



CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF LAGOS

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Special Circular

MARCH, 2020 /No. 090.1

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

FURTHER DIRECTIVES ON THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

1. Dear brothers and sisters in the Lord, I am constrained to send another circular this month in further response to the coronavirus pandemic that is giving grave concern to the whole world at this time. The disease has brought death in multiples of thousands, it has brought grief and sorrow to many families. The effects have been very devastating and have led to some drastic measures being taken all over the world. This scourge has affected economies, sports, entertainment, disrupted lives and all manner of things such that it has even been found necessary to suspend public Mass in Dioceses in parts of Europe and North America.

We thank God that our country has not had a major outbreak of the COVID-19 because of God's grace over us but also because the index case was recognized quickly, and immediate steps were taken to keep the spread under control. We commend the Health authorities at the Federal level and at the Lagos and Ogun states levels for rising to the occasion and continuing to inform the public on the development.

2. We in the Archdiocese of Lagos have also taken proactive steps to protect the faithful of the Archdiocese. We are happy to note that the cases have not escalated in our country and those who contracted the illness are getting over it. However, we must continue to assess the situation as it develops in order to make appropriate decisions.

It is in this light that we make the following pronouncements:

- Given the fact that the spread of the virus seems to be under control at the moment, we may gather for **Stations of the Cross again on Wednesdays of Lent** in addition to the Friday gatherings.

- We advise that Parishes should take precaution of checking the temperature of the faithful as they come into the Church premises and perhaps make Hand sanitizers available where possible. They should continue to get health workers to continue to inform the faithful on how to stem the spread of the virus etc.
 - The practice of receiving Holy Communion on the hand **remains** until we are out of the woods. I am aware that there are some who argue that it should be optional and there are priests who have ignored the instruction and have unilaterally decided to make it optional. We can only tell such priests and people that they have chosen the path of disobedience of lawful instructions and they would be liable to consequences that arise therefrom.
 - The gains that we had in the days of Ebola virus was the grace of God over our nation but also the fruit of the precautionary measures that were taken in Lagos State and the proactive ecclesiastical steps taken in our Archdiocese. We have on our hands now a deadly virus that spreads more quickly and in more ways than Ebola and yet we have people who have chosen not tackle the matter with enough seriousness.
 - Those who allow the option of communion on the tongue at this critical time should know that they bear responsibility if by any chance they become the weak links by which the virus spreads. Even if by the grace of God, the infection does not spread, they still bear responsibility for leading others in disobedience to lawful instruction from lawful authority. *Obedience is better than sacrifice* is what the Scriptures teach us.
3. In solidarity with the countries of the world, especially in Europe and North America, in which the virus is still raging, we must pray to God asking for his intervention in bringing this pandemic to an end. We therefore ask the faithful to pray in families, at Society meetings and end of Mass:
- **The Divine Mercy Prayers** to ask the mercy of God upon the world as this scourge is still raging and causing distress.
 - We ask that the **Prayer to Our Lady Mother of the Church**, the Patroness of our Archdiocese should be said also.

- We ask that the following prayer should be said after Communion at this time of emergency in our world:

PRAYER FOR AN END TO THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

O God our Help in ages past, we, your children, humbly implore your mercy at this time of adversity. We are devastated by the coronavirus pandemic that is ravaging the whole world, snuffing life out of your people and spreading fear everywhere.

You are the God of Life and nothing is impossible to you. You ask us to call on you in the day of trouble and you will answer us. We know that we are sinners who are unworthy of your favours. Although we have no merits of our own to plead before you, we stand on the merits of the death and resurrection of Christ and plead his saving blood over our lives and situation. We ask you to be merciful to us and save us from this scourge that is devastating the world. Be gracious to us and speak life and healing into the present coronavirus scourge and command it to depart from our world.

Give leaders of Governments and scientists divine wisdom and knowledge to take the right decisions and to develop the vaccine needed to stem the spread of this virus. Protect all health workers and volunteers. Look with pity on those who are already infected with this deadly virus and heal them. Grant eternal rest to those who have died from it and comfort those they left behind to mourn their demise.

Lord, through this scourge may the hearts of many be turned back to you their Creator. We make our prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Our Lady, Health of the sick - Pray for us

St. Raphael, the Archangel - Pray for us

All Angels and Saints of God - Pray for us

May Our Lady, Mother of the Church; the Health of the Sick intercede for the whole world. Amen

+ Alfred Adewale Martins

Archbishop of Lagos