

A CALL FOR SOLIDARITY, UNITY AND HOPE DURING TIME OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Our dear Christians and people of good-will, on behalf of the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops, I bring you greetings and message of good-will during these trying moments of Covid-19 pandemic.

We appreciate the efforts being made by the Government to contain the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic, including sensitization of the populations on preventive and response measures. We owe much gratitude to the health workers who are risking their own lives to care for and treat those who have contracted the disease. We believe that the spread of the virus would have been worse without your effort and commitment. We pray that God keeps you safe and well at all times.

As we continue to combat Covid-19, we are concerned about its impact on vulnerable populations including refugees, internally displaced persons, people on the move such as truck drivers, pastoralists, persons living on the streets, and people with mental illness.

The truck drivers contribute immensely to the economic health of our Country. The continual rise of numbers of truck drivers contracting Covid-19 indicates a gap in addressing their safety and health; therefore, it is a matter of great concern to all of us. We appeal to the Government to urgently address the challenges the truck drivers are facing in order to curb the rising spread of Covid-19.

The refugees and internally displaced people who reside in densely populated camps face risk of contracting Corona-virus. We appreciate the various organizations and groups that have been offering support to refugees and internally displaced people in the camps. We, however, appeal that more deliberate mitigation measures are urgently implemented to protect these vulnerable groups.

Although reported cases of Covid-19 among the pastoralist communities (for example in Murulat County) are low, there is need for sensitization of the communities on Covid-19 risk factors and preventative measures. We encourage both the National and County Governments to continually raise awareness on the pandemic in these communities.

The people living on the streets in the towns and those suffering from mental illness are in a more precarious situation with high risk of contracting, spreading and being overwhelmed by Covid-19. We appreciate that many philanthropists support them with food. However, other aspects of their well-being and health-care need attention, especially during this time of Covid-19. We call upon National and County Governments and people of good-will to support them in all ways possible.

We are also aware of violence (particularly gender-based violence) in families and neighborhoods and the impact on the mental health of the victims, especially the children and women. We appeal to the families facing challenges to exercise restraint and embrace virtues of patience, dialogue, forgiveness and peace-building during this extra-ordinary time. For the victims of the violence, we appeal to them and their care-givers to speak out and seek for help from the religious leaders, hospitals and counsellors. We wish to remind ourselves that, our unity, solidarity and a sense of hope are key to defeating Covid-19.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate the Catholic Bishops' appreciation for all those who are at the forefront in combating the Covid-19. I encourage you all with the following words from the Holy Scripture: *"Let us hold on firmly to the hope we profess, because we can trust God to keep His promise"* (Hebrews 10:23). I also wish to thank the Media Houses, particularly KBC, Capuchin TV and TV47 that are transmitting live our Sunday Masses from this Basilica. Our gratitude also goes to our sign language interpreter (Rev. Fr. Joseph) and Makadara Parish Choir from Makadara Deanery for beautifully animating the Holy Mass.

May God bless you all, May God bless our Nation.

By:

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Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops (KCCB)

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