

THE EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE OF MALAWI



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GUIDELINES FOR THE PREVENTION OF THE SPREAD OF CORONAVIRUS IN ARCHDIOCESES AND DIOCESES UNDER THE EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE OF MALAWI

In the wake of the outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19) in many parts of the world, the Episcopal Conference of Malawi enacts the following precautionary measures in regard to the celebration of the Holy Mass, other Liturgical services and as general guidelines. These are only temporary measures until the situation stabilizes:

1. That priests should give the Catholic faithful messages of hope. Messages on coronavirus must not create panic and despair.
2. That the Catholic faithful should be encouraged to wash their hands before entering the Churches or other places of worship. Similarly, holy water fonts should be drained. Instead, holy water should be kept at the Sacristy where the faithful can collect for their individual use.
3. That the Catholic faithful should avoid squeezing one another as we sit in pews.
4. That there should be no sign of peace during Mass i.e. handshake, hug or any bodily contact.
5. That the Catholic faithful should line up when receiving Holy Communion not kneeling in order to ensure proper distance between them.
6. That reception of the Eucharist should be done *in the hand* not *on the tongue*.
7. That where concelebration takes place, concelebrants should communicate by intinction and only the main celebrant or any other priest should consume the blood of Christ last.
8. That ministers should thoroughly wash hands with sanitizers before and after distribution of the Eucharist and they should do it with care.
9. That offertory gifts (money) should be handled with gloves and when counting money it is necessary to use mouth masks wherever possible.
10. That experts in medical field should be invited to give talks in Churches and schools on coronavirus. Efforts should be made to have a technical team of doctors that will analyze the situation and give updates and advice to the Church.
11. That when administering the Sacraments that involve touching, the minister should thoroughly clean hands before and after the administration.
12. That Commissions working with foreign nationals coming from destinations where cases of coronavirus have been identified should first seek guidance and information from Catholic Secretariat or any relevant Government ministry before inviting them into the country. The same applies to material donations such as second hand clothes – *kaunjika* coming from abroad.
13. That when coughing and sneezing care should be taken to cover one's mouth.

14. That institutions within the Church should be encouraged to clean ablution blocks with disinfectants.
15. That Commissions (i.e. Pastoral, Health, Communication etc.) should come up with messages on coronavirus by using posters which will be displayed at Church entrances and other places where people congregate.
16. That National Bible Team should prepare biblical reflections on coronavirus which will be used in Small Christian Communities.
17. That during public celebrations, public address systems should be used, wherever possible, to enable many Catholic faithful follow the Mass from outside the Church.
18. That priests should celebrate open air Masses, wherever possible, in order to avoid overcrowding in the Church.
19. That those parishes where it is feasible to have pre-festive Masses (vigil) on Saturday evening should do so to prevent overcrowding on Sunday.
20. That priests should be careful when administering all other Sacraments such as Baptism, Confirmation, Reconciliation and more especially Anointing of the sick. They should wash hands before and after administering the Sacraments.
21. That health workers in all Catholic facilities should conduct necessary preventive measures by checking possible signs of coronavirus in the patients who seek medical attention in order to help protect health workers.
22. That Catholic Health facilities should create space as isolation wards for any identified cases of coronavirus.
23. That health workers should avoid overcrowding by guardians in health facilities where patients are admitted.
24. That Head Teachers of Catholic schools should introduce measures that adhere to hygiene and sanitation by all teachers, pupils and students.
25. In the event that many cases of coronavirus have been identified in some areas, the obligation to attend Mass shall be suspended. In addition, workplaces, such as ECM Secretariat, Diocesan Curia offices, etc. where cases of coronavirus have been identified shall remain closed until the situation gets under control.
26. That during this period, the Conference directs that there be reduction in frequency of bringing people together for meetings. Wherever possible, let them discuss issues via Internet or other facilities.
27. That the Catholic faithful should be encouraged to get daily updates on coronavirus through credible news channels and websites i.e. www.who.int.
28. That the Catholic faithful should be encouraged to pray for an end to this challenging situation throughout the world and pray for those who are afflicted with the coronavirus.

Signed on: 13th March 2020



+Most Reverend Thomas Luke Msusa
PRESIDENT – EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE OF MALAWI