



# Simla Chandigarh Diocese

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08.06.2020

## **UPDATE ON CIRCULAR - CORONA VIRUS-10 (Inception of Religious Services-1)**

Dear Fathers,

It is alarming that the Covid-19 cases are rising every day and we invoke God's mercy to be showered upon all of us, very specially in our Diocese. My prayers and support are always with you.

The government has just relaxed (only wherever it is relaxed) the awaited public gatherings of the religious places. Taking this into account, the government also has brought out certain guidelines to be strictly followed in order to flatten the rising curve of Covid-19 cases.

We know that most of our people have very simple backgrounds and some of them are migrants, labourers and daily workers. It is our obligation, as leaders of the Church, to keep in mind this situation. In case, some of them get affected by this virus, there is a great risk of its spread into the entire family or community, which will make the situation worse. Therefore, please do not rush with the public gatherings as advised by our Cardinal Oswald Gracias, the President of CBCI. Sooner or later, however, we may have to open the churches for the liturgical services. Hence, in this regard, I suggest the following guidelines for the Churches in our Diocese. However, I would like to get also your feedback as to what can be done practically.

Please suggest if you have anything more to add to these and send them by Friday, the 12<sup>th</sup> of June 2020.

First and foremost, scientists and doctors advise not to press the panic button too soon but take sufficient safeguards as per administration's guidelines:

1. Everyone is supposed to come wearing a mask. Soap and washbasin be made available before each one enters the church. All are expected to wash and wipe with their personal towel or kerchief which they are expected to carry along. Sanitizer is also to be made available. Volunteers and ushers will guide the people.
2. Keeping with the body distancing norm, the number of participants per mass will have to be within the permitted limit (50 or so). Only 10 people in Haryana, 20 people in Punjab are allowed for the religious gatherings. Therefore, bigger parishes have to increase the number of masses. Particular time is allotted for different areas in the parish. Sub stations could be identified and masses are celebrated on Sundays regularly.
3. Body distance of six feet both front, back and sideways is to be kept with proper marking on benches, floors etc.
4. Singing is to be avoided as far as possible or kept very short. Using of books and papers is to be avoided. Please choose hymns that everyone knows by heart, if singing cannot be avoided.