



UGANDA EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE

(UGANDA CATHOLIC SECRETARIAT)

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P.O. BOX 2886
KAMPALA
UGANDA, E.A.

13th April 2020

The Lord has truly risen, Alleluia!

Dear brothers and sisters,

On behalf of the Catholic Bishops of the Uganda Episcopal Conference, I greet you with joy that comes from our faith in the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. After forty days of spiritual renewal through prayer, fasting and good works of charity we have been able to conclude the Lenten Season. During that period, we have been endowed with God's graces and blessings that have led us to the celebration of the Paschal Mystery. Let us rejoice and be glad, for the Lord is risen, Christ is alive. Happy Easter to you all!

When Jesus rose, he conquered death and thus he successfully accomplished his mission of saving us from sin. Let us remain renewed in the life of the risen Christ as St. Paul teaches us: *"We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life"* (Rm. 6:4). Celebrating Easter means that we are light to the world (Mt. 5:16) and we are commissioned to proclaim the good news of the risen Christ (Mk. 16:7; Jn. 20:17-18).

However, we are celebrating this year's Easter in a very unusual way. This year the world is threatened by the COVID-19 pandemic caused by the coronavirus. As we said in our "Guidance on Triduum and Easter" dated March 28th, 2020, this disease reminds us of earlier epidemics that killed millions of people around the world. It is a very difficult moment for all of us. The COVID-19 pandemic has inflicted fear, pain and great

suffering for many people. The Church is not spared, as lockdown across the world, including in our own country, has kept believers in their homes. Churches are locked and believers are not able to assemble, physically, with Christ in the celebration of the Word, the Sacraments and other liturgical celebrations.

Like Christ, we are challenged to encounter suffering and uncertainty with faith, love and hope. We are called to hold on to hope and believe more fervently in God's willingness and power to free us from the bondage of sin and suffering (Rom 8:21-24).

Let us take for example the narrative of the Passion of Our Lord on Good Friday. Christ offers us an example of hope and unwavering faith while he was tortured especially on Calvary. He even cried out with a loud voice: "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*" (Mk.15:34; Mt.27:46). In all this, Christ remained steadfast and focused on the will of his Father. Indeed, through the Resurrection, Jesus conquered sin and death (1Cor. 15:4), and we are the fruits of that victory.

We are, therefore, encouraged by the fact that we are not alone in our darkest moment of pain and agony. The risen Lord is with us. He invites us to deeper faith and to worshipping God in truth no matter where we are. We applaud you for keeping the faith and hope alive. We know that many of you are praying devoutly from your homes, which is an opportunity to strengthen the family church, the pillar of Mother Church.

We exhort you to continue building your families on the foundation of love and faith. With St Paul, we implore you to strengthen each other in all that you do during this moment of confinement (1 Thes. 5:11). Parents, now is even a greater opportunity for you to teach your children the faith and, by your own example of love, demonstrate to them the love of Christ for his Church and humanity. Children, listen to your parents and participate in family prayer and work (Eph. 6:1). Together, pray for your families, for the Church, for victims of COVID 19, for health workers, and for all persons who are contributing in different ways to bring an end to the pandemic. Allow the light and joy of the Risen Lord to shine on your families and bring you hope and blessings as you go through this trying moment. Let us make the best use of this time!

May the Holy Spirit also inspire you to share the joy of Easter with your neighbours. As you know, Christian faith is never complete without good works (James 2:17). Similarly, love urges us to forgive our neighbour, to feed our neighbour, to clothe our neighbour, to visit the sick and the prisoner; for, whatever we do to them, we do unto the Lord (Mt. 25:31-46). We should not exploit this difficult time for selfish gains, but, rather, like the Good Samaritan, use it as opportunity to witness and show compassion to the poor, the marginalised and those in need (Lk 10:25-37; Phil. 2:3-4).

In the same spirit, we urge you to cooperate with Government in bringing a safe end to the pandemic, and the security agencies to exercise restraint in the exercise of their mandate.

As for the clergy and co-workers in the Lord's Vineyard, we recognize the challenge that the pandemic has created for your apostolate. We encourage you to continue praying zealously for your flock and using available technologies to bring the joy of Easter to them.

Wishing you a graceful Easter and reiterating our firm promise to pray for you, your families and communities at this difficult time,

Yours in the Risen Christ,

Signed:

†Rt. Rev. Joseph Antony Zziwa
Chairman of Uganda Episcopal Conference and
Bishop of the Diocese of Kiyinda-Mityana.