

# ARCHDIOCESE OF AGAÑA

CHANCERY OFFICE

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Protocol No. 2020-057

## **PASTORAL LETTER IN RESPONSE TO THE DECLARATION OF A PUBLIC HEALTH STATE OF EMERGENCY AGAINST THE SPREAD OF COVID-19**

**Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ**

Peace be with you!

As Guam and the world continues to contend with the growing threat of COVID-19, I ask all people to be steadfast in prayer and have relentless trust in God. He is all knowing, all powerful and unceasing in His love for us.

As you are aware, on March 14, 2020 Governor Lou Leon Guerrero declared a Public Health Emergency under the laws of Guam as COVID-19 moves throughout the globe. As the Governor pointed out, as each day passes it become more evident that the government alone cannot contain this virus. This is an unprecedented threat of worldwide concern. We must work together to overcome it.

I write to you now out of care and concern not only for your spiritual well-being but for your physical health and wellness. I understand that the following instructions may be difficult to hear, but I encourage us all to continue to hold fast to prayer and penance during this Lenten Season.

I announce that in conjunction with the declaration of emergency and as part of our precautionary measures to stop and avert the further spread of COVID-19 **all Sunday and weekday public Masses (as well as all other parish events) will be suspended in the Archdiocese of Agaña, effective Tuesday March 17 until Saturday, April 18, 2020.**

The celebration of the Holy Eucharist is the source and summit of our Catholic Faith, through which we encounter and enter into sacred Communion with the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ. Therefore, my decision to temporarily suspend this practice was not taken lightly. Fixing our eyes on Jesus Christ, we take to heart in a very real way the greatest commandment, to love one another, which in this unprecedented moment of our world's history is the prudent attention to the local, federal government and health officials.

I reiterate the words of St. Paul in my earlier message to you, “rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer.” – Romans 12:12. To help you in this time I have communicated to your pastors regarding more details to direct the life of the parish during this time. If you have any questions, then please contact your parish offices. Both emails and phone numbers of all parishes can be found on our archdiocesan website <https://www.archagana.org/>.

Be assured that our priests will be offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass each day in private, that is, alone or with only one or two servers so as to continue to draw upon, and direct the graces contained therein. I encourage everyone to watch and participate in the Mass through radio, KOLG 90.9 FM and via

TV {KUAM}, as well as social media platforms such as Facebook Live. These links along with other resources and prayers during this time are also provided on our archdiocesan website. As you participate in Mass in this way you and your family are encouraged to pray the "Act of Spiritual Communion Prayer:"

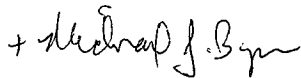
*My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament. I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself to You. Never permit me to be separated from You. Amen.*

I am entrusting to our priests the prudential discretion of celebrating baptisms, weddings and funerals. Gatherings are not to exceed 50 people in attendance. This directive is given by the local government so that the number of cases of those infected with COVID-19 does not spike. Holy Communion, except as Viaticum, will not be distributed to the faithful.

Also, at the discretion of pastors, churches may be open for private prayer so that you can approach Our Lord who is fully present in the Tabernacle. Please also receive direction from the pastor (or the one whom he designates) as to the availability of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Please contact your parishes directly for more information.

I take this opportunity to request that you enter into the experience of this Lenten Season, to fast and to pray. Pray particularly for those individuals who are on the front lines of the response to this virus, the doctors, medics, researchers, and government leaders tasked with the noble work of keeping our island and communities safe. I ask that you also pray for one another, especially our manamko and those who we are finding are particularly susceptible to this strain of virus. I humbly ask that you keep in prayer all those who have passed. We are a Church universal and where one part of the body suffers, we all suffer. May the Lord and Santa Marian Kamalen be with them and comfort their families. It is possible that during a time such as this we might forget that God is with us, even treat one another with a lack of charity. Do not forget the love of Christ for each of us, and allow that to inform your interactions with those around you. May God continue to be with us and that Santa Marian Kamalen may bless us and give us strength.

I remain in Christ,



Archbishop Michael J. Byrnes, S.T.D.  
Archbishop of Agana

March 16, 2020