



ZCBC STATEMENT ON COVID-19
17 March 2020

Introduction:

In the wake of the global outbreak of Covid-19, we wish to add our voice to the many other voices, including WHO, our own Government and, in particular, the President and Ministry of Health, on the pandemic. Prevention is better than cure. ZCBC fully supports the various calls to take serious and drastic measures to prevent the spread of Corona Virus in the country, whose urgency cannot be over-emphasized. At present, prevention proves to be a fundamental weapon to fight the virus and it is even more essential in our country where hospital structures are not fully-equipped to support the influx of a great number of seriously ill people.

1. Attendance of Sunday Masses/Services

a) The Sunday obligation to attend Mass for the elderly, children, the sick and the vulnerable is lifted until further notice. Vulnerable faithful should not feel guilty for failing to attend Sunday Mass.

b) Where possible, the vulnerable faithful are encouraged to follow live streaming of Mass through various media of social communications.

The current situation offers an opportunity for us to renew our appreciation of the value of Prayer at Home and in private – this has as we know a particular relevance in Lent where we are encouraged “when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret, will reward you.” (Matt 6: 6) We are encouraged to read our Bibles and to hold Services of the Word; we are able to be in “spiritual communion” with our Lord in the Eucharist and in our Neighbour.

2. General Guidelines

The Catholic Church is addressing and dealing with the following concerns in its public worship and liturgical services:

- Reception of the Precious Blood by Concelebrants and the Congregation has been suspended;
- Reception of Holy Communion must only be on the hand, not on the tongue;
- Sign of peace during the Holy Mass has been suspended;
- Holy Water fonts at the entrance of the Church should be drained;
- Safe measures must be upheld in visiting and anointing of the sick.
- All Clergy, including extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should practise good hygiene by washing their hands both before and after liturgical services

□ All faithful are encouraged to wash their hands with soap or use hand sanitizers as frequently as possible.

3. Celebration of Sacraments:

□ Care and prudence should be taken in administering, celebrating and attending the Sacraments of Baptism, First Holy Communion, Confirmation, Holy Matrimony and Holy Orders.

□ Safer measures are to be taken in administering the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. Individual confessions are not to be done in the confessional box but in an open space that, while preserving privacy, allows for the recommended distance in a time of corona virus.

Necessary permission is granted for general absolution during a penitential service for the duration of the pandemic.

All blessings by placing of hands must be suspended.

4. Easter Celebrations

Nearer the time, we will once again assess the situation, with the help of health experts to propose safe alternatives for the Triduum Rituals, for example, the washing of the feet, Veneration of the Cross on Good Friday, Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday night, etc.

Conclusion:

Any matters and situations not covered by these guidelines are left at the discretion of the Parish Priest and the Parish Council, always keeping in mind the safety and the well being of the community. Let us promote the common good. Let us familiarize ourselves with the public education on the coronavirus issued by various Health Agencies and take the necessary precautionary measures. We encourage all faith communities to share widely the WHO guidelines on how to prevent the spread of COVID-19. We implore you to adhere to the information and warning by the Ministry of Health and WHO on regular basis.

Let us continue to unite and pray fervently for a speedy end to this pandemic, for the recovery of those infected and for the repose of the souls of those who have died as a result of this pandemic.

God Bless You All

+**Robert C. Ndlovu, Archbishop of Harare**

(ZCBC President)

+**Alex Thomas, Archbishop of Bulawayo**

(ZCBC Vice President)

+**Paul Horan, Bishop of Mutare**

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+**Michael D. Bhasera, Bishop of Masvingo & Apostolic Administrator of Gweru**

+**Albert Serrano, Bishop of Hwange**

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