



# ARCHDIOCESE OF KOTA KINABALU

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## PASTORAL LETTER

To all clergy, religious and lay faithful of the Archdiocese,

Peace be with you!

When I wrote you a Pastoral Letter on 5<sup>th</sup> July 2020, our nation was at the Recovery Movement Control Order (RMCO) stage. The daily Covid19 positive cases then had sharply decreased to single digits and our churches were able to resume public Masses.

Today the situation has reversed. In the past few weeks, we have witnessed a spike in Covid-19 infections in Sabah (with 889 new cases on 24 Oct alone!) and the number of new clusters is increasing. Various media statements are being published to pinpoint where or what the causes are, and the blaming game continues.

In fact, the upsurge does not only happen in Sabah. Some European countries are going through the second wave. Germany and France, for instance, see record cases. Italy and Spain rush to enforce strict measures. Czech Republic announces a new national lockdown. Positive cases in US and India keep on rising.

With Conditional Movement Control Order (CMCO) enforced in almost all districts in Sabah, we are reverting to partial lockdown where Masses have to be done online, pastoral matters are to be carried out based on importance and urgency, and so on and so forth. Our government has just announced the extension the CMCO for another two weeks to 9<sup>th</sup> November. Many of us will have to continue to stay at or work from home. For those who have lost incomes or being laid off, the situation is more depressing. While policy responses have to strike a balance between economy and public health, political uncertainties in the country are “adding salt to the wounds”.

It would seem that the pandemic will be around for a long haul. Its roller coaster trend will continue depending on how personal hygiene is being taken seriously. It is stated that the only way to flatten the curve is to observe the four things: put on face mask, wash hands frequently, avoid crowded places, and maintain social distancing. We have successfully done that before and I feel we should not give up doing it.

At this trying time, the front liners in medical and security services are the ones who bear the grunt of societal failures to observe the SOP. Some become positively infected. Some are overwhelmed by the demands of their services. Let us pray for them and offer them words of motivation and comfort.

To those who are infected or have lost someone dear due to covid-19, I offer my deepest sympathy and prayers. I hope they will stay calm and turn to the Lord for strength and consolation. In moment like this, only He can heal all psychological and emotional pains.

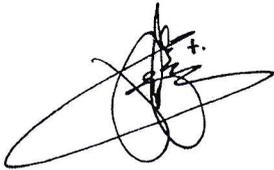
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In my last Letter, I asked two pertinent questions: “What have we learnt from the lockdown? What is the Lord saying to the world today?” I would like to add more here: What is God telling us about the situations in our nation? Where are we heading? What can we do to rectify and/or improve the situations? What can we do to help each other to overcome the economic and public health conditions? The pandemic is forcing us to think globally and act locally.

As Catholics, our faith demands us to stay focus on Him when the “boat is about to sink” (*cf.* Mt 14:28-31); while at the same time we are called to “bring good news to the poor, proclaim liberty to the captives, recover sight to the blind, and set free the oppressed” (*cf.* Lk 4:19-20). Let us remain steadfast in our faith and never lose sight of our mission here on earth in spite of the pandemic!

Stay safe and never lose hope!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'John Wong', with a large, sweeping flourish underneath.

**Archbishop John Wong**

30<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Sunday of the Year, 25 October 2020