

LET US BE A BEACON OF HOPE TO ONE ANOTHER

Our dear Faithful and all people of good will, especially those who have joined us through the Media in this Eucharistic celebration, I bring you the greetings and message of good will from the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops.

As you are aware, our Country continues to grapple with the ravaging effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has been aggravated in the recent past by the floods that continue to wreak havoc in various Counties. Despite these challenges, we wish to assure you that the Risen Lord is with us; He is here to strengthen us and to give us hope, and hence we should not be afraid. Indeed, the Risen Lord invites us to be instruments of hope, and to be beacons of hope to one another in these challenging times.

The Risen Lord invites us to mourn with the families that have experienced the loss of their loved ones through the ongoing floods and landslides, and also to mourn with those who have lost their loved ones to COVID-19 disease or through other causes. The Risen Lord continues to invite us to stand with those who may have lost their means of livelihoods, those who are hungry, and those on the verge of losing hope.

The Holy Father, Pope Francis, has declared May 14th 2020 a day of Prayer and Fasting and Works of Charity, to implore God to help humanity overcome the coronavirus pandemic. We invite all of you to join hands and hearts on this day with the Pope and the whole Church as we raise our voice to God and as we engage in works of charity towards our neighbors.

As Catholic Bishops, we continue to appreciate the efforts of those in the Church, in Government, in Non-Governmental organizations and individuals of good will on the forefront in combating the challenges that we face. In particular, we laud the efforts of health-workers in hospitals and dispensaries, and those working in quarantine and isolation facilities; we laud the efforts of our security personnel and volunteers at all levels. We appreciate the workers in Mission Hospitals attending to many patients from all walks of life. May God bless you for your selflessness and dedication.

As the Bishop in-charge of Education in the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops, I wish to take this opportunity to assure our young people from various Institutions of learning that the Risen Lord is still with us, that He

cares for us. In particular, I wish to remind parents that their homes are the first schools; indeed, it is at home that the earliest lessons in life are planted and nurtured; it is at home that virtues are cultivated; it is at home that valuable lessons about the value and dignity of work are learned; it is at home that family values that help us become responsible citizens are inculcated. Our children are in their primordial school, the real School.

As families, we should, therefore, take the opportunity to strengthen family bonds, to pray together, reflect, share and have fun together. Since a number of children are now spending countless number of hours online, parents now more than ever before have a responsibility of training their children to be responsible digital citizens. For the many families who are not able to access e-learning materials, TVs or Radio, this time can be spent to learn through story-telling and reading, completing assignments and revising school work. As families, we can make the experience of our children during this extended stay at home positively memorable!

As your Shepherds, we understand the anxiety that parents, especially those with candidates, may have regarding their children's prolonged absence from School. Indeed, we would like our children to go back to School at the earliest opportunity. But dear parents, let us not forget that our children's health and safety comes first. Let us wait for directives from those managing the situation and only take our children to School when it will be safe for them and for the academic and support staff in our Institutions.

As you are aware, there are a number of people who have been cured of the COVID-19. We appeal to all of us not to stigmatize them and welcome them to our families and communities. We also appeal to you to accept being tested because it is for your wellbeing. Let us also support those among us in need of food, clothing and even shelter.

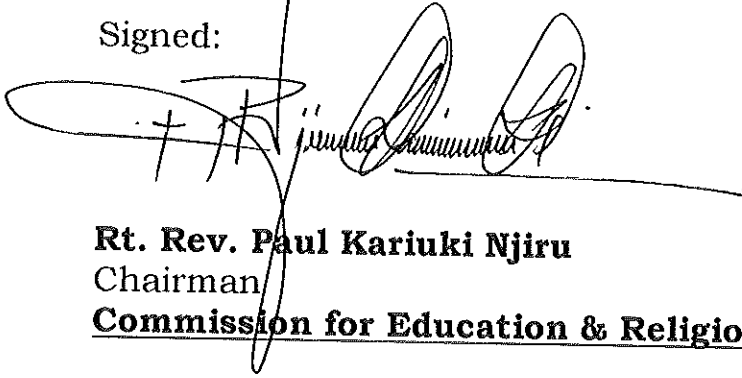
We continue to urge all of us to continue observing the guidelines given to us by the Ministry of Health, such as frequent handwashing, sanitizing, observing social distancing, wearing of face masks and staying at home. As we all know, the more we observe these measures, the more effective our fight against the pandemic will be and the sooner we are likely to go back to normalcy.

Let us all be true patriots! Let us come together for unity of purpose and we will defeat COVID-19 together!

I wish to conclude with the following encouraging verse from St. Paul in 2 Corinthians 4: 8-9, where St. Paul assures us: "We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; struck down, but not destroyed."

God bless you all! God bless Kenya!

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rt. Rev. Paul Kariuki Njiru". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "P" and "K".

Rt. Rev. Paul Kariuki Njiru
Chairman

Commission for Education & Religious Education

May 10, 2020