



Catholic Archdiocese of Accra

3rd June 2020

To **Priests, Religious and Lay Faithful
of the Archdiocese of Accra**

Dearly Beloved,

RESUMPTION OF PUBLIC WORSHIP IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF ACCRA

Peace be with you.

Introduction

On Sunday, 31st May 2020, the President of the Republic announced the easing of some of the imposed restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. He indicated that Church services could resume on Sunday, 7th June 2020 with a congregation of 25% in attendance with a maximum of hundred (100) congregants, the registering of names and contact details of worshippers at any given service, among others. As a follow-up to this announcement, the Priests' Council met on Monday 1st June to discuss the implications of these measures on our pastoral work. This meeting was enriched by a document submitted by the Catholic Health Professionals' Guild. I thank our Health Professionals whose suggestions have largely been adopted in writing this letter.

I wish to emphasize from the outset that even though churches are permitted to congregate with not more than hundred (100) people from Sunday 7th June 2020, no parish or church in the Archdiocese is obliged to implement this unless the requisite logistics that guarantee a safe opening and operation have been put in place. In deciding on this, Parish Priests are to work with their Parish Councils bearing in mind that the safety and well-being of parishioners override all other considerations.

Matters Needing Immediate Attention

1. Fumigation and Disinfection of Churches

Pastors together with their Parish Councils are to ensure that churches and their surroundings are fumigated. This exercise is to be done before any church is opened for public use. We are also required to disinfect the churches after each use.

2. Parish COVID-19 Team

Each parish / church is to immediately establish a COVID-19 Team to guide, advice and accompany parishioners throughout the pandemic period. The Team should comprise medical experts and persons with some technical knowledge to help in handling the pandemic. They are to work with the Parish Priest to ensure adherence to the safety measures.

General Considerations

In addition to implementing Government's directives on health and safety protocols such as provision of hand-washing facilities, hand sanitizers, digital thermometers, observing social distancing, wearing of face-masks, etc. the following are also to be observed:

- I) Parishioners who assist in counting Collections shall take necessary precautions including wearing of gloves, face masks and using sanitizers as and when required.
- II) Designated entrances and exits should be marked where feasible.
- III) Observe social distancing measures at times for offertory, collection, Communion and other activities that may involve physical contact and also in the seating arrangements by marking pews.
- IV) Baptisms, marriages, burial Masses and other Church gatherings must be performed following current public health norms regarding social distancing and hygiene.
- V) For Sunday Masses, there will be one-hour duration between one Mass and the other to allow the disinfection of pews and chairs before the next Mass. Each Mass is to last not more than an hour.
- VI) Sunday School/Children Services are suspended during this period.

Targeted Recommendations

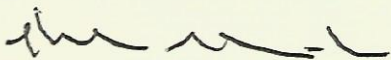
- I) In the case of concelebration, the main celebrant uses the principal chalice. Other chalices should be provided for concelebrating priests who will communicate by intinction.
- II) There shall be a maximum of five choristers and two altar servers, if need be, at Mass.
- III) Face masks shall be used by all in the church at all times.
- IV) Priests shall wash their hands or use sanitizers before going to distribute Holy Communion. Communion for the faithful shall be received only in the hand.
- V) Liturgical robes for choristers, lectors, ushers and altar servers are not to be used during this time.
- VI) Microphones should be disinfected after each use.

Conclusion

For pastoral reasons, I grant permission for Priests to offer anticipatory Masses on Saturday evenings where needed. Also, each Priest has my permission to celebrate two Masses on Weekdays and three Masses on Sundays (cf. Canon 905). Masses can be celebrated concurrently in the church, at the grotto or in the parish hall at any given time. I entreat Pastors to ensure that places outside the church where the Eucharist will be celebrated has the proper decorum and reverence.

Lastly, I encourage parishes to continue with the online streaming of Holy Masses and Catechesis for the home-bound and those who, for some other reasons, are unable to congregate physically. In addition, the telecasting of Holy Masses will continue.

While thanking you for your sustained efforts in the past months during this pandemic, I encourage you to earnestly pray for the end to the COVID-19 pandemic so that we return to our regular liturgical life. May Mary, the Mother of the afflicted, intercede for us.



Most Rev. John Bonaventure Kwofie
Metropolitan Archbishop of Accra and
Apostolic Administrator of Sekondi-Takoradi Diocese

