

Coronavirus emergency appeal

message from CAFOD Director Christine Allen

In recent days, among our dispersed CAFOD teams, planning our global response to Coronavirus, some words from St Paul have come to mind: faith, hope and love.

We are facing an unprecedented emergency in every country we work in; and we are also mindful, each day, of people in our own Catholic community here in England and Wales who are unable to attend Mass; people worried and overstretched; of those who have tragically lost loved ones, and of those who were already enduring loneliness and are now in isolation. We need to respond in faith, hope and love. And so in faith, hope and love, we are reaching out to you.

Coronavirus is affecting every country we work in. The poorest and excluded are most vulnerable. Food prices have risen with borders closing; the poorest are losing their jobs and income with wholesale shutdowns. As you can imagine, the outlook is very serious in places where healthcare is inadequate, and washing regularly and social distancing are luxuries. Half the world's population can't access basic healthcare, and already struggle to feed their families; and they now face the threat of hunger as the coronavirus shuts down markets and jobs.

As our first response, we have adapted all of our current work across 40 countries, and are also responding to already severe needs with emergency food relief, water and sanitation, and spreading awareness of prevention measures, especially through Church leaders and Catholic media.

But this is very much only the beginning of what will be a massive, and enduring response programme across every country we work in. This virus is changing our entire programme of work across the world. Beyond the immediate loss of life and suffering, long-term vulnerability, poverty, exclusion and injustice will only become more acute. The task is daunting. We and our church partners around the world are looking to God for strength, and to keep us acting in faith and hope, and we know that you across England and Wales are doing the same.

We know all too well that things are far from straightforward in all our parishes right now. We, as a global family, have never faced a crisis of this magnitude –in our own communities, and those communities CAFOD works with. But the scale is unimaginable in the most vulnerable communities of our world, and so as of today, we are appealing for support for our emergency response. Those communities with nothing, who have everything stacked against them, - our brothers and sisters - have never needed your love and support so much.

To help with adapting parish life to lockdown, some resources and guides are below, and I also include wording for an announcement in your parish newsletter, website and social media.

We are so grateful as always for all of your prayers and support, especially in what we know are distressing times for many here in the UK. At this time, I truly believe that our way through this time lies in holding fast to our faith and to one another. Please remember CAFOD's work and our appeal in your communications with parishioners and in your prayers.

We are living through one of the global events that will shape humanity, and our response can only be the response of the heart of God. We need to be his hands and feet – we cannot do otherwise.

With my sincere thanks and my prayers

CAFOD Director Christine Allen

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