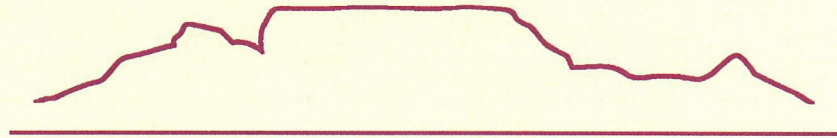




Archdiocese of Cape Town



Dear Bishop/Monsignor/Father/Deacons/Brothers and Sisters

At the outset I wish to thank you for the courageous way in which you have responded to the requirements spelt out in my letter dated 17th March 2020 and for the support you have shown in these difficult times.

I now reach out to you to express my prayerful solidarity with all who are affected by the coronavirus – health workers who valiantly make sacrifices to reach out to assist those afflicted, and several others who show concern for those suffering. I also keep in mind those who are fearful and those who find isolation a burden.

We must also commend the measures put in place by the Government. I believe that it is a step in the right direction to “flatten the curve” of infections. In response to the measures now enforced, as outlined in the President’s address last night on the 23rd March 2020, and the questions that many priests are asking on how to observe Easter this year, I convey to you the following decisions based on the Exhortations from the Holy Father.

Easter Celebrations:

Easter is not simply one feast among others in the Church’s liturgical calendar. It is the heart of the entire year. It culminates in the Easter Triduum and is preceded by Lent and crowned by the celebration of Pentecost. Hence Easter cannot be transferred.

However in the light of the restrictions now in place, I call upon you to take note of the following:

Chrism Mass:

The celebration of the Chrism Mass is cancelled during Holy Week. A date for the celebration will be forwarded to you after evaluating the situation of COVID-19 in the Archdiocese and in the Country.

Easter Triduum:

The public celebrations of the Mass of the Lord’s Supper, the Passion of the Lord, the Easter Vigil and the Easter Sunday are cancelled. There will be no public liturgy.

Mass of the Lord’s Supper: The Holy Father has granted the faculty to all priests to celebrate this Mass alone and to omit the procession to the place of repose – the Sacrament is to be reserved in the usual tabernacle.

Passion of the Lord: Again, there is no public liturgy. All the faithful are called upon to at least read the account of the Passion. A simplified prayer service for use in the home is being prepared and will be circulated to you. Would you please ensure that it gets circulated to as many of your parishioners as possible. It will also be posted on the Archdiocesan website (ADCT).

Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday: With deep regret I must inform you that baptisms, receptions into the Church and Confirmations cannot take place. Celebrations will be private celebrations by the priest. Please give encouragement and hope to all those who were expecting to receive the Sacraments at Easter and assure them that as soon as the restrictions are lifted you will arrange a date for their baptism, reception and Confirmation – this will be at the discretion of the parish priest.

As these are sacred days in the life of the Church, I call upon families to spend time in prayer. For this purpose, I ask Priests to ensure that all parishioners have the Rite of Spiritual Communion that was forwarded to you, and also the Prayer Service that the faithful could use on Good Friday which will be sent to you shortly.

Communion to the Sick:

Due to the restrictions imposed by the Government, all regular ministering of communion to the house bound must be cancelled. I appeal to your discretion when the danger of death presents itself. Let us not forget “*ecclesia supplet*” viz that in our incapacity “the Church supplies”.

Online Mass:

The Archdiocesan website will have a list of parishes that will live-stream Masses and other devotions. I will appreciate it if you could pass this useful information on to your parishioners.

Furthermore, below are the two useful links for the Stations of the Cross. Kindly make them available to your parishioners.

<https://catholicsaints.info/the-way-of-the-cross-by-venerable-fulton-john-sheen/>

<https://www.ecatholic2000.com/liquori/stations/cross.shtml>

I sincerely acknowledge the contributions that you are making in response to these difficult times. Many of you find yourselves even busier than usual during these days. In the midst of all that is happening around us let us not forget that we have an obligation to the Church and to the faithful. We must use whatever means available to us to continue ministering to those entrusted to us. I urge you to bear in mind the following:

Prayer:

More than anything, let us remind ourselves that our primary goal is to become a men of prayer. In order to worthily carry out our mandates as priests we must devote ourselves to prayer – both priestly prayer i.e. Mass and office of the hours, and also devotional prayer such as the rosary and stations of the cross. During this time Mass is not cancelled – it is merely celebrated privately. Both Bishop Sylvester and I offer our Masses as *pro populo* intentions during this time. Please convey this to your parishioners so that they become aware that they are not forgotten. Please also ask them to pray for us.

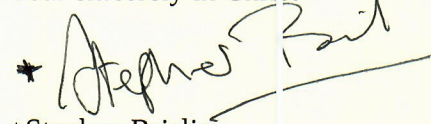
Spiritual reading and reflection:

I urge you to make use of this time for spiritual reading and to spend time in reflection. Most of the time we are so busy that we find it difficult, or we are too exhausted to catch up on these important aspects of our priestly lives. Let this time of isolation be seen as a time of spiritual renewal as we literally place ourselves in the desert with Jesus.

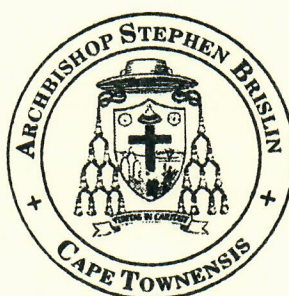
I once again thank you for the contributions that you make to keep the faithful spiritually united in the Church and for the creative ways in which you reach out to them. Physically we have to maintain social distancing, but spiritually we can come together in spiritual communion and in prayer.

Please know that I thank God each day for your faithful ministry, in the words of St Paul: “I thank my God whenever I think of you” (Phil 1:3).

Your sincerely in Christ



+Stephen Brislin
Archbishop of Cape Town



24 March 2020