

**ARCHDIOCESE  
OF  
GOA AND DAMAN**

*PATRIARCHATE OF THE EAST INDIES*

CP-Cir/13/2020

Archbishop's House,  
P.O. Box No. 216  
Panjim - 403 001  
GOA - INDIA  
Tel: (0832) 2223353, 2225291  
E-mail: [archbpgoa@gmail.com](mailto:archbpgoa@gmail.com)

**CIRCULAR**

**To the Priests, Religious and Lay Faithful  
of the Archdiocese of Goa and Daman**

**The Corona Virus Disease - 19**

Dearly Beloved,

The Corona Virus Disease (COVID – 19) has practically placed the whole world in a health emergency situation. Nationwide lockdowns have been imposed by some governments, as the pandemic keeps unravelling and threatening the life of entire populations. This unprecedented situation calls for unprecedented measures that we are required to adopt urgently.

Our government authorities are constantly issuing directives for the safety of the population in view of the fluid situation, advising the general public to stay at home at all times, except to fulfil basic needs and to practise social distancing to prevent being affected by COVID-19.

Dear sisters and brothers, we must be mindful, in the first place, that the life that God has bestowed on us is a precious, though a fragile gift. We are called to do our part in guarding it, knowing that the Giver of all good gifts always watches over each one of us with unfathomable love. Keeping this and also the common good in mind, we hereby issue the following instructions, to be followed, until advised to the contrary, by the Clergy and the Faithful of this Archdiocese, as a precautionary measure against a possible onslaught of the pandemic in our midst. These instructions are necessitated by the fact that the virus spreads in a most subtle, unsuspecting and rapid manner.

**1. Celebration of the Holy Mass:**

- The Faithful are dispensed from the obligation, required by can. 1247, of participating in the Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation;
- In order to prevent community transmission of the virus, the Faithful are advised not to go for daily Mass, unless it is strictly necessary. They should, in any case, keep a distance of not less than a metre from one another. The following are strongly advised not to take part in the Mass: (a) children and those above 60 years of age; (b) those who are under a bout of even a common cold, including cough, sneezing, runny nose

or fever; (c) those having co-existing ailments like hypertension, diabetes, heart disease, lung disease, cancer, etc.; (d) those who have travelled from any of the virus-infected areas, outside or inside the country, after the 1<sup>st</sup> of March, 2020;

- Priests, however, should continue to celebrate Mass, even without a congregation;
- Concelebrants at a Mass should receive Holy Communion through intinction only;
- Wherever Mass is celebrated, even with a tiny congregation, the priest must necessarily take the appropriate sanitary precautions (e.g. sanitizing or washing the hands with soap, before and after the distribution of Holy Communion);
- Communicants are bound to receive Holy Communion only in the hand;
- Holy Communion is to be administered only under the species of bread;
- Weekly or other such novena services in our places of worship are hereby suspended with immediate effect;
- Wherever possible, the celebration of the Mass is to be live-streamed or recorded and then broadcast, either by the respective parish or through the local electronic media.

## 2. Private Prayer in Churches/Chapels:

- Pastors are advised to keep the Churches/Chapels open during the day, at least for a few hours, with prior announcement, so that the Faithful can come and pray privately. On these occasions, the Faithful should maintain safe distance (not less than one metre) from one another and take the necessary sanitary precautions;
- **We do hereby revoke the recommendation we had made in our previous Circular (CP-Cir/10/2020) of 14<sup>th</sup> instant for an Hour of Adoration to be organized in our places of worship either on 20<sup>th</sup> or 27<sup>th</sup> of this month, both Fridays.**

## 3. Meetings/programmes of SCCs/associations/groups in the parish:

- All such meetings of the Faithful are to be suspended, barring those that are necessary for urgent consultation or decision-making and for charitable activities, seeing that only the strictly necessary number of members take part;
- Children and those above 60 years of age as well as those showing symptoms of sickness should not be allowed to attend such meetings.

## 4. Gatherings and devotional practices:

- Community devotional practices like the Way of the Cross, the *Santos Passos*, processions, recitation of the rosary, chaplets, domiciliary visits of the statue of Our Lady of the *Medalha Milagrosa*, etc. as well as gatherings, like on the occasion of retreats, penitential services and even Lenten dramas/depictions, are not to be held;
- The Faithful are, however, encouraged to celebrate their faith as a domestic Church, by taking time to pray together as a family, either celebrating the Liturgy of the Hours, reading and reflecting on the Sacred Scriptures, reciting the rosary/chaplets and engaging in other devotional exercises, while also offering sacrifices, to implore God's mercy during these difficult days.

## 5. The Sacrament of Reconciliation:

- The use of the confessional should be avoided for the celebration of this Sacrament;

- The Sacrament of Reconciliation should be celebrated in an appropriate space which is not closed and which will facilitate the keeping of a certain distance (not less than one metre) between the priest and the penitent.

**6. The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick and the Viaticum:**

- Priests are not to deny the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick and the Viaticum, whenever requested. However, the priest should sanitize his hands before and after touching the recipient and take other precautionary measures;
- Such celebrations should avoid the gathering of many persons.

**7. The Sacrament of Baptism:**

- Baptisms are to be celebrated taking the necessary sanitary precautions and with the participation of close family members only, provided they do not show symptoms of the disease or of a common cold. In case they, or even the godparents, show such symptoms, they are not to participate in the celebration.

**8. The Sacrament of Marriage:**

- Marriage celebrations with large attendance should be postponed to a safer time.

**9. Funerals:**

- Funerals are to be celebrated only with the participation of the minister and of close family members, who are to take the necessary precautions;
- On the occasion of deaths, gatherings in the house of the deceased are to be avoided;
- Masses for the Dead, with the participation of a large congregation, are to be rescheduled to a safer time.

The above instructions are in addition to those issued by the President of the CBCI on the 10<sup>th</sup> of this month and endorsed by us on the 14<sup>th</sup> of the same. We shall keep heeding all official advisories that may be issued from time to time, both by the central and state authorities, and actively collaborate with them. Decisions with regard to the celebration of the Chrism Mass and the Holy Week will be made known in due time, as we continue to monitor the situation.

I fervently appeal to our Clergy not to abandon the Faithful in this crisis situation, but rather to be in the frontline, offering comfort, hope and courage, while also exercising due prudence.

Dearly beloved, as we offer fervent prayers that our Archdiocese, our nation and indeed the whole world may be freed from this state of emergency, let us bring to our mind that, in keeping with the teachings of Our Lord Jesus and as part of the sacred tradition of Lent, it is appropriate that our prayer be strengthened by fasting and by other expressions of Christian charity. Let us make use of this occasion to spend quality time in our homes and thus strengthen our family bonding. In this context, some of our Diocesan Centres have been asked to offer suggestions which may be helpful to us during this period.

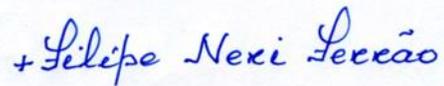
It is in this spirit of prayer and penance that we place this whole situation in the hands of our merciful heavenly Father, through the powerful intercession of Mary, the *Salus Infirmorum* (Health of the Sick), of St. Francis Xavier, the *Gôycho Saib*, who has been interceding for us Goans in untold ways

for more than four and a half centuries and of St. Joseph Vaz, the Patron of our Archdiocese, who has been much invoked in times of pestilence. May this hour of trial lead us to experience the depths of our Father's merciful love and a springtime of hope in Christ Jesus.

We call upon our Parish Priests, Chaplains, Rectors and Superiors of educational and other religious institutions to make those under their care aware of the contents of this Circular by using the different means at their disposal.

Let us continue to follow Christ in His Passion and Death as we await the joy of His Resurrection.

Archbishop's House, Panjim, Goa, Solemnity of St. Joseph, Patron and Protector of the Universal Church, the 19th day of March of the year 2020.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ Filipe Neri Ferrão". The signature is written in a cursive style and is centered within a light blue rectangular background.

( + Filipe Neri Ferrão)  
Archbishop of Goa and Daman