

CONFERENCE OF RELIGIOUS, INDIA

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REFERENCE: 2020/03/20-Assembly

March 20, 2020

URGENT COMMUNICATION

TO ALL MAJOR SUPERIORS OF RELIGIOUS IN INDIA

SUBJECT: NATIONAL ASSEMBLY POSTPONED

Friends,

You will be aware, as much as I am, about the pandemic the world is facing today, and its extremely tragic impact in many parts of the world.

Several countries have issued severe restrictions on movement and gatherings. You will know what is happening in Italy, Spain, South Korea, etc.

In India, too, the government is taking stringent measures for containing the contagion. In Delhi, for instance, gatherings of more than thirty persons are forbidden. Church authorities are cancelling even Sunday Masses.

Given the gravity of the situation, I felt more and more concerned about exposing a large number of major superiors to possible contagion through close contacts for days with a large number of people.

I did not want to decide the issue on my own. So, I wrote to all the 31 members of the CRI National Executive, seeking their urgent response. Here are their answers: 23 are for postponing the Assembly to a safer date, 2 are for having it in May 2020 as fixed earlier, 4 are for waiting and seeing how the situation develops and 2 could not be contacted (of whom one is very sick).

Hence, with this letter, I am making this communication:

The CRI National Assembly 2020, planned to be held in Dharmaram-Christ-University, Bangalore, from May 2 to 6, 2020, is indefinitely POSTPONED.

I cannot tell you now when we will have it, since no one knows right now how soon and how effectively the Coronavirus contagion will be brought under control. As of now, all over the world, including India, the security measures are made stricter, not more lenient. (For instance, in the week starting on March 22, no international flight will be allowed to land in India. Such a step is without precedent.)

Given the fact that the virus has proved more dangerous to seniors and those with pre-existing medical conditions (high BP, diabetes, asthma, heart disease, etc.), and there will be a number of major superiors in these categories, you will appreciate the necessity and wisdom of our decision.

May I also use this occasion to remind all of us to make our communities (and our employees) aware of the necessary safeguards we all need to take to keep ourselves and others safe. I need not tell you what these measures are. Information is available readily and in plenty (e.g., the need to wash hands thoroughly with soap when coming from outside or touching objects that others have handled, avoiding unnecessary travel, giving our workers leave (but paying them), avoiding physical contact, etc.). We may need to print these out and display them prominently in our institutions. Let us do what we can to avoid reaching the tragic stage where some other countries are today. We do not have their financial strength, or similar medical facilities, or even testing possibilities.

We may also do well to see how to help the poorer people around us who do not have the luxury of cutting themselves off from others, or even keeping themselves clean and safe.

Let us pray for those affected by the virus, and for medical personnel all over who look after the sick at great risk to themselves, as well as for those working on discovering a vaccine and treatment.

With my fraternal greetings for a happy (but quiet) Easter, and praying for wisdom for all of us (to know what to do and what to avoid in this unprecedented situation),

Fr Joe Mannath SDB

National Secretary, CRI

PS: I appeal to those who have not yet sent the information about your province or religious order to please send it as soon as you get this letter. We have to submit up to date information to the Vatican.

Copy to all the fourteen Regional Secretaries