

19<sup>th</sup> March 2020

Dear friends

### **Re the Coronavirus pandemic**

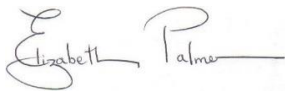
Our world and this country face difficult times. The government has asked people aged over seventy years old and those with chronic health conditions to self-isolate, and the rest of the population to practise careful hygiene and social distancing. The most vulnerable in our society and those who are often already socially isolated will be at risk during the pandemic.

Pope Francis has said, "I unite myself to my brothers Bishops in encouraging the faithful to live this difficult moment with the strength of the faith, the certainty of hope and the ardour of charity". Cardinal Nichols and Archbishop McMahon have asked us to be attentive to the needs of our neighbours, "especially the elderly and vulnerable; contributing to our local food banks; volunteering for charitable initiatives and organisations; simply keeping in touch by all the means open to us."

Catholics in England & Wales, and particularly the members of the Society of St Vincent de Paul, have a long history of outreach to those in need and isolation. Many parishioners and members of the Society want to do so now. The question we face is how best to do this under these difficult circumstances.

In order to help parishes and conferences discern this we attach a simple template which can be used to plan a practical local response. It can be adapted to meet your local needs and way of working. We hope it is of use. Please feel free to adapt it to meet your needs. Any planned actions should be in line with national guidance to ensure they are safe and effective. The guidance can be found at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>. Any plans should also be approved by your safeguarding representative. If you would like any assistance in creating these responses then you will see that the proforma ends with some useful resources.

Please pray for those suffering from the virus, for those caring for people affected, and for the bereaved. Please be assured of our prayers and support at this time.



Elizabeth Palmer, Chief Executive of the Society of St Vincent de Paul (England & Wales)



Phil McCarthy, Chief Executive of Caritas Social Action Network