, but it is not normal and need not be our fate. For all of us who care about Orthodox unity, IOCC represents a vehicle for jurisdictions to work together on a regional level. It helps us share our concerns for the broader world and our relations (or isolation) as Orthodox Christians in ways that we care about but don't often know how to put into words or where to begin. As individual communities, there may be little we can do beyond our local areas. But when combined with IOCC, we are united with an organized and effective Orthodox witness and humanitarian response that reach throughout the United States and other parts of the world.

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# SELF-CARE DURING QUARANTINE OR SELF-ISOLATION

Being quarantined (or deciding to stay at home in self-isolation) for a lengthy period of time during an infectious disease outbreak is unavoidably stressful.

Anything you can do to reduce your sense of isolation, uncertainty, and boredom and provide some structure and routine to your days will help – both during your time isolated and afterwards.

This resource gives you tips on things you can do to stay resilient and manage stress and anxiety during this time.

## STAYING HEALTHY AND RESILIENT

What can you do to help yourself cope with the stress during this “wait and watch” period? In general, the more you feel safe and in-control, the better you will cope.

### 1. Prepare

- **Prepare for several weeks at home on a practical level.** Stock up on necessary food, medication, disinfectant, tissues, toilet paper, etc. You may also want to buy some new books and/or board games.

### 2. Remember

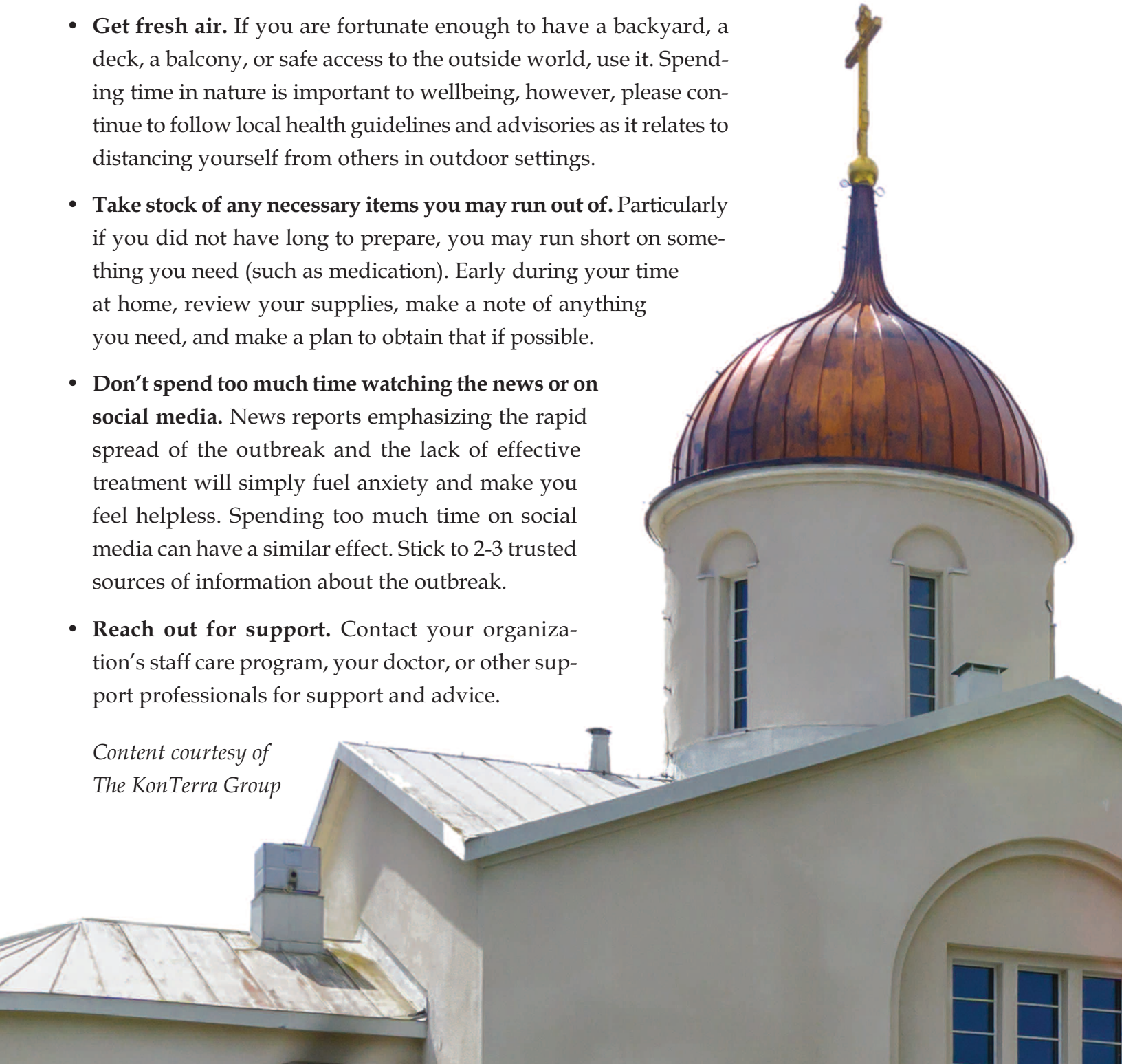
- **You have coped with difficult situations in the past.** You will be able to cope with this one, too.
- **This is temporary.** The quarantine will end and life will resume its normal pace in time.

### 3. Do These Things

- **Connect with people you love.** You may not be able to see them physically, but you will likely be able to reach them by email, phone, or using video calling or voice messaging. Be proactive about reaching out to others to ask how they’re doing or catch up with them. This is especially important if you live alone.
- **Create a routine and structure for your days.** Keep up a normal daily routine as much as possible. Decide how much time (if any) you’re going to allocate to work, and when. Identify other things you want to do during your days, too, and list these out. Create a daily to-do list for yourself (and have family members, including children, create one, too.) Put some “productive” tasks on this list (such as work or cleaning the garage) and some “fun” tasks on there (such as spending extra time reading books or playing board games with the kids). Accomplishing the things on your list will give you a sense of structure, achievement, and control.
- **Get some regular exercise.** If you have exercise equipment in your home, use it. You can also access Pilates, yoga and workout routines online that are geared for all fitness levels and don’t need any equipment. Put some form of exercise on your to-do list every day.

- **Do things around the house that you never seem to get around to.** Identify projects around the house you've been meaning to do. Now's the time to finally organize your sheets and towels, or the garage. Write all these projects down and start putting them on your daily to-do lists.
- **Do something for fun you normally don't make time for.** What is something you enjoy doing but normally don't make time for? Read a new book, watch a new TV series, play board games, etc. Put something enjoyable and fun on your to-do list every day.
- **Plan some time out from each other.** Make sure everyone gets the opportunity to spend some time alone (or, if you're home with young children, in smaller family groups.)
- **Get fresh air.** If you are fortunate enough to have a backyard, a deck, a balcony, or safe access to the outside world, use it. Spending time in nature is important to wellbeing, however, please continue to follow local health guidelines and advisories as it relates to distancing yourself from others in outdoor settings.
- **Take stock of any necessary items you may run out of.** Particularly if you did not have long to prepare, you may run short on something you need (such as medication). Early during your time at home, review your supplies, make a note of anything you need, and make a plan to obtain that if possible.
- **Don't spend too much time watching the news or on social media.** News reports emphasizing the rapid spread of the outbreak and the lack of effective treatment will simply fuel anxiety and make you feel helpless. Spending too much time on social media can have a similar effect. Stick to 2-3 trusted sources of information about the outbreak.
- **Reach out for support.** Contact your organization's staff care program, your doctor, or other support professionals for support and advice.

*Content courtesy of  
The KonTerra Group*





# IOCC and the Opportunity to Overcome Isolation

*continued from front cover*

Self-isolation and social distancing may have become common expressions of our current dysfunction, but they have healing and the restoration of community as their goals.

John Donne wrote that “No man is an island.” These times, our common prayers, and the work of IOCC can help us understand this and see ourselves and others in ways that may have never before been so obvious and necessary.

*Fr. John Shimchick*

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*If you wish to contribute a reflection to the next issue of Priest to Priest, please email [rloumiotis@iocc.org](mailto:rloumiotis@iocc.org)*



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DEAR FATHERS,

In this strange time of anxiety and unknowns, I want to thank you for everything you do – and have done through the years – to support IOCC’s work of service, even as you tend to your flocks.

In the midst of a public health crisis that has hit home here in the US in ways that many emergencies don’t, please know that IOCC seeks to serve you, as well. I hope this newsletter in some small way provides encouragement and strength as you seek to serve Christ’s Church during troubling times. May God grant you courage and strength for your work.

Yours in Christ,

Constantine M. Triantafilou, *Executive Director & CEO*