

Fathers,

We wish you, belatedly, a hope-filled Easter and we trust that you are keeping safe and well.

What strange and difficult times for all of us as we adjust to the challenges of our present circumstances. But even in the sadness and anxiety there is much for which to give thanks in the generous response of people in engaging with live-streamed liturgies and in the generous help given to those in need, both by individuals and by agencies such as Caritas and SVP.

This present crisis also presents opportunities for us all to adjust our priorities, to recognise the pressing needs of our brothers and sisters. While here at home we can do much to address social needs of homelessness, domestic abuse and forms of social degradation, we must also renew our awareness of the appalling suffering of so many millions of our brothers and sisters in some of the poorest countries of the world. What havoc may Covid 19 cause in countries where there are minimal healthcare facilities (10 African countries have no ventilators at all!), where millions of Rohingya and Syrian refugees are crowded in the squalor of insanitary refugee camps and millions of workers exploited?

As trustees of CAFOD, we have seen for ourselves the enormous need that so many in the world face. We fear for the people and communities we have met in our travels and the catastrophic effects on those communities. We recognise that the scale of this pandemic is unprecedented.

This is why CAFOD is launching an appeal for funds to help support their response to the global pandemic that is COVID-19. All around the world CAFOD's partners and Caritas agencies are responding. CAFOD is repurposing its own grants and programmes of support but in the face of this pandemic we need a concerted effort. We know that this comes very soon after the CAFOD Lent appeal but this is an essential moment when we need to generate funds to support so many around the world. The impact of this virus on the poorest is incalculable. Research indicates high levels of deaths in the short-term but the lasting impact on economies and livelihoods of those who already live on the edge is potentially disastrous.

We are writing to ask that you be vocal in supporting this urgent appeal and encourage the Catholic community to respond to this crisis not only here at home, but for our brothers and sisters around the world. Please encourage your priests and parishes to promote the CAFOD Coronavirus appeal, especially encouraging giving on-line. If your social media and communications teams could share the CAFOD posts on Facebook and Twitter, that would best publicise the message.

It is likely that there will be a Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) appeal in early May and this will further raise the profile of the impact of this virus on the world's poor. This would be another opportunity to promote the CAFOD appeal, as a member of the DEC. Thank you for considering this. CAFOD is our agency of which we are rightly proud. This appeal will make a real difference in the lives of so many.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "John", with a small cross symbol to the left.

Bishop John Arnold
Chair of Trustees of CAFOD

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Patrick", with a small cross symbol to the left.

Bishop Patrick McKinney
Trustee of CAFOD