

Apostolic Vicariate in Brunei Darussalam
Vicar Apostolic of Kuching (Incorporation) Act, 1973
Church of the Assumption
P.O. Box 527
Bandar Seri Begawan BS 8671
Brunei Darussalam
Tel: +673-2222261 Fax: +673-2238938



Rev Father Paul Shie,
St John's Church,
Kuala Belait.

Rev Father Robert Leong
Church of Our Lady,
Seria.

Rev Father Arin Sugit
Church of the Assumption,
Bandar Seri Begawan.

Dear Fathers

COVID-19: 28th March 2020 - Update on Short-Term Measures

Dear Fathers

Peace be with you.

My previous circular of 14th March 2020 addressed to you designated the suspension of mass gatherings in the churches of our vicariate from 14th March to 29th March 2020. I am most obliged to you for your cooperation in carrying out this request diligently and conscientiously.

As I write, the Covid-19 pandemic is very much with us. Indeed, it is likely to be some time before we see any real change in the situation. To date, 115 cases have been detected with one fatality reported today. Many are in quarantine and others undergoing tests to ascertain their condition.

The observance of Lent this year of has provided us with a new and hitherto unexpected understanding of many traditional practices. Restricted access to the sacraments such as Eucharist and Confessions and devotions such as the Stations make us acutely how much they mean to us.

Thank you for your initiatives to maintain the spiritual well-being of our Catholics during this time. For example, parishes have responded by streaming the mass or by prerecording and uploading it online each day. This way, though not physically present, our Catholics are still connected to the Lord, in a real, if different mode.

However, given the uncertainty as to how this pandemic will develop, I believe it is prudent and necessary to continue with the suspension of religious services. In this respect, I therefore declare that we extend the period of suspension of mass and other religious services until April 15th 2020.

As this period includes Holy Week, I ask you to make provision to maintain and sustain the faith of our Catholics just as you are doing now and as outlined in my previous circular. At the same time, you are to celebrate the liturgy for this solemn season following the Decree of the Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments ("In Time of Covid-19 II" of 25 March 2020).

I will revert to you soon with further details on how we will adapt the ceremonies in line with the guidelines set out in the abovementioned Decree. May I already bring to your notice the following:

1. The Chrism Mass this year will be deferred to a later date
2. Rites of Initiation (Baptism Confirmation and Eucharist) will not be carried out at the Easter Vigil but will also be deferred. Please convey this to the affected Elect and their sponsors.

As humble servants we do what we have been primarily entrusted: to care for our flock the best way we can and know how to. Let us commit all our endeavours to the Father in heaven, and I am confident that "he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." (Philippians 1:6)

Thank you for your continuing support to the Lord and his Church. I pray that God's strength be with you, our Parish Pastoral Councils, organisations and parishioners, to remain at peace amidst all the ambiguity and confusion, and trusting in God's providence for us.

Yours fraternally in Christ,

Cornelius Sim
Vicar Apostolic
Brunei Darussalam

28th March 2020

Nada te turbe, nada te espante;
Quien a Dios tiene, nada le falta.
Nada te turbe, nada te espante:
Sólo Dios basta.

Let nothing disturb you, Let nothing frighten you;
for the one who has God, nothing is lacking.
Let nothing disturb you, Let nothing frighten you;
God alone is sufficient.

St Teresa of Avila (1515-1582)