



CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF INDIA (CBCI)

C.B.C.I. Centre, 1 Ashok Place, Near Gole Dakhkhana, New Delhi-110 001. India

Tel: +91 11 2334 4470

Cardinal Oswald Gracias

President

March 10, 2020

To
All the Bishops of India

Sub: Corona Virus

Your Eminence, Your Beatitude, Your Excellency, Your Grace, Your Lordship,

The threat of a Corona Virus pandemic still looms large. As of today, 130 countries have been affected: 110,000 confirmed cases worldwide and over 4000 deaths. This is no indication yet that the spread has peaked and that the situation is coming under control. Major events have been cancelled, economies have taken a sharp downturn, educational institutions have been shut and lockdowns enforced in an attempt to prevent further spread. The Holy Father has cancelled several public engagements.

As a faith community our first response must be to turn to God. I am attaching a prayer that may be said every day after Mass and also frequently in our institutions and families.

I am now sending the following advisory after consultation with Cardinal Allencherry, Cardinal Cleemis, Archbishop Felipe Neri (President of CCBI) and Medical experts:

1. If anyone has had contact with a person who has been diagnosed with Corona Virus please ask them to temporarily avoid coming to public functions where many congregate, for at least two weeks. (Eg. Mass, Missions, Stations of the Cross)
2. At the first sight of cough and breathlessness with or without fever, please advise them to seek Medical assistance.
3. Encourage our people not to shake hands at the sign of peace but to greet each other with folded hands (namaste). In general, avoid shaking of hands.
4. Encourage our people to receive Holy Communion in the hand.
5. Before distribution of Holy Communion, the Priest/Minister could purify their hands in a bowl of water / sanitizer.
6. On Good Friday at the Veneration of the Cross discourage people from kissing the Cross. The blessing with a raised Cross would be adequate. Those who desire could come in a queue, make reverence with a bow and go back.
7. Holy water stoops may be kept dry.

Evidently, all these are temporary arrangements and will be reviewed from time to time. At the moment these Norms can be followed till Easter Sunday, April 12, 2020.

This circular is going to all the Bishops in India. Bishops may because of special local circumstances make any modifications to suit local needs.

Do advise people not to panic. The Government of India has moved promptly and taken steps which we hope will be effective. All of us must give our full cooperation to the civic authorities in order to combat this effectively.

With kind regards and wishing you a grace-filled season of Lent,

Yours fraternally in Christ,

✠ Oswald Cardinal Gracias

Archbishop of Bombay

President, Catholic Bishops Conference of India

Encl: as above



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Prayer

Almighty and merciful God, who show your love to all creation everywhere, hear graciously the prayers we make for all those affected by the Corona Virus in various parts of the world.

We come before you asking for a quick control of the outbreak, for a healing of those affected, for the victims and their families.

We pray for the doctors doing research that an effective vaccine to combat the sickness is speedily found.

We pray for the Government and health authorities that they take appropriate steps for the good of the people.

We make this prayer through Christ Our Lord. Amen.