



ZCBC STATEMENT ON CHURCH GATHERINGS

THE JOY OF COMING TOGETHER AGAIN FOR PUBLIC WORSHIP

Lk 1:43 "And why am I so honoured, that the Mother of my Lord should visit me?"

12 June 2020

To: The Clergy, the Religious and the Laity

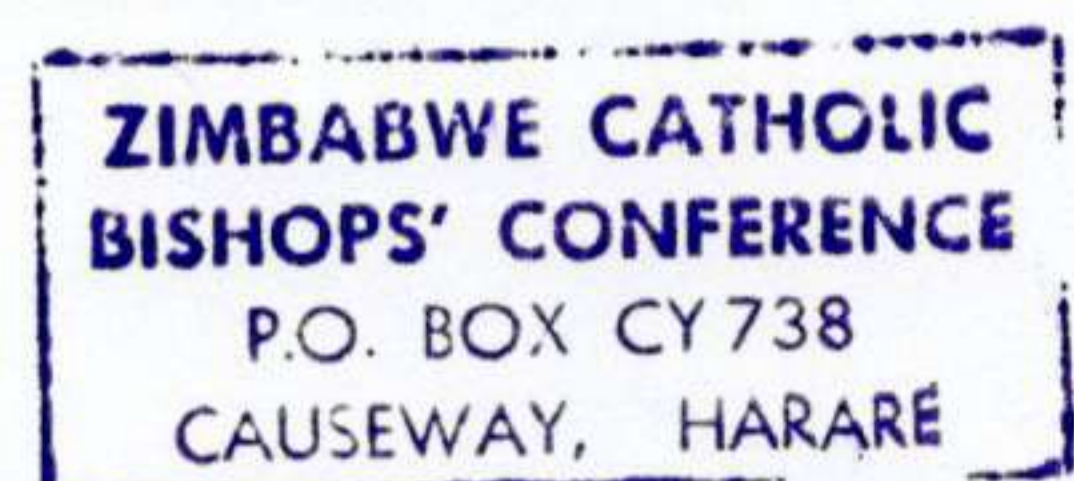
On Thursday 11 June 2020 His Excellency, President E. D. Mnangagwa, announced the easing of restrictions on Church gatherings as the nation adapts to living in the Covid-19 environment. ZCBC concurs. However, as we celebrate, we need to be ever conscious of the threat of Covid-19 and take all the necessary precautions, as agreed with the local Parish Council, medical personnel, Ministry of Health and WHO. We recommend as follows:

1. That all Church gatherings and communal liturgical celebrations should resume forthwith in Churches and Small Christian Communities.
2. During such gatherings, the Presidential Decree restricted congregants to not more than 50 while strictly observing social distance. In Churches where social distancing may not be possible, Catholic faithful must be encouraged to congregate in an open space.
3. That Guidelines in Public Health issued by the Ministry of Health must be strictly adhered to during all Church gatherings and funeral functions, including the wearing of masks.
4. That with reference to no. 3 above, priests, religious and ushers must specifically ensure that the faithful strictly follow basic rules of hygiene namely, washing hands with soap regularly and thoroughly, avoiding physical greeting and contact, observing social distancing of one metre from others; avoiding to touch eyes, nose and mouth; covering mouth and nose with a bent elbow or tissue when coughing or sneezing and avoiding spitting in public.
5. That the ZCBC Guidelines on the celebration of Sacraments for the Prevention of the spread of coronavirus issued previously continue to remain in force.
6. That pastoral activities which by their nature bring together large numbers of people such as ordinations, confirmations etc., should be suspended or postponed until the situation improves. But in the event that an ordination ceremony takes place Presidential Decree on restricting congregants to not more than 50 should be strictly followed while observing social distance.

7. In the event that priests are called upon to administer Sacraments such as anointing of the sick to people in danger of death, they must seek medical advice from competent health professionals and ensure that they protect themselves and others by using Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) i.e. certified clothing, masks and gloves etc.
8. That Guidelines in Public Health must be strictly observed not only when attending Churches and funerals but wherever one goes including public places such as markets, hospitals etc.
9. That the elderly priests and those with underlying medical conditions are not obliged to preside over public Holy Masses, conducting funerals or anointing the sick. Similarly, old people, all those with underlying medical problems and those beyond the limited number of 50 people are dispensed from Church attendance and funerals until the situation improves.
10. That priests and religious should consider all gatherings such as the Holy Mass, funeral functions etc. as occasions for conducting public awareness on the seriousness and dangers of COVID-19 and preventing further spread of coronavirus.
11. That Catholic media houses, working in close collaboration with the Pastoral Commission, should continue to broadcast live Holy Masses and other relevant pastoral programmes for the spiritual nourishment of the faithful who may be physically impeded in attending Holy Mass.
12. That until the situation normalizes it is a must that everyone should strictly adhere to precautionary measures at all times.
13. That Guidelines stipulated in this ZCBC Statement are not optional. Everyone is obliged to follow them.

With the pledge of our pastoral closeness and joint prayers through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, for the victims of COVID-19, we remain,

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| +Robert C. Ndlovu, Archbishop of Harare | (ZCBC President) |
| +Alex Thomas, Archbishop of Bulawayo | (ZCBC Vice President) |
| +Paul Horan, Bishop of Mutare | (ZCBC Secretary/Treasurer) |
| +Michael D. Bhasera, Bishop of Masvingo and Apostolic Administrator of Gweru | |
| +Albert Serrano, Bishop of Hwange | |
| +Rudolf Nyandoro, Bishop of Gokwe | |
| +Raymond Mupandasekwa, Bishop of Chinhoyi | |



Appendix: Quick Check:

If the Parish/Mission can afford and follow the laid down requirements you may go ahead and convene Church Gatherings:

- 1. A maximum of 50 members inclusive of the priests.**
- 2. A task team to be put in place in each place to supervise the adherence of regulations. Team members should be qualified in health matters.**
- 3. Proper signage with all information be placed in strategic places.**
- 4. All people to be sanitised at the gate with temperatures taken (where possible) and monitored. Anyone with a temperature of 37.5 degree Celsius and above should not be let in.**
- 5. A register of all people who enter the gate to be kept strictly with full names and contact numbers.**
- 6. All items inside the church such as switches, furniture, door handles should be sanitised.**
- 7. All pews to be sanitised immediately after each service.**
- 8. One meter distance between people with clear demarcations. No sharing of any items such as Bibles, microphones, hymn books, leaflets, offertory boxes, sign of peace etc.**
- 9. Everyone to put on proper masks at all times.**
- 10. Each service not to exceed one hour. Between the services there should be a time gap of at least 30 minutes.**
- 11. Toilets should be thoroughly sanitised and cleaned. Adequate tissues to be provided in each toilet. No crowding in and near the toilets. Hand washing facilities with running water to be provided.**
- 12. No physical meetings of groups such as parish councils, associations, catechumens etc. allowed.**
- 13. Entrance and exit of the church should not be crowded. One meter distance to be observed.**
- 14. Provide proper bins with lids at all points for the disposal of items such as tissues, masks etc.**
- 15. No consumption of food items within the church premises.**

