



COVID-19: GOVERNMENT SHOULD SWING INTO ACTION TO CONTAIN THIRD WAVE

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ABUJA, NIGERIA - ARCHBISHOP KAIGAMA Worried by the third wave of COVID-19 which is here and infections and fatality rates are on the increase, the Catholic Archbishop of Abuja, Most Rev. Ignatius has appealed the Federal Government to swing into positive action to see that the resident doctors resume their duties, with the needed medical measures taken to save lives. Archbishop Kaigama, who made the appeal in his homily of the 19th Sunday in the Ordinary Time at St. Dominic Catholic Church, Kwali, noted that the strike of the National Association of Resident Doctors compounding an already worrisome situation of hunger due to the escalating prices of food stuff. "The doctors are striking over their pay, insurance benefits and the need to improve medical facilities. It has become normal for the Government to dilly dally in finding the best solutions until people have died or suffered irreversible damages". According to the Prelate, frequent industrial actions of various professional groups reflect the poor attention given to workers with very sensitive responsibilities. "It is not surprising therefore that many of our doctors are happily taking job opportunities in European countries and beyond, where their services are needed and valued. It appears not to disturb our authorities that we are losing many health experts, not because they want to leave the country, but because they don't experience any job satisfaction and their effort to serve patriotically is not reciprocated by a conducive working environment and appropriate remuneration and incentives." See below the full homily: NINETEENTH SUNDAY, YEAR B, AUGUST 8, 2021, ST. DOMINIC'S PARISH, KWALI, HOMILY BY ARCHBISHOP I. A. KAIGAMA Readings: 1 Kgs 19:4-8; Ps. 33(34): 2-9; Eph. 4: 30-5:2; Jn. 6: 41-51 Dear beloved parishioners of St. Dominic's Parish, Kwali, I am quite happy to pay my first visit to you. You may be our second to the last parish on the Lokoja road axis, but you are certainly not second to the last on my mind. I invoke God's grace, mercy and blessings

upon you parishioners led by your parish priest, Rev Fr. Jude Igba, CMF. The story of Prophet Elijah in the first reading shows that he was a lone prophet of God in the midst of 450 prophets of Baal, during the reign of King Ahab. Elijah had a contest on Mount Carmel with the prophets of Baal, and having defeated and killed them, a furious Queen Jezebel swore to take Elijah's life in revenge. This forced Elijah to flee into the desert where he became physically exhausted. While wandering in the desert, Elijah, discouraged and frustrated, prayed to God to take his life. God refused to grant Elijah's prayer for death and sent an Angel to feed him. Elijah became strengthened by that food to walk the journey of forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. Sometimes even the strongest among us can experience not only physical hunger but also spiritual weakness. In the challenging times today, we feel discouraged, because the journey of life has become rough and the storms violent. Many people have problems with school fees, feeding, clothing and lack of employment. Some even wish in their hearts not to be alive to face the problems of today. But God is always there in the midst of our situations to comfort us. He comes to us in the form of friends, priests, colleagues, and He comes to us above all in His word and Holy Communion to comfort us. He alone is the medicine that can calm our fears and renew our strength for the journey ahead of us. This is why the holy body and blood of Christ is also called Viaticum meaning, food for the journey. Hope is the most important commodity we all need at the moment. We need hope to trust again in our political leaders. We need hope to trust again in the dream of a better Nigeria, and we must rise above the clouds of hopelessness, anger and division and engage ourselves in constructive thinking and action. Pope Benedict XVI says, "Whoever has hope lives differently; the one who hopes has been granted the gift of a new life" (Spe Salvi, 2). The bread that the Prophet Elijah received from the hands of the Angel is a pre-figuration of Jesus the true bread of life. By referring to Himself as the bread of life, Jesus in today's Gospel was not making an empty claim. The Jews however complained because He said He came down from heaven. Unfortunately, many people still doubt the divine presence of Jesus in the Eucharist like the Jews in today's Gospel. Some do this for reasons of ignorance, some for reasons of familiarity with this sacrament, and some out of sheer mischief. Because some of us don't see the Church as a place of solemn encounter with God, we receive Communion again and again; but it is a mere routine. If we receive Christ in Holy Communion without preparing ourselves like a child who prepares to receive Holy Communion for the first time; without using the occasion to talk with Jesus, to thank Jesus, and to ask Jesus for what we need, that Communion cannot give us the

nourishment and strength to go through difficult times, and to make us better and more loving persons. St. Paul in our second reading admonishes that because we share the Eucharist from one table we should not bear grudges against one another, but to be imitators of Christ and to eschew every form of bitterness and anger. It is disheartening that we repeatedly hear stories of killings, acts of inhumanity and barbarism such as cutting down food crops in farmlands, burning and looting houses and property, etc. Many of our people are being ravaged by poverty. As if that is not enough, we now have the strike of the National Association of Resident Doctors compounding an already worrisome situation of hunger due to the escalating prices of food stuff. The doctors are striking over their pay, insurance benefits and the need to improve medical facilities. It has become normal for the Government to dilly dally in finding the best solutions until people have died or suffered irreversible damages. Frequent industrial actions of various professional groups reflect the poor attention given to workers with very sensitive responsibilities. It is not surprising therefore that many of our doctors are happily taking job opportunities in European countries and beyond, where their services are needed and valued. It appears not to disturb our authorities that we are losing many health experts, not because they want to leave the country, but because they don't experience any job satisfaction and their effort to serve patriotically is not reciprocated by a conducive working environment and appropriate remuneration and incentives. We hope the third wave of COVID-19 which is here and infections and fatality rates are on the increase, will convince the Government to swing into positive action to see that the resident doctors resume their duties, with the needed medical measures taken to save lives. May God save us from further loss of lives. May God keep us safe so that we can go about our business in the farms, markets and schools without fear of attacks. May God provide for us food as He did for Prophet Elijah.