



# ARCHDIOCESE OF AGANA

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Archbishop's Message to the Faithful

Holy Eucharist is essential, shall remain accessible  
to Catholics through parking lot Masses

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

During these times of heightened anxiety, I send my prayers from abroad. I remain in close communication with my brother priests as well as Archdiocese of Agaña Curia members regarding developments in our island.

With the Governor's recent Executive Order, our church protocols remain in effect. Though the churches are closed to the public, our priests shall continue to provide Guam's Catholic faithful access to the essential, saving graces of the Holy Eucharist at a number of parishes at this time through the celebration of Masses in parish parking lots. Many of these Masses will be livestreamed to our homebound, elderly, sick and fragile brothers and sisters.

I would like to share cogent words and a wonderful theological reflection from one of our brother priests on Guam that I believe most would find quite helpful. It is as follows:

“One of the fulcrum/pivotal ideas in the discussion on which institutions or establishments should be allowed to open in this time of the pandemic is the concept of ESSENTIAL. Simply put, whatever is ESSENTIAL should remain open no matter what; and, whatever is NON-ESSENTIAL should be closed. After all, isn't that what it means to be essential, that is, that it is something you cannot live without? While it may appear to be a simple argument, I believe that the word ESSENTIAL has nuances of meaning because of its richness and depth... Definitely, spiritual life is the Most Essential. ‘What is it for man to gain the whole world but forfeit his life?’ Hence, you ‘cannot live’ without spiritual nourishment for eternal life. But, food is also essential for physical nourishment for man is not just spirit but BODY and SOUL. Jesus did not let the crowds go to look for their own food when they were in the deserted place. He fed them.

On one hand, government officials use the word ESSENTIAL to refer to the PHYSICAL survival of man. On the other hand, spiritual leaders use the same word but referring to eternal life. There is a huge and wide difference between the two. They are not on the same plane. No doubt, spiritual nourishment is way, way more essential than physical nourishment.

But in this time of the pandemic, one of the major considerations is on the issue of the manner of

acquiring these said two essentials, two nourishments. One may not be able to physically come to church but can still nourish his spirit through various means like livestreaming. The Eucharist remains available to us through this platform and many other means. This is the very same reason why there is such a thing as Baptism by Desire, Communion by Desire, Spiritual Communion, etc. When extremely necessary, Sunday Obligation may even be dispensed.

But in this issue of ACQUISITION, opening of the stores and other establishments may become NECESSARY (ESSENTIAL). While we can continue to spiritually nourish our faithful through various means and strategies as we have already done before, there is no other way that our people can acquire their needed physical nourishment unless there are sources they can go to.

May the Good Lord, through the intercession of Our Lady, on the occasion of her Assumption, guide us and make use of us as instruments of His continued love and care for His flock entrusted to our care.”

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I respect my brother priest considerably, and I would like to add a thought that springs from the beginning of our collision with the Covid-19 disaster. The primary virtue of the Christian faith is charity, the chief of the supernatural virtues. When we first began to navigate the virus, I proposed that maintaining social distance and using face masks are acts of this kind of charity. Of course, we find it inconvenient and bothersome, but that is often the “price” of charity. As Mother Theresa often said, “Without suffering, there is no love.”

Our Governor, our island and in fact most of the world are contending with a disaster of a nature and magnitude many have not experienced before in their lifetimes. Working faithfully and relentlessly for the good of the entire island, our Governor is trying her best. She is a dedicated leader. All of us, no matter our positions or backgrounds, desire everyone to be safe from this danger.

Last week’s pivot to “parking lot Masses” is an example of our Church on Guam working with government and health officials to promote safety while still preserving the beloved sacraments and celebration of the Holy Eucharist that are so vital to our lives and souls as baptized children of God.

Our priests have been working diligently with their staff and volunteers to ensure the safety of their congregations. I am grateful to them. A lot goes into a “parking lot Mass.” Though not ideal, they are a way to bring Christ to the people. Shielded and separated from one another in the safety of their cars at naturally safe distances, the faithful are strongly protected in these instances.

Again, as my brother priest indicates, “essential” contains a broad spectrum of meanings; and I believe that our witness to charity in this regard can be a powerful message to our faithful and to those who do not yet believe in our Savior. I therefore ask all people to have the heart of Jesus as you interact and communicate with one another. Above all, never forget, God is with us during these difficult times.

With full trust in Jesus, I remain,



Archbishop Michael Byrnes, S.T.D.  
Metropolitan Archbishop of Agaña