



CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF TIKOLOHO E KATHOLIKE EA ISIFUNDABHISHOBHI SASE JOHANNESBURG

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17 March, 2020

Dear Monsignor and Rev. Father,

WORSHIP IN THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Background

In order to curb the spread of COVID-19, the President of the Republic announced on Sunday, 15th March that gatherings of more than a 100 people are not allowed. This order has a direct bearing on church celebrations.

- **Chrism Mass**
There will be no public celebration of Chrism Mass. Instead, Mass of the Oils will be celebrated by the Bishops and members of the Council of Priests. Oils will be available for collection
- **Triduum**
Palm Sunday Procession, Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Vigil will not be celebrated publicly at all. It would be difficult to limit the Faithful to a 100 people. We encourage the Faithful to join their small Christian communities, zonal prayer groups, families etc. to follow the prayers and readings that are offered in their Missals. Those communities that have less than 100 members may celebrate publicly according to custom.
- Baptism, First Communion and Confirmation may be celebrated at the Priest's discretion provided that the participants include parents, sponsors and the candidates, and that the total number of the Faithful is not more than 100 people.
- **Easter Sunday Mass**
To be celebrated by not more than 100 persons.
- **Ordinary Sunday Masses**
May be celebrated at different hours. The numbers are to be limited to a 100. A priest may celebrate not more than 5 Masses on Sunday.
- **Weekday Masses** – not more than 100 people
This arrangement will remain in place for the duration of the state of disaster.

Parishioners are encouraged not to attend Mass because it will be difficult to limit them to 100 participants. They should rather arrange to do their prayers and readings at home.

- **Sodalities, Associations/Organisations**
General meetings, celebrations etc. are suspended until further notice. The leadership can always arrange for a meeting of not more than a 100 members.

- **Parish Confirmations**

These may take place provided that the celebrations are for candidates, sponsors and families only, and that they are not more than a 100.

- **Funerals:** - 100 participants only.
- **Marriages:** - 100 participants only.

- **Hygiene:** Every parish church should have sanitizers installed.

- **Collections:** Those who are responsible for counting money are advised to use gloves. We suggest that collections be deposited into a collection box placed in the front of the church.

- No new applications for work permits from the affected countries will be considered until further notice

- **Monthly Pilgrimage to Regina Mundi** - Suspended until further notice.

Implications of Suspending Masses

- There will be those among the Faithful who will argue that Sunday is the “Day of the Lord” and therefore that they have a religious obligation to attend Mass on Sunday.
- Sunday Masses or Masses of more than a 100 persons are forbidden in order to avoid the spread of the Corona virus.

Reduction of Collections

The suspension of Masses will inevitably have a serious negative impact on the income of parishes. Many parishes will struggle to pay for:

- Utilities
- Stipends
- Levy
- Lenten Appeal and other collections
- Debts

Individual cases should be discussed with the Chancery.

Conclusion

Catholics are also citizens of South Africa. The Government has made a call on all South Africans to become involved in the gallant effort to curb the spread of the Corona virus and to save lives.

“Lord when did we see you hungry or thirsty and did not minister to you?”

(Mt. 25.44).

We hereby dispense ALL the Catholics in the Archdiocese of Johannesburg from attending Mass during the entire period of this disaster.

Sincerely,

+ Buti Tlhagale
+Buti Tlhagale o.m.i.
Archbishop of Johannesburg

