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

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

SPECIAL CIRCULAR ON THE OUTBREAK OF CORONAVIRUS

In December 2019, a cluster of pneumonia cases was reported in the City of Wuhan, China. Investigations found out that this was caused by previously unknown virus now named 2019 novel Coronavirus (nCoV). The outbreak has now become a global concern as it keeps spreading at an alarming rate. Therefore, while the government is doing all that need be done to ensure that this virus does not spread in our country, as we have been assured, it is important that information about the virus and factors relating to it are brought to the attention of everyone. We have been told that a case has been confirmed here in Lagos, we have to take proactive steps to protect ourselves from infection.

- **How is Coronavirus Transmitted?**
  A. person can carry and transmit COVID-19 without showing the symptoms. Coronavirus are circulated in a range of animals and can be transmitted to humans, though the exact dynamics are yet to be determined. In general, respiratory diseases are usually transmitted through droplets created when an infected person coughs or sneezes or through something that has been contaminated with the virus.

- **People most at risk.**
  - Those in close contact with animals
  - Live animal market workers
  - People caring for those with infection
  - Family members or health care workers.

- **Common Signs of Coronavirus**
- Respiratory infection symptoms
- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Breathing difficulties

- In severe cases:
  - Pneumonia
  - Severe acute respiratory syndrome
  - Kidney failure
  - Death.

- Treatment

There is no specific medication; treatment is supportive care and treatment of symptoms.

No vaccine, treatment and vaccines are in development.

B. Standard Recommendations to Prevent Spread of Infection

1. Regular washing of hands with soap and water
2. Cover your mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing
3. Cook your meat and eggs thoroughly before consuming.
4. Avoid close contact with anyone showing symptoms of respiratory illness such as:
   - Coughing
   - Sneezing
5. Avoid undue contact with animals.
6. Appropriate use of mask in health care centers
7. Wash your hands thoroughly after having contact with live animals and animal products
8. Stay at home when you feel unwell
9. Cook meat and other such products very well.
10. Visit your health care centre early if you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing
C. The following are further preventive measures as published by Channels TV

- **Wash your hands frequently**

Regularly and thoroughly clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water.

Why? Washing your hands with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand rub kills viruses that may be on your hands.

**Maintain Social Distancing**

Maintain at least 1 metre (3 feet) distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing.

Why? When people cough or sneeze they spray small liquid droplets from their nose or mouths which may contain the virus. If you are too close, you can breathe in the droplets, including the COVID-19 virus if the person coughing has the disease.

**Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth**

Why? Hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses. Once contaminated, hands can transfer the virus to your eyes, nose or mouth. From there, the virus can enter your body and can make you sick.

**Practice Respiratory Hygiene**

Make sure you, and the people around you, follow good respiratory hygiene. This means covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately.

Why? Droplets spread the virus. By following good respiratory hygiene, you protect the people around you from viruses such as cold, flu and COVID-19.

**If you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical care early**

Stay home if you feel unwell. If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention and call in advance. Follow the directions of your local health authority.
Why? National and local authorities will have the most up to date information on the situation in your area. Calling in advance will allow your health care provider to quickly direct you to the right health facility. This will also protect you and help prevent the spread of viruses and other infections.

Stay informed and follow the advice given by your healthcare provider

Stay informed on the latest developments about COVID-19. Follow the advice given by your healthcare provider, your national and local public health authority or your employer on how to protect yourself and others from COVID-19.

Why? National and local authorities will have the most up to date information on whether COVID-19 is spreading in your area. They are best placed to advise on what people in your area should be doing to protect themselves.

In the light of this present circumstance, we hereby instruct as follows, till further notice:

a. The shaking of hands during the time for the Sign of Peace during Mass is suspended for the time being.
b. During this season of Lent, in order to reduce the number of gatherings in Church to the barest necessary, we encourage people to do Stations of the Cross privately on Wednesdays while public celebrations will take place only Fridays especially as it is often followed by Mass.
c. Communion, for the time being, shall be received on the palms
d. People are encouraged to have Hand Sanitizers handy to be used as and when needed.
e. The use of Holy Water fonts in churches and public places should be suspended till further notice

May the Lord deliver us from this plague and all evils.

+ Alfred Adewale Martins
Archbishop of Lagos
February 28, 2020