



# CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF LAGOS

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Special Circular

**JUNE, 2020** /No. 93.1

**TO ALL PRIESTS AND RELIGIOUS WORKING IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF LAGOS, AND  
THE LAY FAITHFUL**

Dear Msgri. /Frs., Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

## **SUSPENSION OF SCHEDULED REOPENING OF CHURCHES IN LAGOS STATE.**

1. The recent announcement by the Lagos State Government, suspending the planned reopening of Churches for public worship has left us with a feeling of utter disappointment and bewilderment. We, lay faithful, Religious and the Clergy, had all been looking forward to 21<sup>st</sup> June, 2020, with joyful anticipation that we shall gather once again to celebrate the Eucharist as Communities of Faith in our different parishes. We had been engaging the Government and acting in concert with other Christians in the Christian Association of Nigeria on what we need to do. We had even gone ahead to issue particular stringent Archdiocesan Guidelines towards the gradual restoration of public Masses in order to ensure the safety of our people. All the parishes had started working to make the Church premises safe for worship following the guidelines later released by government.

It is very unfortunate that the State Government suspended the scheduled opening of Churches for Public worship because of the increase in the number of COVID-19 infections and its belief that the Church is a fertile ground for new infections. We are convinced that there are higher chances of protecting people from the infection within Church premises than in other public places such as markets and motor parks due to precautions that we believe would be better respected by the faithful when they come to worship. If offices and businesses could be opened with safety measures put in place, we believe that the same principle ought to apply to Churches with higher chances of better compliance. We make bold to say again that the Church cares about the health and safety of the faithful as much as the State, if not more.

We also remind everyone that good health is not just physical wellness, it is a state of total wellbeing of the person: mental, emotional and psychological well-being. Faith and religious worship help to provide these other indices of well-being and we hope that would be taken into consideration by government in reconsidering its position.

2. We encourage the Clergy, Religious and Lay Faithful of our Archdiocese to accept the situation we are in with the eyes of faith, seeing it as the Will of God for us at this time. Whatever happens to us has the mark of God on it and we should recognize it as part of God's providence. It is normal to feel disappointed and frustrated but we must never give in to discouragement rather we must remain calm and hopeful.

We shall continue to celebrate Masses which shall be broadcast on *Lumen Christi Television Network* and we hope that you will all continue to participate from your homes. Let us endeavor to keep the flame of our faith alive drawing strength from the words of St. Paul that "*all things work together unto good for those who love God*" (Rom. 8:28). We shall not relent in our prayers for God's intervention in our fight against this virus since we believe that our sacrifices and efforts by the grace of God, would bring an end to the spread of this virus.

3. We urge the faithful of the Archdiocese to place our inability to celebrate Mass in public in the hands of God for a resolution. The Rosary is like a weapon that you use when you are at war and its potency have been proved over the years. We are not sure of what we are battling against but we know that with God on our side, we shall overcome. Please pray the rosary every day for an end to the Coronavirus but also for the restoration of Public Mass and return to normal life.
4. Meanwhile we urge all the faithful not to relax in taking due precautions because there is no doubt that the virus is still with us and we need to protect ourselves and others even while we go about our daily lives. Keep physical distance from others, avoid large gatherings of people, remain in your home unless there is need to go out, wear the face mask when in public and wash your hands often.
5. Do you know that you can use the opportunity of washing your hands to pray also? It takes about 20seconds to say the ***Our Father***. Use the time for washing your hands productively by saying a prayer.

Finally, we commend the efforts of our dear priests who have been working to keep the faith of our people alive in these unusual times and in such dire circumstances. Along with the committees in their parishes, priests have been making efforts to prepare our churches in line with the safety measures for the resumption of public Masses. We assure you that your efforts are not in vain. We believe that sooner than later, we shall have the opportunity to gather in our parishes to celebrate the Eucharist and the other sacraments once again. May God deliver us from this evil. Amen

**(Signed)**

**+ Alfred Adewale MARTINS**

**Archbishop, Metropolitan See of Lagos**

**19<sup>th</sup> June, 2020**

ARCHDIOCESE OF LAGOS