

Orthodox Motorcade in Moscow Wards Off Virus With Holy Icon and Prayers

By [AFP](#)

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Patriarch Kirill leads a service at the Epiphany Cathedral at Yelokhovo in Moscow. **Gavriil Grigorov / TASS**

The head of the Russian Orthodox Church blessed Moscow on Friday to ward off the coronavirus, circling the city in a motorcade with a holy icon and reciting prayers.

Patriarch Kirill's convoy took a main highway around the Russian capital which is under strict lockdown measures and passed near the Kremlin walls, an AFP photographer reported.

Embed:

Patriarch Kirill of the Russian Orthodox Church is driving around Moscow's ring road in a Mercedes van, accompanied by a police escort, with a holy icon and praying for the coronavirus pandemic to end. pic.twitter.com/MEkMDrQoxw

— max seddon (@maxseddon) [April 3, 2020](#)

A live broadcast on the SPAS religious television channel showed the patriarch's van with tinted windows escorted by other vehicles with flashing emergency beacons.

Patriarch Kirill, 73, said a prayer to ward off the pandemic and appealed to "believers, while in their homes, to pray together" with him against the coronavirus, a statement on his website said.

Health officials have confirmed 4,149 coronavirus cases and 34 deaths, according to the latest figures published Friday.

To curb the spread of Covid-19, President Vladimir Putin has declared April a non-working month when Russians will still receive their salaries.

Most of Russia's regions have implemented self-isolation measures and closed non-essential businesses including restaurants and cafes.

At the beginning of coronavirus outbreak, the Russian Orthodox Church spoke out against the closure of church, but Patriarch Kirill has recently told believers to pray from home.

The Russian Orthodox Church — a close ally of the Kremlin — has more than 150 million followers, mostly in the former Soviet Union.

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