Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord:

1. THE MONTH OF MAY: I warmly welcome you all to the month of May, 2020. In this month, the Church deliberately draws our attention to Mary, the Mother of the Risen Lord; She who stood by Her Son during His Passion and while on the Cross till He died. Now she shares in His glory as she bears the title Regina Caeli which we gladly address her with as we pray: "O Queen of Heaven rejoice" in the fifty days of Easter. We, followers of Christ in a most profound way share in that joy of the resurrection and of participation in the new life of Easter. May the resurrection of Christ, by which heaven is wedded to earth and the human race is reconciled God be our eternal hope and reward.

2. SOLEMNITY OF THE ASCENSION: which we shall celebrate on Thursday 21st of May 2020 commemorates Our Lord’s glorious entry into heaven and is celebrated on the 40th day of Easter. The event of the Ascension confirms the truth that Jesus Christ; true God and true man, returns to the Father in order to come again at the Second Coming. Our faith teaches that after his ascension, He sits at the right hand of God the Father until He comes to judge the living and the dead. By the Feast of the Ascension, may our eyes be turned to heaven where our true treasure lies.

3. EFFECTS OF CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC: Since end of February this year, our state has been in a lockdown. This has had many effects on our local Church, the economy and the general well-being of people. One of the most regrettable effect of the lockdown has been the suspension of Public Mass and the inability to celebrate the other sacraments especially the sacrament of Reconciliation. As Catholics the inability to celebrate the sacraments has been a major source of sadness for many of our people. All thanks to God for the Lumen Christi Television Network and later on the Multichoice, Nigeria that have bridged the gap, to
the extent possible, by transmitting Masses live such that people could participate and receive Spiritual Communion. We use this opportunity to commend the faithful of the Archdiocese; Laity, Religious and Priests, for the patience with which we bore the inconveniences imposed on us by the lockdown. We have been exemplary in the way we adapted to the new normal of the last two months. May God grant increase to our faith and support us in our moments of weakness.

4. CALL TO PRAYER: we want to encourage all the faithful: Priests, Religious and the lay faithful not to relent in prayers that God will intervene and bring the Coronavirus Pandemic to an end and very soon. I particularly encourage praying the Novena to Our Lady, the Undoer of Knots. Let us together begin praying this Novena from Sunday, 3rd of May united in heart and mind for the healing of our world from the coronavirus and of those who have been infected and are already sick.

I urge you all to also continue to pray our Prayer for an End to the Coronavirus Pandemic. We commend the couple, Cyril and Monica Ayeni, who has made the prayer into a song and hope that it would help people to pray better. Let us also not forget to pray the Prayer to St. Michael the Archangel for God’s intervention to free us from the evil of Coronavirus.

5. WHAT IS NEW NORMAL?: We cannot overemphasize the fact that what has been the new normal concerning liturgical celebrations in the last two months is in fact an aberration brought about by what could be described as a war situation. Mass on television and Spiritual Communion can never and will never replace Mass as a gathering of God’s People to offer the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross in a bloodless manner. What we have been doing is merely an effort to stay alive and healthy so that we can remain alive to go back to our normal gathering as God’s People to worship and praise the Lord. We have started to engage the relevant authorities in our state to discuss how we can gradually go back to our normal ways of worship and at the same time remain safe and healthy.

Let me state clearly that we are not out of the woods yet because the rate of new infections detected has continued to rise, the facilities available to take care of those infected are beginning to get stretched out just as the health workers are also under more strain than before now. So we cannot afford to relax our vigilance especially with regards to taking the required precautions: washing of hands regularly, keeping a physical distance of two meters from one another, wearing of face masks in public, resisting the urge to touch
our faces and staying at home to reduce contact with crowds of people. The more we are able to take the precautions seriously, the more quickly we can defeat the virus and its threat to mankind and get back to normalcy again.

6. CARE OF THE POOR: Let me now use this opportunity to commend the faithful of our Archdiocese for the care and support given to the less privileged among us; the poor and the needy. We commend the Parishes and their priests for efforts that were made to provide food items for those in need. We thank all those who made generous contributions to ensure that the Church in our Archdiocese could fulfill her duties towards the poor and the needy especially with the lockdown and its attendant hardships.

We are grateful also to all those who responded to the appeal of the Archbishop. By your generosity, we were able to support Parishes twice, in cash and food items, to the tune of about #25,000,000: 00 (Twenty-five million naira). The contributions to the Archbishop’s appeal received responses from donors who made donations that range between one thousand naira and ten million naira. Each one has given his and her own widow’s mite. May the Lord reward you in full measure, now in this world and in the world to come.

7. LIVE TRANSMISSION OF MASSES: The liturgical celebrations for weekdays and Sundays shall continue to be transmitted live on Lumen Christi Television Network and also on DSTV Channel 198 on Sundays only.

We continue to express our gratitude to the Founder of Lumen Christi, Prince Soji Olagunju, the Management and staff for the good work that they are doing in transmitting Mass Live and daily from our Cathedral since the present problems of COVID-19 disrupted the way we celebrate normally. We also thank Mr. John Ugbe, the CEO of Multichoice, Nigeria as well as the Management and staff of the Company for bringing the excellent services of DSTV to use for live transmission of the Paschal Triduum, the Easter Sunday and all Sundays till now. We are truly grateful to them for making their services available pro bono. We commend also the Administrator of the Cathedral, his Assistant, OLA sisters of St. Mary’s, Broad Street and the choristers who have made the Live transmission worth the while of worshippers in their homes. May God bless you all.

8. PASTORAL PRESENCE TO THE FAITHFUL: We would also like to acknowledge the efforts of the priests who have found ways and means of keeping the line of communication with their parishioners open in these past weeks that we have not had communal celebrations
of the Liturgy. Many parishes have been live-streaming Masses for the benefit of their parishioners where possible. May God bless you as we urge you not to rest on your oars.

Some of our parishes have been barely able to survive, especially in terms of fulfilling their obligations of payment of salaries to their staff because they have not had income into their purses. Of course, it is the same with most self-employed parishioners in particular. However, we urge those who are able, to use the means of making contributions to the parish accounts to do so through the means that have always been published in your Parish bulletins. Or else place a call through to the Parish Priest for information on how to do it. Remember, the obligation to contribute to the support of the Church remains.

9. ANNOUNCEMENTS:

a. POSTPONEMENT OF MEETINGS: The meeting of the College of Consultors will not hold in the Chancery as scheduled. We shall hopefully hold it online using the ZOOM App. on May 22nd 2020. More information will be given as we approach the day.

b. 2020 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE N.C.D.P.A: The 2020 Annual General Meeting of the Nigeria Catholic Diocesan Priests’ Association (NCDPA) will be hosted by the Lagos Ecclesiastical Province, with Lagos Archdiocese as the venue. The date of the event is being reviewed due to the Corona Virus pandemic. For further inquiries, you may contact Rev. Fr. Stephen Akinsowon on 08038688853.

c. ARCHDIOCESAN YOUTH DAY (AYD) 2020/35TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION: The earlier schedule of April 26th, 2020 has had to be reviewed in line with the present coronavirus pandemic. New dates will be announced later.

d. CHILDREN’S DAY CELEBRATION: Given the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the necessitated Social Distancing in Lagos State and around the country, our annual Children’s day Celebration in the parishes slated for 31th May, 2020 will not hold. If, however, the situation improves, we would be informed accordingly.

e. MATER ECCLESIAE MONASTERY:
   Monthly Retreat: Mater Ecclesiae Monastery, Sangotedo, Lagos organises a day of spiritual retreat for young girls from 15 years and above for the purpose of discerning their vocation.
The retreat is scheduled to hold on the first Saturday of every month. **Time: 9:00 am – 4.00 pm.** Venue: Mater Ecclesia Monastery, Sangotedo, Lekki, Lagos.

**Mater Ecclesiae Retreat Center:** Mater Ecclesiae Retreat Center is officially open to everyone for personal and Group Retreats. Time for Public Adoration to the Most Holy Sacrament is from Mondays to Saturdays 9:00am to 8:30pm; on Sundays after 9:00am Mass to 12:15pm; and from 3:30pm to 5:00pm. Also, you can visit the Book Centre. For more inquiries, call 09085648168.

**10. PRIESTLY ORDINATION ANNIVERSARIES:** We congratulate, rejoice with and request your prayers for Rev. Frs. Eduke Godwin, Garber Leo, Monye Joseph, Njugi A. Gichuki, Anthony K. Odoh, Josh Nunez, Leonard U. Ogbanufe, Marc Nkulu SMA, Anthony Babafemi Ogunsanya, Agapitus Tobeckhuw Okoye, and Elobuik A. Asogwa, as they mark their Sacerdotal Ordination anniversaries this month. May God grant them lasting joy and the grace of final perseverance. *Ad multos annos!!*

**11. BEREAVEMENTS:** With deep sympathy, we announce the death of **Late Mr. Brendan Joseph Omoegbele Okodua**, a younger brother to Very Rev. Msgr. Bernard Okodua. We also announce the death of **Late Mrs. Florence Chude**, the mother of Sr. Priscilla Chude OLA. We hereby announce also the death of **Late Mrs. Florence Dada Anyansi**, the mother of Rev. Fr. Paul Anyansi. She will be buried on Friday, 8th of May 2020 after Mass at the Holy Cross Cathedral, Lagos. We commiserate with the Okodua, Chude and Anyansi families as we ask God to console them in this moment of grief. We urge all priests to celebrate Masses for the repose of the souls of the departed and the consolation of the families. *Eternal rest grant unto them O Lord. May they rest in peace.* Amen.

Signed

+Alfred Adewale Martins

Archbishop, Metropolitan See of Lagos