



International Catholic Movement for Intellectual and Cultural Affairs
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Living in Times of Covid-19: Experiences of Catholic (Christian) Lay Across Africa
Online Discussion Forum

A. Introduction

1. A Regional online discussion entitled Living in Times of Covid-19: Experiences of Catholic (Christian) Lay Across Africa was organized on Saturday 11, 2020. The main objective of the online discussion was to bring together Catholic professionals across Africa and beyond to share their experiences about the COVID-19. The discussion was organized by Pax Romana ICMICA-Africa in conjunction with Pax Romana IMCS-Africa. The discussion drew participants from all regions in Africa. The following were main speakers for the different countries.

Region	Country	Name
East Africa	Kenya	Samuel Mukundi
		Fredrick Wamalwa
		Dennis Ong'aria
	Tanzania	Thomas Ommulisa
Southern Africa	Zambia	Kaputo Chenga
	Zimbabwe	Albert Dhafana
	South Africa	Tshiamo Moela
Madagascar	Madagascar	Joseph Rahasa
		Olive Maria Hajamiharisoa
IMCS-Africa	Ethiopia	Fasika Lachore
	DRC	Aurelie Monganzimbi
West Africa	Ghana	Justus Atayaaba
	Togo	Dr. Jules Wahare
	Mali	Dr. Afou Chantal Bengaly
	Burkina Faso	Martine Badoré
	Ivory Coast	Loukou Léon
	Benin	Dr. Jules Zannou
Central Africa	Cameroun	Fabrice Nintedem
	Gabon	Idris Emane
	RDC	Valentine Makongo
Europe	UK	Alex Mthobi
	France	Phillpe Ledouble
America	USA	Kevin Ahern
Moderators	Benin	Marcel AKPOVO
	Ivory Coast	Emmanuel Loukou
Chaplain	Kenya	Fr. Emmanuel Mulu

B. Summary Take Away(s)

2. Covid-19 continues to disrupt people's life across Africa. People are afraid of getting ill and losing loved ones to the Covid-19 pandemic. Across the countries, there are demands for social distancing and requests for people to stay at home and/or work from home. Some countries like South Africa, Zimbabwe and Kenya are under lockdown, although at varying levels. In most countries, schools and social places have also been closed down. Covid-19 has also disrupted people's way of worship. Majority of churches around the world have suspended their Sunday services and worshippers now find themselves following online services. There are also fears about the impact of the epidemic on the economy and people's livelihoods. Some measures such as lock-down are likely to negatively impact on the livelihoods of a large maturity of African who work in the informal sector.

3. Sadly, women are more likely to be disproportionately affected by the impacts of the Covid-19. Across Africa, women are on the front lines of healthcare- they comprise a large share of the frontline healthcare workers. Women also make up a greater share of the workers in the informal sector, whose jobs have been shut down or downsized as a result of measures such as lockdown.

4. As a (global) community of Christians, we need to remain united (in solidarity) especially at this time of isolation and create an authentic lay spirituality. The Covid-19 has pushed people into isolation. We need to turn such moment of isolation into a global solidarity by mainly leveraging on what technology offers to reach to one another. Covid-19 also offers an opportunity to create an authentic lay spirituality given the threat of Covid-19 to our Christian lives. By virtue of baptism, we have become full Christians called to be agents of evangelization. We should therefore create a spirituality that can exist even if we are denied to essential part of our Christian life, such as attending mass and receiving the Eucharist.

5. In line with the call for authentic lay spirituality, Pax Romana (IMCS and ICMICA) has been facilitating on-line prayer sessions and dialogues among lay leaders from different regions. Pax Romana has also developed an on-line guideline to help members organise on-line discussion. On April 11, 2020, Pax Romana held Easter celebration, bringing members from access the world. Pax Romana IMCS-Africa organised media campaigns among its members to sensitise them about Covid-19. Some of the individual members, like in Zimbabwe and Mali, have been directly involved in national and local initiatives aimed at alleviating the effects of Covid-19 in their countries.

C. Going Forward

6. Going forward, the following emerged as practical steps going forward.

- Hold monthly on-line discussions, at the regional level, focusing on specific topics related to Covid-19.
- Such on-line discussions need to be organised at the national level too.
- Engage on resource mobilisation and fundraising to support the efforts aimed at mitigating the impact of Covid-19. Resource mobilisation could be enhanced at the national level and can be channelled to the local (church) episcopal conference. Zimbabwe offers an example.
- Sensitise members within our communities about Covid-19 leveraging on the efforts of governments.
- Provide required advice (evidence based) and direction, to the church, our governments and the communities we live in, leveraging on our professional training and moral standing in society.