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Pastoral Letter

The Church Emerging from MCO

Dear People of God,

We have spent half of Lent and the entire Holy Week, Paschal Triduum and Eastertide under the restrictions of the MCO and CMCO where you have been physically away from your churches. This liturgical “winter” has been extremely painful for many of you: Holy Communion denied, public Masses suspended, weddings and baptisms postponed, funeral rites abridged and generally, lives disrupted. But now with the implementation of prudent measures to curb the spread of infection and the widespread cooperation of the public, we are finally seeing the first signs of “spring.”

In these past few weeks and days, I have been hearing this question: “When can I go back to church?” I am heartened that so many, despite the many uncertainties and anxieties which are not fully resolved, have expressed this great passion and yearning for the sacraments. The Eucharist is indeed the “source and summit of Christian life”, and should always be our priority. But it is also the priority and responsibility of the Church to ensure that Catholics can return to church in a safe manner in accordance with all the recommended public health advisories.

On the 21st of May 2020, the Ministry of National Unity (MNU) gave approval for 174 places of worship to reopen under Covid-19 standard operating procedures (SOP). This was to take effect from 10th of June, i.e. at the end of the Conditional Movement Control Order.

Of the three Catholic churches/mass Centre that were selected by the authorities for reopening (*ref: ArchKL Media Statement dated 23rd May*), the Church of St John Vianney, Tampin, is the only church which is preparing to reopen in a limited way pursuant to the public health advisories under the SOP issued by the National Security Council (NSC).

The application from our other dioceses were not approved due to various reasons as follows:

- Not in the Green Zone;
- Incomplete Data; and
- Incorrect format.

The reopening of the Church of St John Vianney will follow a phased approach in compliance with the Archdiocesan Guidelines for the Celebration of Sacraments. The preparatory work is progressing cautiously, for we must test the procedures and steps for restoring public church life. We must responsibly navigate the many challenges that is posed by health risks.

The Archdiocese has resubmitted a fresh list of churches, chapels and mass centres from various Malaysian dioceses to the Ministry of National Unity for their consideration and decision. Until an approval has been given by the MNU and NSC, no church, chapel or mass Centre is allowed to open for public worship.

As we witness a decline in the number of new COVID-19 cases, let us continue to be vigilant and pray that there will not be a resurgence of this pandemic. We should offer our prayers and sincere gratitude to all those labouring to insure the necessities of life, healthcare workers, security personnel, food supply workers, and other essential occupations who have sacrificially offered themselves for the benefit of their neighbour.

I know that many of you are anxious and excited to return to the public celebration of the Masses but I would like to appeal to you to be patient. With the current restrictions on the number of churches allowed to open and persons allowed to attend, it would still not be possible for the majority of you to attend Mass. The Prime Minister had announced that the government is looking into reviewing their SOP and to consider if it is possible to ease some of its current stringent restrictions. Until such restrictions are eased to allow a larger number of Catholics who are willing and able to return to their Churches and chapels, I will continue to dispense all the faithful from the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation. The Archdiocese will also continue to provide live streamed Masses for your spiritual nourishment.

Given this 11th of June of the Year of Our Lord 2020

Yours affectionately,



+ Most Reverend Julian Leow Beng Kim
Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur

