



The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Manila

121 Arzobispo Street, Intramuros

P.O. Box 132

Manila, Philippines

PASTORAL LETTER ON COVID 19

Jesus saw the vast crowd. His heart was moved with pity for them, and he cured their sick (Mt. 14:14).

Dear People of God, clergy, administrators of church institutions, and church leaders in the Archdiocese of Manila,

Since it was first discovered in December of last year, the corona virus now known as COVID 19 has rapidly spread all over the world. Doctors and scientists are still learning about its transmission and complications. We should not spread unnecessary panic and fear. Let our attitude be compassion and care for others. Thus we need to take precautionary measures in the spirit of charity for all. We also need to be prepared for any eventuality.

Hence, I encourage all to intensify our prayers to ask for Divine protection and intervention. Faith can avert evil. While we pray, let us also exercise good stewardship over our health. In the spirit of Lent let us keep a healthy lifestyle so that our bodies may be strong enough to resist infections. Thus eat healthy food, have enough rest, keep clean, get enough exercise and avoid unnecessary travels and gatherings of large crowds.

While we do the above, let us take the following precautions in our churches and institutions:

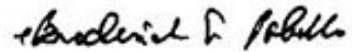
1. Suspend the practice of dipping of hands in the Holy Water Font or Stoup. Empty all Fonts and let the faithful be informed that such practice will be temporarily suspended. Holy water can be made available for people to take home or sprinkling of the Holy Water can be done before or after liturgical gatherings.
2. Let containers of 70% Ethyl Alcohol be located at various entrance doors accessible to the public in our church institutions.
3. Advise the faithful to stay home when they are sick with flu-like symptoms and cough. They should get medical attention for their good and the good of their family members. Signages may be posted to this effect in prominent places. They can sanctify the Lord's Day by praying in their homes and reading the Scriptures. TV masses are available for them to watch at the Quiapo Church Facebook and website as well as TV Maria. Radio Veritas also airs Masses regularly and other parishes have their own video streaming facilities. Priests and lay ministers who have flu-like symptoms should also refrain from serving. This is an act of charity that we can offer to the people.

4. Routinely clean with disinfectants the high touch areas, pews, benches, door knobs as well as microphone covers.
5. All should take care to observe cough etiquette (like covering their mouth with their sleeves or napkins which they should immediately dispose in safe places.) Frequent hand washing is to be promoted to all.
6. Remind all that we need not hold hands when praying the Lord's Prayer and when giving the sign of peace. For the time being, the beautiful Filipino sign of reverence in holding the hands of the priests and the elderly (the *Mano Po*) can be substituted by a slight bow with a smile or by a slight touch on the head for the giving of the blessing.
7. Until the virus is overcome all should refrain from the kissing and holding of statues and sacred images, and even the glass frames that protect them. Let barriers be installed so that people do not get near them to touch them.
8. Let ministers and priests thoroughly wash their hands before they serve. For the time being, Holy Communion is to be received by the faithful by hand.
9. Those parishioners who are weak or have non-communicable diseases like diabetes, cancer, etc. are encouraged to wear masks even during Holy Mass.
10. Churches and adoration chapels with air conditions and hardly any windows should be biomisted. Air Purifier perhaps may be of help but it will be very expensive and there is no clear evidence of its effectivity in large areas like churches. Open windows and doors after mass and shut off the air conditioning in order for the air, heat and sunlight to circulate.
11. The World Health Organization (WHO) confirms that the coronavirus may spread through money. Those who count the money must wear mask and use alcohol after counting. It is good that they be provided with latex gloves.
12. Let the parishes be prepared for the economic effects of the COVID 19 phenomenon. Worst case scenario would be the suspension of public gatherings. We need to save at this time of impending crisis. Let us make our church institutions resilient. At this time, let expenses be made only in what is essential in order to save for any eventualities. Let us suspend purchases on capital expenditures and make our programs frugal. What we can save, let us put in a Disaster Resiliency Fund. In this way, in case we have no collections, we may sustain the salaries of our employees maintain our religious institutions.

While we take the above precautions, let us take care of the sick in our families and communities. They are weak and vulnerable for infections. Let extra attention and care be given to them. Let us remember the words of Jesus: "I was sick and you take care of me." (Mt 25:36)

While we trust in the Lord and fall on our knees to beg for his mercy, let us also stand on our feet to act and wash our hands to keep ourselves fit to serve Him and His people. May Mary the Mother of the Sick and the Afflicted keep us under her protecting mantle.

Sincerely yours in the Lord,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Broderick S. Pabillo".

+ BRODERICK S. PABILLO, DD
Apostolic Administrator

9 March 2020