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

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord:

1. The Month of February: I welcome you to the month of February, 2021, a month rich in liturgical activities and spiritual memorials. Beginning with the Feast of the Presentation (February 2), the Church calls us to re-dedicate ourselves to God, presenting our dreams, hopes and fears to Him and making sacrificial offerings of our lives in service of the Gospel. She further presents us with the lives of the following saints as spiritual guides in the course of this month: St. Blaise (February 3), St. Agatha (February 5), St. Paul Miki & Companions (February 6), St. Jerome Emiliani and St. Josephine Bakhita (February 8), St. Scholastica (February 10), Our Lady of Lourdes (February 11), Sts. Cyril and Methodius (February 14), Seven Founders of the Orders of Servites (February 17), St. Peter Damian (February 21), and the Chair of St. Peter (February 22). As we celebrate the memorial of these Saints, may the fire of Divine love be rekindled in our hearts, that we may love the Lord as they did.

The month of February is also the month that leads us into the special season of Lent, a season in which we are called to deepen our relationship with God through prayer, fasting and almsgiving. With Ash Wednesday (17th February, 2021) the Church ushers us all into the solemn Season of Lent when we experience the profound call to repentance and spiritual renewal.

2. A Few Thoughts on Lent: As we begin the season of lent, may I remind you all of the following regarding the season:

a. Abstinence: All the faithful who have reached 14 years of age and above are required to abstain totally from meat or favorite dish or drink on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday as well as all the Fridays of Lent.

b. Fasting: All the faithful between the ages of 18 and 60 years are obliged to fast. In practice, fasting involves limiting oneself to a single full meal or two smaller meals a day. Those who are sick, pregnant or nursing or whose health would adversely be affected by fasting should not consider themselves bound by this norm.
Parents and teachers are responsible for helping young persons, who are not bound by the norms regarding fasting and abstinence to recognize the genuine values in penance and self-denial. We are required to also to pray fervently for the catechumens who will receive the Sacraments of Initiation during this period. Please find below some of the other ways we can observe this period of Lent so as to benefit from the graces of the season:

i. Avoid Sin: Keep yourself away from all occasions that could lead to sin. Repent and return to God by a good sacramental confession and do appropriate penance if you fall into sin.

ii. Practice self-control: be more generous especially in giving to the poor and needy and in contributing to the works of the church and payment of just wages.

iii. Pursue and achieve reconciliation with anyone with whom you are not at peace.

iv. Read the Scriptures in order to deepen your intimacy with God, spread the kingdom of Christ and help others to know and return to Christ.

v. Pray before the Blessed Sacrament, go to Mass often, if possible, daily.

vi. Be regular at the stations of the cross on Wednesdays and Fridays and do it every day if you can.

vii. Take part in the Lenten programmes and retreats that will be organised in your parish. Take full part in the Holy week ceremonies.

viii. Pray your Rosary daily.

Bear in mind that all other Fridays of the year remain Days of penance in prayerful remembrance of the passion of Jesus Christ.

3. Vatican gives Directives for the Distribution of Ashes on Ash Wednesday: Given the current Covid-19 pandemic which is affecting the world, the Holy See through the Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of Sacraments, has laid out procedures for priests to follow for the distribution of Ashes on Ash Wednesday. The following are the directives:

After blessing the ashes and sprinkling them with Holy water in silence, the Priest addresses those present, reciting once the formula found in the Roman Missal: "Repent, and believe in the Gospel" or "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return". Then, the priest “cleanses his hands, puts on a face mask, and distributes ashes to those who come to him or, if appropriate, he goes to those who are standing in their places.” He then sprinkles the ashes on each person’s head “without saying anything.”

All priests are to ensure that he above directive is adhered to, strictly.

4. STILL ON THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: We call attention again to the need to focus on encouraging our people to pay attention to the safety precautions that we all know very well by now i.e., wearing of face masks, regular washing of hands, the use of sanitizers, maintaining physical distance, resisting the urge to touch our eyes and faces and observing the basic rules of hygiene.
We also expect all parishes to reawaken and renew the safety measures that we had in place to keep our churches safe and secure for people to worship. Celebration of Masses would be at 50% of the Church’s capacity as indicated by government. Just as it was before, parishes should consider making use of other available spaces within the Church premises such as Parish halls so as to have more Masses available for the faithful.

5. RESUMPTION OF SOCIETY MEETINGS: at the recent meeting of the Bishops’ Conference of Lagos Ecclesiastical Province, it was resolved that given that the Covid-19 virus which has adversely affected our lives is still very much with us, we must learn how to move on with our lives while trying our best to keep safe at all times. Hence, the Bishops of the province have directed the resumption of society meetings. However, it should be noted that all meetings should be held in compliance with the covid-19 safety protocols, while maintaining the required social distancing. Parish Priest and priests-in-charge should ensure compliance with the regulations.

6. St. Augustine College of Education (Project Time) affiliated to the University of Ibadan:

   a. We call on Parish Priests and Priests-in-Charge to inform their Parishioners that the above-named College has commenced admission procedures for its 2020/2021 session. With a minimum JAMB Score of 200 and above for Degree programs and 150 and above for NCE programs, St. Augustine College is the place for you. Our programs and their Requirements include:

   - B.Ed. degree (Full-Time and Distance Learning Center) – 5 Credits at one sitting.
   - NCE (Full-Time and Part-Time) – 6 Credits at two sittings.
   - PDE (PGDE) – First Degree or H.N.D. From any recognized tertiary institution.
   - Catechesis – practicing and intending Catechist OR O’Level Certificate.

   For further enquiries, call - 08065954493; 08024582945; 08034919553.

   b. Parish Priests are requested to send their Catechists, Catechism Teachers and Marriage Counsellors for Advanced Diploma in Catechetics at St. Augustine’s College of Education (Project TIME) Akoka, Yaba, Lagos. For more enquiries, visit www.sacoedng.com or www.sacoed.edu.ng or call 08034919553; 08065954493; 08033098523.

   c. St. Augustine’s College of Education offers Admission in-Service Masters in Education (M.Ed.) in Curriculum Development and Educational Evaluation and Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PDGE) in the following:

   - Curriculum Development in Arts and Languages
   - Curriculum Development in Information Technology
   - Curriculum Development in Mathematics
• Curriculum Development in Pre-primary and Primary Education
• Curriculum Development in the Sciences
• Educational and Evaluation Research
• Test Construction and Public Examining
• Development and monitoring of Curriculum
• Psychological Testing, Assessment Evaluation and Counselling
• Schools/institutions’ Accreditation and Evaluation
• Programme Evaluation
• Teaching etc.

7. ANNOUNCEMENTS:

a. Day of Consecrated Life: This annual celebration comes up on the 2\textsuperscript{nd} of February, 2021, at St. Dominic Catholic Church, Yaba, Lagos by 10.00am. There would be a special collection for Consecrated Life taken up in all parishes the following Sunday, 7\textsuperscript{th} February, 2021. Parish Priests and Priests-in-Charge should take note.

b. Consultors Meeting: The meeting of the College of Consultors for the first quarter shall be held on the 10\textsuperscript{th} of February, 2021 at the Chancery by 10.00am. Those concerned should please take note.

c. Priests Recollection: The Priests’ Recollection for the first quarter of this year comes up on 3\textsuperscript{rd} February, 2021 at the designated parishes in the Four Regions of the Archdiocese. The Episcopal Vicars would communicate the time and venue accordingly. All Priests are required to be in attendance.

d. 2021 VALENTINE’S DAY WITH THE ARCHBISHOP: The Archdiocesan programme planned by the Directorate of the Catholic Lay Apostolate in conjunction with the Archdiocesan bodies of the Couples for Christ (CFC) and the Catholic Biblical Instructor’s Union (CBIU) will come up as follows:

**DATE:** Saturday, 13th February, 2021

**TIME:** 10:00 a.m. starting with the Holy Mass

**VENUE:** Catholic Church of the Ascension, Int’l Airport Road, Ikeja

There will be Renewal of Marital Vows for interested couples during the Holy Mass. Couples interested in the renewal of their vows should kindly call any of the telephone numbers below.

Goodwill placement cost Twenty Thousand Naira Only (N20,000.00).
For more information, kindly call the Planning Committee on 08033481595 or 08033577190 and the Director's office on 08026156606 or 08077003036

**e. 2021 CARITAS-LAGOS SUNDAY COLLECTION (28th February):** Caritas-Lagos Collection to support Dioceses, Parishes, Seminaries, Convents and other Institutions in need comes up on the 28th of February, 2021. This special collection should be taken in all parishes on this day and Parish Priests are directed to sensitize their parishioners beforehand and ensure that THE TOTAL COLLECTION is immediately paid into the Caritas Account on or before Thursday 4th of March, 2021. Account details are as follows: **FIDELITY BANK, 4110033795, CARITAS LAGOS.** We count on your cooperation.

**f. JDPC Lenten Campaign:** The Lenten Campaign is an annual programme of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) which is our collective action during the period of Lent. It applies the values of the Gospel to the problems and challenges of society and promote social justice, human development and sustainable peace in the Country. It is also a viable means by which the JDPC raises funds to continue on its mandate as approved by the Church.

The Lenten Campaign collection comes up on **Sunday, 21st March, 2021, the Fifth Sunday of Lent.** We urge all parish priests/priests-in-charge to encourage their parishioners to be generous and support this charitable collection.

**g. International Day of Prayer and Awareness against Human Trafficking:** The International Day of Prayer and Awareness against Human Trafficking comes up on **Monday 8th February, 2021** on the feast day of Saint Josephine Bakhita. The theme for this year's celebration is **“An Economy without Human Trafficking”**

Program of activities include the following:

- **Press Conference:** **Monday 8th February, 2021 at 11:00am** (For selected Groups/Organizations)

- **Venue:** St. Leo’s Catholic Church Conference Hall

- **Celebration of the Holy Mass across ALL Parishes with special Prayers against Human Trafficking:** **Monday 8th February, 2021, Feast of St Josephine Bakhita**

- **Recitation of the Holy Rosary and candle Light procession in ALL Parishes with special Prayers against Human Trafficking:** **Monday 8th February, 2021, Feast of St Josephine Bakhita**
• Venue: All Parishes within the Archdiocese

• Exhortation of the Parishioners on the reality and ills of Trafficking in persons at all Masses: On Sunday 7th February, 2021. This should be done by the Parish Priest/Priest-In-Charge

h. 2021 Archdiocesan Directory: The 2021 Archdiocesan Directory has been out for about a month now. Priests who have not should pick up their copies from the Deans of each Deanery, and copies for your Parishes from the Chancery. The Female Religious should please pick their copies from the Chancery also.

i. Admission into the Catholic Secondary Schools: This is to inform everyone that admission into JSS 1 for the 2020/2021 academic session in all Catholic Secondary Schools in the Archdiocese is in progress. The Entrance Examination comes up on 20th February, 2021 at the selected schools. Forms can be obtained from the school of choice, all Catholic Primary Schools in the Archdiocese, selected parishes and electronically on www.cmsslagos.ng or on any of the following schools' website. Sale of forms will close one week to the date of examination. The 10 Catholic Archdiocesan Secondary Schools are:

1. St Gregory College, South-West, Ikoyi http://www.stgregoryscollege.ng
9. St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic College, Okomaiko
10. St. Kizito Catholic College, Iju

Let us give our children a sound upbringing in the Catholic Faith.

j. St John Paul II School for Marriage and Family: This Archdiocesan School is offering Learning opportunities and Skills development for Marriage Facilitators, Married Persons, Singles/Widowed, Parents, Lay/ Youth Leaders

List of courses/trainings
1. Marriage Theology and Lived Experience.
2. Teaching Sexuality Education in the Family
3. Theology of the Body Made Simple for Youth Teenagers and Adults
4. Natural Family Planning (NFP) Instructors Course
   Managing Couple Fertility Naturally (Love & Life Method)
5. Basic Christian Counselling Skills
6. Formation Of Children (one day courses)
   i) Parenting Skills for parents of children Ages 1-10
   ii) Training a Child to love
   iii) Steps to Building Character and Developing Core Values
7. Holidays at FHLU for Students (July/August)

This programme encompasses a range of interesting activities and information for positive youth enhancement and leadership.
• How to improve Relationships with Parents and other Adults.
• Teenagers, Love & Relationships

Courses began in February 2020
For enquiries and registration, call Martina Ozegbe on 0813 028 5777 and 07030616170.

k. Department of Social Communication: The new edition of the Archdiocesan Catholic Herald Newspaper is out on sale in Catholic bookstores all around the Archdiocese. We encourage the faithful to buy the newspaper and be informed about the faith and events concerning the Church. As part of the efforts to widen the scope of the Catholic Herald Newspaper, the Directorate of Social Communications hereby welcomes write-ups and contributions on matters of faith and morals as well as social issues from priests, religious (Male and female) as well as lay faithful. You can send your write-ups/ contributions to: thecatholicherald2007@gmail.com or tonygeee23@gmail.com for consideration.

We are expect Parish Priests and Associates to publicize the Catholic Herald Newspaper during Altar announcements. May God continue to bless and reward our apostolate. Amen.


Duration: 6 Months
For Whom: Parish Pastoral Assistants, Parish Evangelization Commission members, Faith Formators, Group Facilitators, Catholics who desire to grow and share our faith.

REQUIRED: Potential attendees are to be recommended by Parish priest, practicing/confirmed Catholic, possess minimum of SSCE or equivalent, a very good grasp of English Language, ability to
use the relevant technology and handle the required level of work/assignments and keep to the Institute’s rules.

**Commencement Date: March 20, 2021.**

Form available for #1,000

**Enquiry/contact:** Rel. Edu. Dept., 19, Maybe Street, off Montgomery Road (opposite Lebanese School), Yaba. Call or SMS: 08033574050, 08066224284.

**m. Pauline Foods First Quarter Training on Food Processing and Packaging:** Pauline foods, our Archdiocesan owned food processing and packaging initiative, announces the commencement of its seminar. This quarterly seminar will commence on **Saturday, 13th February, 2021.** It will hold for 2 months. You can either register for the Saturday or Tuesday classes. After the classes, the trainees will have 3 months of practical mentorship to fully empower them to become instant entrepreneurs in this business of food processing and packaging.

The registration form and Training modules card is N1,000.

Trainees are expected to pay for their training fees before the commencement of the training program.

For more information on the training fees, please call: 07037673899 & 09044946744. Or reach us on our email: paulinefoods@gmail.com

Instagram: @paulinefoods

**n. Application for Anthony Cardinal Okogie Foundation Scholarship:** We wish to inform all interested applicants that the Application Form for the Anthony Cardinal Okogie Foundation Scholarship for the 2020/2021 session can be obtained from the Archdiocesan Website. Applicants are requested to click on the following link: http://www.lagosarchdiocese.org/down/g14.pdf to download the forms, fill and submit them to the Chancery. Closing date for all applications is the 31st of March, 2020.

**o. Quarterly Returns and Special Collections:** Every Parish is expected to fulfill the canonical obligation of giving an account of its income and expenditures to the Chancery and make the required financial returns.

Please be reminded that the returns from the following Special Collections are to be made in the first quarter of the year: **Epiphany Collection- 05/01/2021** **AUI Collection- 12/01/2021,** **19/02/2021,** **08/03/2021,** **Consecrated Life Collection- 7/02/2021,** **Caritas-Lagos Collection- 28/02/2021,** **JDPC Collection- 22/03/2021,** **Laity Collection- 29/03/2021.**
Henceforth, Parish Priests/Priests-in-charge MUST make all quarterly returns payments to the Chancery’s accounts through BANK TRANSFERS, or have their cheques paid directly to the Chancery’s accounts and attach only the tellers or payment slips to the quarterly returns sheets submitted to the Chancery. This is to forestall the challenges of returned cheques, irregular signatures and other problems that cause cheques to bounce. We emphasize again that when making returns, Parish Priests or Priests-in-Charge, should ensure that they fill and submit the complete sheets for the appropriate quarter, and attach evidence of payments.

8. Priestly Ordination Anniversary:
We congratulate, rejoice with and request your prayers for Rev. Frs. Daniel Nwankwo, Simeon Adejo, Emmanuel Edet and Joseph Okpala as they mark their Sacerdotal Ordination anniversaries this month. May God grant them lasting joy and the grace of final perseverance. Ad multos annos!

9. Bereavement: With deep sympathy but with thanksgiving to God, we announce the demise of the Late Rev. Mother Mary Langley, HHCJ, a onetime Superior general of the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus; and Late Mrs Naomi Abel Usman the mother of Rev. Fr. Jacob Usman. We ask that Masses should be celebrated for the repose of their souls and the consolation of their families. May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed rest in peace. Amen

Signed

+ Alfred Adewale Martins
Archbishop, Metropolitan See of Lagos