

# DIOCESE OF MANGALORE

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BISHOP'S HOUSE, KODIALBAIL  
MANGALORE – 575 003  
DAKSHINA KANNADA, INDIA.

Ref. No.

Dated

## DIRECTIVES TO PRIESTS, RELIGIOUS AND LAY FAITHFUL IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID -19

As a Diocese, our top priority remains the health and safety of our families, children, the vulnerable of our community and all people around us. We need to cooperate and work with the government in the mission of protecting the vulnerable from the Corona virus pandemic. On March 17, 2020 the Deputy Commissioner and District Magistrate has issued an Order in view of preventing the spread of COVID -19 and in the interest of public health and safety, which needs to be adhered to by all. In the light of this Order, I give the following directives to be followed in the churches and religious institutions situated in the diocese of Mangalore until further orders:

- 1) The current situation requires to bring about some changes in our religious gatherings, common worship and faith rituals. We may not be able to pray with people in the ways that we are used to in ordinary circumstances, but we can certainly pray for people, and we can certainly offer practical care and support.
- 2) The churches will remain open for private prayer, meditation, visit to the blessed Sacrament and private/individual adoration. They are places of healing and hope. The faithful are encouraged to visit the Blessed Sacrament according to their convenience to pray in private and thereby unite themselves in spiritual communion with the Lord.
- 3) In the interest of health and safety, coming in groups to the church, congregating in groups and exiting in groups is prohibited. Even when individuals are in the church, they are encouraged to remain at adequate distance from other individuals praying in private. In other words, observe the protocol for social distancing.
- 4) Whenever the church remains open, it is the responsibility of the Parish Priest (or the one whom he designates) to ensure that the church is not crowded at one time and people are maintaining 'social - distancing'.
- 5) When public access to Sunday Mass is unavailable, the faithful are dispensed from the Sunday obligation of Mass. As Sunday continues to be a holy day, the obligation of private and family prayer along with spiritual communion with the Lord and with others remains. **Regular Masses will not be held. I am hereby exempting all our faithful in the Diocese of Mangalore from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays till March 31, 2020.**
- 6) Priests may offer Masses even without the participation of the congregation.

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- 7) Anyone who is ill, suspects he or she is ill, or is considered vulnerable, people with chronic illness, immune system deficiencies or other underlying health conditions should refrain from visiting churches and other places.
- 8) Take to heart the admonition of Saint Paul: “Rejoice in hope, endure in afflictions, persevere in prayer” (Romans 12:12). It is a time to encourage families to give more time for prayer in their own houses, and practice fasting and penance, and to centre their homes on prayer and reliance upon God’s mercy. Read the Bible meditatively, pray the Rosary, practice devotions, make the way of the cross, recite the chaplet of Divine Mercy, read spiritual writings and learn more about faith, watch Mass and spiritual programmes on TV / YouTube /diocesan website. Pray for those who are suffering from the Corona virus worldwide and for all those in the medical community who serve the sick and the dying.
- 9) The spiritual programmes with the congregation such as public retreats, way of the cross, the common penitential services, and other devotions held in common should be cancelled.
- 10) In consonance with the order issued, all conferences, seminars, SCCs or ward gatherings, Masses in ward for the sick, summer camps, parish events, parish/school/youth day, processions, and so on, are not be planned and held.
- 11) As restriction has been placed on public gatherings and all public celebrations, the Parish Priests and Heads of the Institutions should take into consideration the order of the District Administration on the issue of providing access to the parish halls for programmes and meeting places.
- 12) Priests, religious and leaders must take into account the ongoing guidance and orders from civil authorities relating to public/private gathering, personal hygiene, cleanliness in all public and private places, transport, and other activities, and thus, cooperate with them in protecting and promoting health and life.

We are profoundly saddened that we are not able to celebrate our sacraments as a community for the time being but we know Christ remains with us at all times – especially in this tragic situation.

Please know of my fervent prayers for you all. Let us rejoice in knowing the goodness of the Lord and let us continue to pray for and support one another.

March 18, 2020



*Peter Paul*  
Most Rev. Peter Paul Saldanha  
Bishop of Mangalore