



Circular No. 20-14

March 13, 2020

TO ALL THE BISHOPS AND THE DIOCESAN ADMINISTRATORS

Your Eminences, Your Excellencies and Reverend Administrators,

RE: PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY, CODE RED SUB-LEVEL TWO – COVID-19

The Department of Health has raised the alert system for the COVID 19 to Code Red Sub-level Two (2). It is now the time to respond together as a Church with greater seriousness to the potential havoc that a more widespread transmission of this virus can cause on our people. With our communal efforts we can help the government control the further spread of this disease.

We are morally obliged to cooperate and support all the precautionary measures that our health officials and government leaders offer us to keep our people safe and healthy.

We hereby offer to all the local ordinaries and the diocesan administrators of our country updated recommendations in the light of this recent development. Our two previous instructions are to be taken as complementary guidelines to this new one.

1. Each Local Ordinary must discern the seriousness of the situation in his Local Church in the face of the spread of the COVID-19. He does this in consultation with the local medical and civil authorities. We cannot take lightly the DOH recommendation on “Social Distancing” and, whenever possible, avoid large gatherings. This is still the proven and effective measure to prevent and lessen the transmission of the virus.
2. Depending on the given circumstances, the Local Ordinaries may exercise their prerogative to dispense the faithful from the Sunday and the Holy Days of Obligation.
3. Such a dispensation, however, does not excuse us from our duty to provide the faithful with spiritual nourishment especially in time of crisis. Every diocese must therefore provide for the celebration of the Eucharist, other liturgical services and spiritual activities, transmitted live through the Internet, Television, or Radio. We should encourage the faithful to avail themselves of these and pray together in their homes as a family or in their small Christian communities (BECs).
4. We should continue to celebrate the Holy Eucharist and Holy Week liturgical celebrations even in the absence of a congregation. In spite of the fact that our faithful

cannot be physically present in the Eucharistic celebration, the crisis gives us the opportunity to unite ourselves with one another in the bond of spiritual communion through the digital technology. In the absence of digital technology, we remind our faithful that a mere desire to be part of the Eucharistic celebration, with the given circumstances, already unites us spiritually to the Body of Christ.

5. We recommend the cancellation or postponement of recollections, pilgrimages, conferences, processions and other activities that gather people together in big numbers.
6. Our churches should be kept open so that those who need to pray and seek prayerful moments may find solace and strength in these trying moments.
7. We ask all our parishes to sound together the church bells at 12:00 noon and 8:00 pm and pray the *Oratio Imperata*.
8. We encourage the bishops, religious and the clergy to spend time in silent adoration of the Blessed Sacrament for the safety of our flock and the healing of the sick.
9. We continue to minister to the sick by offering them the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick but following the necessary precautions proposed by the DOH, in particular the wearing of face mask.
10. We are enjoining all the Local Ordinaries and the Diocesan Administrators to call for a Day of Prayer and Fasting for all those who are infected with the COVID-19 and those who have died, and for our deliverance from this pandemic.
11. We continue to remind everybody to keep the hygiene protocol and the cleanliness of our churches and church facilities.


In this time of crisis let us put our trust in the Lord who accompanies and strengthens our faith. May He open our hearts to help those in need and move us to genuine compassion for our brothers and sisters who suffer.

Let us encourage our faithful to be open to the vulnerable, especially the poor, and share our resources with them.

We pray for the immediate resolution of this temporary crisis. This is a time of difficulty but also a time for growing in true discipleship as we strive to follow the Lord in selfless love and service of others.

May God through the loving intercession of Our Lady, Health of the Sick, deliver us!

Sincerely yours in Christ,


+ ROMULO G. VALLES, D.D.
Archbishop of Davao
President, CBCP