



Catholic Diocese of Umzimkulu

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In Service to the People of God
Ukusebenzela Abantu bakaNkulunkulu
W służbie Ludu Bożego

Dear Fathers, together with the Religious and All the Faithful of Umzimkulu Diocese

A demand for deeper Faith and Charity in time of pandemic of CoronaVirus

On the **Feast of Annunciation of the Lord** we hear the sure Words of the Messenger of God - Archangel Gabriel to young girl Mary: "For nothing is impossible for God". These words for Mary were the assurance of God's assistance and loving presence in the life she was going to start as the Mother of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. For us as well, who are in challenging times, they are the strength when we tremble because of the pandemic's menace.

So we raise our voices to God in prayer for His guidance and protection in these days in which so many feel threatened and become anxious; we also pray for those who become ill and infected with the virus and those who may be near death.

We express our sincere thanks to President Ramaphosa for the leadership he is offering us together with his co-advisors and co-workers. There is also a deep sense of gratitude to doctors and all health workers, the police and social workers who take a frontline position in working for our good and that of our families.

The Church of SACBC and the Government respond to this situation through different directives regarding safety measures to be adopted in the face of Coronavirus treat to life in Southern Africa and particularly in Umzimkulu Diocese. The latest announcement of Lockdown on 26th March midnight – requires the adjustment of all previous decisions and pastoral plans accordingly.

I convey to you the following decisions which are based on the directives received from the Holy Father and his collaborators as well as from local consultation:

1. ALL SUNDAY AND WEEKDAY MASSES as well as Sunday Celebrations in the absence of a Priest are suspended for the period of the lockdown.

Priests will continue to celebrate a daily Mass alone with no congregation, remembering in prayer all who are affected by the pandemic, and parishes should continue to make provision for their churches to be

open at some time so that individuals can still come and pray privately, especially have the possibility of adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

I ask the priests to inform the faithful of the beginning times of daily, Sunday and Holy Week celebrations so that they can prayerfully unite themselves in their homes. Means of live (not recorded) internet or radio broadcasts can be of help. In any event, it remains important to dedicate the adequate time to prayer, giving importance above all to the Liturgy of Hours - Breviary, as well reading and reflecting on the Word of God, the prayer of Rosary and Divine Mercy Chaplet, Stations of the Cross and other prayers in the Families.

2. PALM SUNDAY - The Commemoration of Lord's Entrance into Jerusalem is to be celebrated by the priest within the sacred buildings of the church, using the third form given in the Roman Missal.

3. THE CHRISM MASS - The Blessing of the Oils of the Sick, Catechumens and Chrism is transferred to a suitable time when the Bishop, Priests and the Faithful can celebrate together.

4. EASTER TRIDUUM - The **public celebration** of Lord's Supper, the Passion of the Lord, the Easter Vigil, and the Easter Sunday are canceled. There will be no public liturgy. If in the parish there is the convent of Religious Sisters and Brothers, they are celebrating the above celebrations and daily Holy Mass with the priest within the parish Church or convent's chapel.

5. MASS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER - The Holy Father has granted the faculty to all priests to celebrate this mass alone and to omit the procession to the place of repose - the Sacrament is to be reserved in the usual tabernacle.

6. PASSION OF THE LORD - again there is no public celebration. All the faithful are called upon to at least read the account of the Passion according to the Gospel of St. John the Apostle. A simplified prayer service is going to be prepared for use in the home and will be circulated to you, as well it be on Facebook and the diocesan website. The solemn adoration of the Cross in our diocese, we will do in September, in connection with the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. I appeal to all the faithful in their families to pray the Novena of the Divine Mercy from Good Friday and the Chaplet of Divine Mercy - till the Sunday of Divine Mercy on the 19th of April.

7. EASTER VIGIL and EASTER SUNDAY - with deep regret I must inform that baptisms, receptions into the Church and Confirmations cannot take place. Celebrations will be private celebrations by the priest. Please give encouragement and hope to all those who were expecting to receive the Sacraments at Easter and to assure them that as soon as restrictions are lifted you will arrange a date of their baptism, reception, and Confirmation - this will be at the discretion of the parish priest.

As these are the sacred days in the life of the Church, I call upon the Families to spend time in prayer. For this purpose, I ask priests to ensure that all parishioners have the Rite of Spiritual Communion, that is sent with this letter, and also the Prayer Services that will be sent to parishes in due time. I ask the Priests, the Religious and the Faithful to avail yourselves to the task of translation of all the documents and prayer services into isiZulu.

8. COMMUNION OF THE SICK - Due to restrictions imposed by the Government, all regular ministering to the housebound must be canceled. I appeal to your discretion when the danger of death presents itself, assessing the local situation.

9. FUNERALS - should be conducted according to directives of the state without the body of the deceased being brought to the church – but the priests will offer Mass for the deceased in a private way.

10. ALL MEETINGS of Sodalities and parish activities are suspended.

I sincerely acknowledge the contributions you are making in response to difficult times. In the midst of all that is happening around us, let us not forget that we have an obligation to the Church and to the Faithful. **We must use whatever means available** to us to continue ministering to those entrusted to us.

I urge you to bear in mind the following:

Prayer:

More than anything let us remind ourselves that our primary goal is to become the men of prayer, In order to worthy carry out our mandates as priests we devote ourselves to prayer - both priestly prayer, i.e. daily Holy Mass, and Office of the Hours, and also devotional prayer such as Rosary and Stations of the Cross. During this time Holy Mass is not canceled - it is only celebrated privately.

Spiritual Reading and Reflection:

I urge you to make this time for Spiritual reading and to spend time in reflection. Most of the time we are so busy that we find it difficult, or we are too exhausted to catch up on these important aspects of our priestly lives. Let this time of isolation be seen as the time of spiritual renewal as we literally place ourselves in the desert with Jesus.

Once again I thank you for the contributions that you make to keep the faithful spiritually united in the Church and for the creative ways in which you reach out to them. Physically we have to maintain the social distancing, but spiritually we can come together in spiritual communion and in prayer.

Yours in Christ,

+ Stanislaw Dziuba, OSPPE

+ Stanislaw Jan Dziuba, OSPPE
Bishop of Catholic Diocese of Umzimkulu



Harding, on 25th of March 2020