

THE EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE OF MALAWI



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OUR REF:

YOUR REF:

16th April 2020

To: The Clergy, the Religious and the Laity

RE: **ECM DIRECTIVES FOR THE LOCKDOWN PERIOD**

Easter Greetings to you all!

The State President of the Republic of Malawi declared a 21 Day lockdown which will initially be effective at midnight on Saturday, 18th April 2020 and it will end on Saturday 9th May 2020 at midnight. The lockdown may be extended beyond 9th May 2020 as circumstances warrant.

Following this declaration, we the Catholic Bishops of the Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM) would like to give the following directives which will be followed during the entire period of the lockdown:

1. All public Church gatherings and communal liturgical celebrations are temporarily suspended for the entire period of the lockdown – from midnight of Saturday, 18th April 2020 to midnight of 9th May 2020.
2. In the meantime, all Christians should pray in their homes every day. On Sundays, the Order of Prayers where there is No Mass found in *Chitsime* and the Missal should be used. To compliment this, Catholic media houses namely, *TV Luntha*, *Radio Maria Malawi*, *Radio Alinafe*, *Radio Tigabane* and *Radio Tuntufye* should broadcast the Eucharistic celebration which Christians will follow at designated times of the day.
3. Priests should celebrate Mass daily in their Parish Church or Community chapel in order to pray for the intentions of the people.
4. Catholic media houses, working in close collaboration with the Pastoral Commission, must not only disseminate information about coronavirus but must also prepare some pastoral resources to be aired through radio, television and social media platforms.
5. Additionally, Priests should offer their pastoral ministry using the innovations available in the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) as well as offer sacramental services in line with the guidelines issued by the Holy See in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the event that they are called upon to anoint the sick who are in danger of death, they must seek medical advice from competent health professionals and ensure that they protect themselves and others by using Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) i.e. certified clothing, masks and gloves etc.
6. Every initiative undertaken in Parishes by Parish Priests during this period of the lockdown should be done in consultation with the Local Ordinary.

Vision: Family of God filled with the Holy Spirit living in Harmony, Peace and Solidarity

All official correspondence to be addressed to the Secretary General

7. All material/financial resources that Parishes/Institutions have, should be used properly and sparingly.
8. Major seminarians, as much as possible, should be assigned to different parishes and not their homes, where they will stay waiting for the re-opening of school.
9. All Arch/Diocesan offices will be closed during the lockdown. Any urgent matters should be referred to those responsible through telephone or any other electronic means.
10. Essential workers in Parishes and Institutions, for example watchmen, will continue observing the normal working hours.
11. Parish and Institutions should make every effort to find ways to support themselves materially and financially.
12. The Clergy and the Catholic faithful should continue to strictly adhere to the Health and Pastoral Guidelines earlier issued by the Conference and Ministry of Health i.e. washing hands with soap regularly and thoroughly, avoiding physical greeting and contact, observing social distance etc.
13. The above directives are subject to minor modifications by Local Ordinaries to suit specific needs and local situations.

Let us unite in prayer, even when we are practically not able to meet as a liturgical assembly in our Lay Organization, Small Christian Community (SCC), Out-Station or Parish. Let us give heed to the exhortation of St. Paul when he says: “Pray without ceasing” (*Ephesians 6:18*).

We sincerely thank you in anticipation for your kind understanding and usual cooperation during this difficult time.

Most Reverend Thomas Msusa
Right Reverend Martin Mtumbuka
Most Reverend Tarsizio Ziyaye
Right Reverend Peter Musikuwa
Right Reverend Montfort Stima
Right Reverend George Tambala
Right Reverend John Ryan
Very Reverend John Chithonje

Chairman and Archbishop of Blantyre
Vice-Chairman and Bishop of Karonga
Archbishop of Lilongwe
Bishop of Chikwawa
Bishop of Mangochi
Bishop of Zomba
Bishop of Mzuzu
Administrator of Dedza