

Getting the Most out of Livestreaming Worship

Helpful tips during a Shutdown

As one priest described it, "our worship has a physicality to it that is non-negotiable." There can be no adequate electronic substitute for the reception of Communion or a priestly blessing, the radiant presence of holy images, the fellowship of other worshippers, and the sounds and smells of liturgical worship. But since many parishes offer the option of livestreaming services during a time when public services are closed, it is useful to consider the great benefit these online services can offer us — if we approach them wisely and in the right spirit. To truly be there **in spirit**, we must participate **with spirit**. Here are some tips you may find helpful.

- Speaking of the role of pilgrimage, an Eastern monk once said "If you have it here, you'll have it there." When you participate in online services, **you need to "have it here"** — that is, to approach the service in the context of an already-active life of prayer in your home, rather than a temporary interruption in an otherwise distracted and worldly day-to-day routine. Your prayer life at home will enhance your experience of online services, and vice versa.

- Along the same lines, it is good to view such services at or near your home altar, or in whatever space in your home which you have dedicated to God and prayer.

- As a preparation for the service, be sure you've banished all distractions from your environment and your schedule. Smartphones off!

- We've all become accustomed to spending our days "looking" — at our smartphones, our computers, our television. But livestreaming services should be approached **in the spirit of live participation**, not as a "spectator sport." God and your own heart are watching and listening.

- Dress appropriately.

- Candles and incense can contribute greatly to a spiritual atmosphere. Just as you include these in daily prayers at your home altar, use these as you participate at home in online services.

- Sit, stand, bow, sing, respond, as you would if you were physically there.

- Your effort to draw close to God and your faith through online services is not a small thing. Be prepared to be surprised. **"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you" (James 4:8).**