

Interconnections

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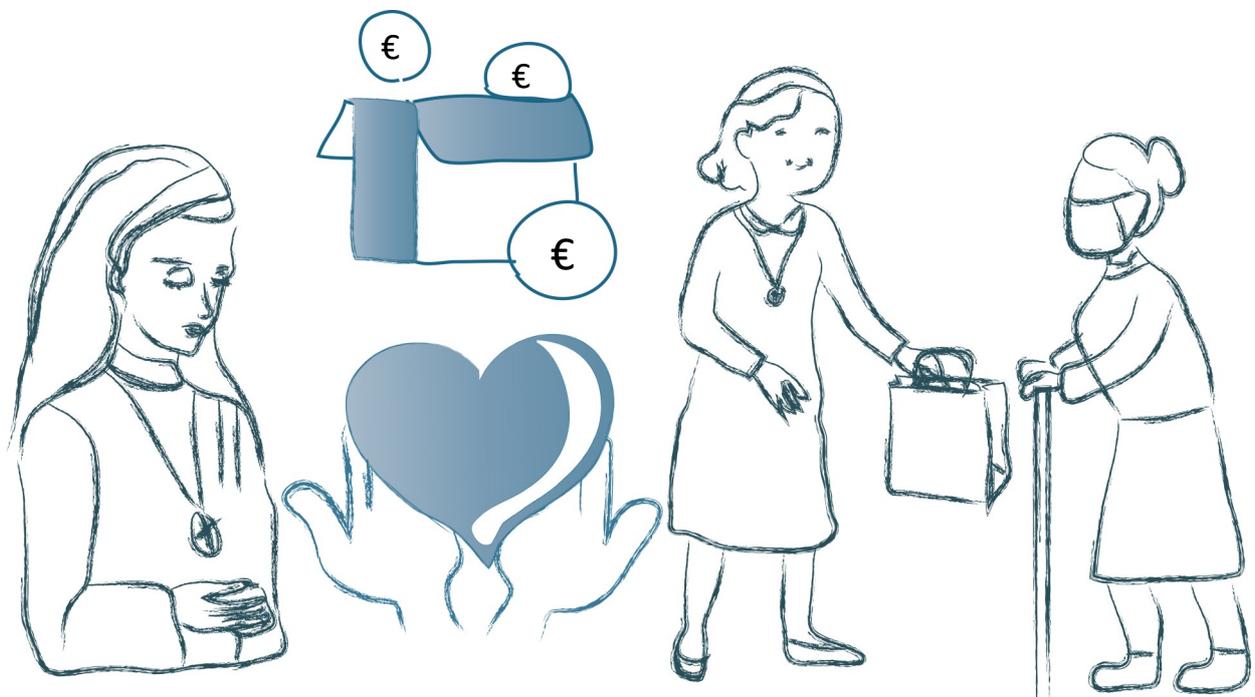
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Live & Communion



Celebrate Family

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EDITORS :

Maristella Annie Anthonipillai
Christine Fene Fene

TRANSLATORS :

Aine Hayde (Britain & Ireland)
Marie Carmen Leach (Spain)
Monika Kopacz (Rome)

WEB SITE : <http://www.saintefamillebordeaux.org/v2/>

FACEBOOK: Sainte-Famille Bordeaux

EDITORIAL

The Coronavirus pandemic caught everyone off guard. It almost pushed us to search for a deeper meaning of our lives.

We have been playing a big role to battle against this crisis and we have chosen to move forward in and through our small ways, ensuring wellbeing and survival for us as well as for others.

In spite of our initial anxiety, fear, powerlessness, stress, we somehow entered wholeheartedly into these six months not giving up our hope, overcome by the difficulties.

1

The quality of community life:

Closeness towards the sick and dying members

Giving time to share with one another during meals

Listening and encouraging

Accompanying the members who need support and help

2

Social media and online facilities:

Online: participating in formation meetings, Classes, Sessions and Exams

Constant communications through WhatsApp, Viber, Facebook, website, YouTube and phone calls to be in touch and strengthen connections

Sharing prayers and reflections

Following prayer Programmes and Eucharistic celebrations

Reading this special issue on 'COVID 19 experience', you would be surely stunned to discover how the members of our PBN Family have lived this reality!

Therefore, as an editorial, I would like to bring out certain values and aspects lived by us in the different parts of the Holy Family world being one with the whole of humanity and creation, contributing to whatever help possible during this unprecedented crisis - COVID 19.



3

Spiritual strength:

Gospel quiz/ Sunday Gospel to the children

Lectio Divina

Group Rosaries through Viber and WhatsApp

Being available to listen to people

4

Help in many forms:

Identifying the poor and the needy

Preparing and distributing food parcels

Providing material for art work and other activities

Organizing Hygienic products / sanitizer

Making and providing masks

Clinic/health and medicinal help



5 Financial contribution:

Identifying individual families and sharing with parishes to cover the special expenses to help the poor and needy

Offering contributions to NGOs and charitable organizations

6 Prayer:

Special times of adoration, praying rosaries, attentive listening to the word of God

7 Some underlined values:

Love

Gratitude

Solidarity and closeness

Becoming aware of accepting our vulnerability

Trust in God

Collaboration

Love and gratitude to each and every one of our PBN Family members, for your courage in living and making others embrace life with Hope.

The smallest gestures can express great love.

Sharing of the lived experience during the pandemic COVID 19

Maria de Lourdes de la Fuente - The Local Community of the Generalate

We are a community of eight Sisters from four continents and from different countries and cultures.

How are we feeling? How are we coping with the present situation?

I feel I can speak in the name of my Sisters because I live with them. I believe that we are calm, open, challenged, worried but not anxious, and aware that we cannot ignore the situation we are in at the moment.

The difference in our rhythm of life and the changes we have had to make challenge us. They are the result of the situation we are living in and which we share with the

whole human race without distinction.

We give time during meals to share with one another in a relaxed way without watching the time.

We live the present moment with ease because the future is uncertain and unknown. We cannot make plans at any level.

We are preparing for the Chapter but we don't know when it will take place.

We celebrated the bicentenary but not in the way we had planned. We could not be together but we used other means to overcome the distances that separated us.

We are amazed that:

Something so tiny and unknown, in spite of all the scientific advances that have been made, has the power to change almost everything in a split second when it usually takes ages to change anything; and that we are able to accept the situation quite peacefully because we know there is no point resisting it.

We comply scrupulously with the norms given by the national health authorities and we help others to do the same.

We do the household tasks ourselves since the staff cannot come in because of the pandemic.

We are amazed because in spite of distances we are communicating more. Social media have helped us to connect with the whole world. We are concerned about the general situation – unemployment, extreme poverty etc.

We encourage closeness and nearness by posting The Eucharist, prayers and celebrations on the HFB website or Facebook.

We often phone the people who come here for Sunday Mass and other friends to talk to them about the situation and to listen to their problems.

In spite of the situation, we feel that there is a current of solidarity running through society at all levels – among churches, countries and continents – which is breaking down the barrier between rich and poor and making us all equal. It is a current of communion which will change the prevailing systems and bring out the best in each person, country and system for the common good.

Reflecting on this in our own context, we heard calls:

to be flexible in the face of change, the unexpected and the unknown

to accept life as it is and to live the present moment; to allow ourselves to be led and to seek what is essential

to accept the unexpected from God, upsetting all our plans and putting us in a state of crisis. God calls us to be open in this crisis



to review our style of life in this financial crisis which affects thousands of families and to live solidarity in an effective way

As an Institute, we have contributed

- ~ towards the food bank
- ~ to Caritas
- ~ to families

to value others' contribution and be enriched by it: complementarity and interdependence

to give time to others and to God and bring the world situation into our prayer.

During the time of lockdown, which has deprived us of the Eucharist, we organised a time of adoration together on Wednesdays and we also follow the Pope's Mass on TV.

All of this means that we are living in a visible way in the midst of conflict and tension as a credible sign of Hope and Communion.

Sisters of the Holy Family in the era of pandemic in Poland

Sisters from the Polish Province

None of us expected the world to change in such a short time. Every day we received media messages about the increasing number of the sick and dying, not only in Poland but also in the world. As of today, none of our Sisters, families or friends have been affected.

Every day, in all communities, Sisters pray the Chaplet of the Divine Mercy at 3 p.m. and then sing Supplications. Polish bishops have asked all the priests and religious congregations to pray the rosary together every day and all our communities have joined this initiative.

Our state of mind is shaped by the situation we are experiencing around the world, but above all, by God's Word heard differently than before. "Whoever believes in me," says Jesus, "will do greater things". We realize that great things are not what we do outside, but what is done inside. We feel more dependent than ever on God, not on our programs, plans, and ideas.

It was a strong experience for us to limit our participation in the Eucharist because of the pandemic. Especially for us Sisters of the Holy Family this is not easy as we are marked by the Miraculous Blessing of February 3, 1822. This Eucharistic dimension is inscribed in us.

The question we are working on before the General Chapter: *Can we still live our purpose as we begin our 3rd century?* resonates strongly within us during these times. The purpose sustains our life and gives meaning to our communities. And now, in the Jubilee Year, all the external

activities, meetings, journeys have been taken away from us. What remains is union with God and communion and spiritual unity between ourselves. Here emerges for us the essence of our life – the meaning and the purpose. Christ is the Purpose.

During this special time we cannot be passive and therefore, apart from spiritual support, we have joined in material help. We contacted the scouts who organized an action of sewing masks. We decided that the community of the oldest sisters in the province - Żabiczki and the community of the provincial house in Warsaw - would undertake this task. The scouts donated the masks we sewed to hospitals and to the inhabitants of our city, especially the elderly.



All the activities of the Caritas facilities where we serve as Sisters of the Holy Family were suspended. However, this did not stop us from helping. In the Day Care

Home for the elderly, 50 lunches are prepared daily and delivered directly to the elderly. In addition, on weekends, the elderly receive packages with food and cleaning products. Sisters and employees help them with shopping. There is also the possibility of obtaining counselling from a psychologist.

Food parcels as well as cleaning products are distributed once a week to families in need. We have also given our children materials for art classes (blocks, crayons, markers, paints) and other school supplies that they need. Thanks to a local company, children from the day care centre received



laptops for remote learning. In addition, we are in constant telephone contact with the children's families, helping them with homework and offering conversation and support.

The group of Holy Family Children in Warsaw were invited to reflect with their families on the Sunday Gospel at home and

then to illustrate it. Then the parents take a picture of this work and send it to the sister leading the group. The sister creates a virtual notice board, posting it in social media. Moreover, among the parents of these children, a mutual initiative was born to help families who are in a difficult financial situation. A fund was created, which consists in paying money to a joint bank account by more affluent families. Then the parish priest, in consultation with our sisters, transfers the money to the families in need.

We notice that people are willing to help each other in this difficult situation. And, in the jubilee year, we truly live united with



God, celebrating the Family, constantly discovering God's great works in us and in this way we live the purpose of our existence. May the Lord be praised by us during this Jubilee.

We are spiritually united with the whole PBN Family.

SOLITARY BUT UNITED WITH THE WORLD

Christine FENE-FENE, à la Solitude

Being faithful to the mind of our Founder, the community at La Solitude witnesses to God's love through her specific mission: *"They should above all strive to imitate the lives of Jesus, Mary and Joseph in the house of Nazareth: a life hidden in God through contemplation and prayer... Situated in the midst of the works of the Association like angels of prayer, they never cease praying for the sisters employed in the active life and for the missions that have been entrusted to them."* (Rules of the Solitary Sisters of the Holy Family, n° 21)

This is my lived experience since my arrival at La Solitude that nourishes my inner life and comforts me. Though words cannot fully express the depth of an experience, I attempt to share it anyway.



Life communicates itself joyfully through mutual attention and welcome; a fraternal gesture, a smile... Everything for me is an opportunity for formation and La Solitude as my **Nazareth**, is *the humble school where I learn to listen to and meditate on the deep and mysterious meaning of the manifestation of the Beloved Son...* Silence is inhabited by God, everything is connected and is an occasion for prayer: ***"The source of our life is hidden with***

Christ in God... Silence and solitude bring us to this source of eternal life; they promote and express the recollection of the whole being in God." (Const. Art 167) At this school I also learn to die to myself in order to let the Lord act. Silence also makes me discover and accept my fragilities helping in turn, to accept the vulnerabilities of others.

During this time, an intense session we had with Françoise DAIGNEAULT on different aspects of the Apostolic Constitution ***"Vultum Dei Quaerere"*** of Pope Francis for the female contemplative life, along with some articles of our Constitutions, had a great impact on me.

Prayer, both personal and communitarian, is a means to live my vocation and my purpose to the full, concretely reproducing what I have learnt in the Spirit. I discover that everything is an occasion for prayer. Information through news and the prayer recommendations received connect us to those who are far away and who are in need. The following expression - *"by our contemplative life we give birth to the world"* - has comforted and encouraged me to go ahead, being close to humanity, carrying them in my heart and prayer. Being more aware of how interconnected we are, I was able to live this time of personal discernment at La Solitude during the confinement due to Covid-19, being in communion with our people, our biological families, our Religious Family, our Church and our world. I felt that the world is with us right here.

During this pandemic, I admired the different initiatives of Pope Francis - broadcasting daily Mass, his call to universal prayer and fasting in face of this immense human suffering and especially his closeness and compassion expressed in his words on **universal fraternity and unity of all** – irrespective of our faith, nationality and his emphasis on **witness of life**.

In short, this experience helps us to realize the interdependence that exists in creation and the impact of globalization; its advantages and disadvantages on our planet.



Above all, I feel vulnerable and I know that only God's grace can lift us up. "**God Alone is enough**". May the Lord help us to become visible witnesses of his love!

AS FLEXIBLE AS REEDS

MARIAN MURCIA, *Don Ramón de la Cruz*

When I think of this time of Lockdown at a personal level, what comes to mind first of all is an equation. Lockdown = a time of joy, a gift from Providence.

In the middle of a heavy work-load, at the beginning of March I saw that I had five days free. I went to visit my mother and, as luck would have it, lockdown kept me with her and five days turned into fifty.

I looked on this time as a gift which I accepted peacefully and joyfully. I dedicated myself totally to the single task of accompanying, caring for and being with my mother. Providence had given me a beautiful gift.

On the other hand, where my work was concerned, the image that best describes this time is that of reeds in the wind.

The most important thing I learned from the Covid-19 crisis is FLEXIBILITY. In the space of a few days I had to undo my diary, programmes, plans, everything in

order to re-organise myself in a completely different way. The internet and the computer became indispensable.

It hasn't always been easy, especially since the future is not at all clear and uncertainty is always before us. That is why the suppleness of the reed will help us to re-invent ourselves. Sometimes we will have to be a basket prepared to receive; at other times, a roof ready to give shelter. We will need to adapt to reality and make the best possible use of the reeds according to needs.

In the midst of all this, I was surprised to find myself comparing Coronavirus to the Love of God. It is everywhere; we cannot see it but we feel its effects; it affects everybody; it does not recognise borders or make distinctions. The word that sums up my experience is GRATITUDE. Hopefully, we will take what is good from this time and change our way of seeing and understanding reality.

Holy Family Community, Newbridge Ireland

Helping Frontline Workers in the Covid-19 Emergency

A group in Dublin, led by Lynda Ennis, responded to the Television News about some women in a community centre in Donegal who responded to the need for protective masks for people at the 'frontline'.

Sr. Pauline Harney was invited to join the effort and Pauline, in turn, invited Sisters of her community who wanted to join with her. She also invited women from outside who might wish to be part of the project in making the masks.



The masks are made of cotton and therefore washable and re-usable. Special filters are inserted into the masks and are regularly replaced after use.

Thanks to the devoted efforts of seven women in the sewing team, as well as several of our community, seventy completed masks have already been sent to Donegal to be distributed throughout Ireland.

Pauline contacted the community Gardai (Police) to help with transporting materials.

Bikers also joined the project to deliver material and completed masks to different nursing homes and to servers. Pauline



also invited her nephew, Shane, who is a biker, to pick up material from the Convent and deliver it to the ladies involved in the sewing.

As a Community, we donated towards the cost of buying some material. There were also donations from people outside.



Those of us involved are convinced it is a worthwhile project, not only for hospitals and nursing homes, but also for ourselves - simply because instead of feeling helpless we know our community is making its own contribution to the struggle against Covid-19.

Religious finding new ways of assisting Jesuit Refugee Service during pandemic

Interview with Sr Margaret Muldoon

What does it mean to bring this work with refugees at JRS UK into your ministry?

At an international level we have taken the option to “be with” people “on the move” and this has become an important part of our ministry at local level, with special attention given to refugees, displaced persons, homeless and others “on the margins”. JRS is one of the groups we collaborate closely with. It is a well-organized faith group that puts the emphasis on welcome, hospitality, accompaniment and advocating and has diverse ways of supporting asylum seekers.

Respecting their dignity, they provide a place where they can feel “at home,” where they are treated as “friends ”and where they can receive support and help.

There is also the possibility to provide accommodation in our communities to homeless women refugees, an opportunity which we avail of and which we find enriching and rewarding. Accompaniment and support of host communities and families is given by JRS.

What do you think you bring to the work?

Conviction that this is a priority for ministry in the reality of today; supported by the options of our Congregation; experience of internationality and encounters with diverse cultures. The call to a Gospel response in line with our

Charism and spirituality. The inspiration of Pope Francis and his constant challenge to be on the side of the marginalised, in his words it is an invitation to recover some of those essential dimensions of our Christian existence and our humanity that risk being overlooked in a prosperous society. That is why it is not just about migrants.

When we show concern for them, we also show concern for ourselves, for everyone; in taking care of them, we all grow; in listening to them, we also give voice to a part of ourselves that we may keep hidden because it is not well regarded nowadays.

(World day of refugees and migrants 2019)

And what do you take away from it?

I take away so much. The experience of encountering women and men who have lost everything and have nothing and yet live with such hope and gratitude in spite of the enormous challenges they face. Their capacity to endure rejection, insecurity, destitution and yet continue to face each day with trust and even smiles; their ability to reach out to others in similar situations and to relate to the staff and volunteers at the Centre. Their unwavering faith in their God. It challenges my life, invites me to an awareness and appreciation of all that I have. These are my sisters and brothers and my encounters with them enable me to be aware of the unjust and disrespect-

ful way people “on the margins” are treated and the prejudices, discrimination and false information that circulates in the



Sister Margaret Muldoon is a day centre volunteer, doing phone support at the moment

media and elsewhere. In the midst of consumerism and all the other “isms” of our society, I am challenged to an awareness of how I may contribute to this reality and of the call to witness to an alternative

gospel response. The challenge is also to find meaning in the midst of the pain and struggle of the people on the margins and to accompany them with love, understanding and compassion. To find the moments of grace in our journeying with them and to be open to the glimpses of insight and transformation that are there when we keep our hearts open. Perhaps the words of the poet, Mary Oliver, speak here: “I tell you this to break your heart, to break your heart open, that it never again be closed to the world.” And Pope Francis: ““Before all else, the Gospel invites us to respond to the God of love... to go forth from ourselves to seek the good of others.”

Anything else?

I would like to add that it is very life-giving, rewarding and enjoyable to work with staff and volunteers who are open, friendly and committed to this service. There are also opportunities for support and on-going training in issues related to the work.

THE COMMUNITY OF SAN BLAS - Quarantine in Pinto

M^a Carmen García de Eulate

My experience of this complicated time for the world.

Yes, I shared this experience with a lot of people. I saw close-up the pain, loneliness and discouragement of many people living without their family and friends. We were all in the same situation.

For me, what was very special was that I believed and trusted that He was among

us. That kept me going. It was a Holy Week of painful crosses but with the hope of the Resurrection.

The most painful time was Carolina’s departure and death, without being able to accompany her. She left us expecting to return from hospital. She experienced the cross and the resurrection. Jesus was her Lord.



I began with pneumonia and spent a month taking paracetamol. I had a high temperature and felt generally unwell. Then I was taken to hospital. I was welcomed there and found an atmosphere of silence, closeness, peace and acceptance. There was a very special relationship among staff, medical personnel and patients. They maintained a lovely peaceful atmosphere in spite of the huge amount of work they had to cope with.

On Holy Thursday, a statue of Our Lady appeared on a table in one of the corridors and on Good Friday, a vase of flowers was placed on the table which was covered in a spotless white cloth. When we were passing by to go to the bathroom, each one acknowledged the statue with a smile, a silent prayer or by



checking to see if the flowers had water. We all knew with certainty that Our Lady was with us and helping us.

After ten days in hospital, I went to the Pinto community where I was quarantined. I arrived around 5 pm. One of the Sisters welcomed me affectionately and even though she could not hug me, I felt her sisterly warmth. I am very happy and grateful to be here. Of course, I am isolated but I am part of community life – prayer, news, animation etc. and I am gradually improving.

I felt the support of your thoughts and prayers all the time. The security of being carried by you gave me strength. From the beginning and right through my experience, I felt the presence of Anun. (Anunciación Esteves, Provincial) She was there through WhatsApp and so were Dori and each member of my community. I am truly grateful.

My family followed the whole process, easing my most vulnerable moments. All of you made things easier for me and made me want to fight. I prayed for those who did not survive and also that the pandemic would bring about some good results for the world.

We are learning that, although human frailty was always there, we did not value it. Courage, sacrifice, even heroism, were what was most valued in our world. However, we now realise that what is common to all of us is frailty and it is frailty that makes us all equal. By living out of what we really are as human beings, we will be examples of humanity, simplicity and people of God.

To all of you, including neighbours, friends and parishioners, I say "Thank you for your closeness and support".

The Covid-19 Experience

Tere Beck. Argentina

Is this a gift for us to enable us to make a qualitative step forward and become better human beings? And if it is, do we know how to benefit from the opportunity?

A few months ago a small virus, invisible and unknown, appeared among us and changed all our plans. We had to reorganise our lives and our timetables. We had to see how to continue our daily lives differently but effectively. Spontaneously, we felt we were being invited to go within ourselves to plumb new depths and reach a new awareness. The words of the prophet Isaiah invited us to see beneath the surface of things, "I am doing something new. Do you not see it?" **Is 43:19**

Some lay people whom we accompany asked me to prepare daily reflections to help them to celebrate the Holy Week. These would be recorded for some local radio stations and used on Facebook and Whatsapp. I saw that this idea was feasible so I began. If this was going to be life-giving, it had to come from the Spirit rather than from myself. I was the first one to benefit as I had to, and still have to, spend long periods in prayer, go deep within myself beyond mere thoughts and, at the same time, remain connected with everyone and everything.

So, I produced reflections on a daily basis from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday. After that I prepared a novena in honour of St. Joseph because our Church is dedicated to St. Joseph the Worker. Then I

prepared two weekly messages, one on the Sunday gospel and the other on Covid-19. The latter was asked for by one of the radio stations. It is a very good way of sharing faith differently, using means that are neither less good nor less deep than the ones we had always used. New methods are being born.

We had to work with communication platforms which meant that we had to



befriend them and learn how to use them. This was a challenging task which made us a bit nervous but at the same time it meant that we had to ask for help from people who were younger than us and better qualified. All is grace!

Our grapefruit trees produced a lot of fruit which we share with passers-by. We also use it to make desserts which we sell to help ourselves and others financially.

The poverty and suffering around us led us to try to meet the needs of the poorest families. We did this with the help of

others who had donated food for sharing.

Our prayer has become more universal. The whole of humanity is close to our hearts and we dream, suffer and pray together. We experience ONENESS as something vital and tangible. I am because we are – “Ubuntu”. We can help ourselves only by helping others.

During the novena we placed a picture of St. Joseph at the door of the Church. Beside it, we left clothes for those who needed them. These disappeared immediately.

We communicate mainly by phone. In this way we are able to accompany people who need a listening ear, families where there are young drug addicts and families where domestic violence has increased because of the lock-down. We also have more contact with the other Vocations of the Family. Our Charism of universal communion energises us.

We network with other organisations like the Town Council who asked us to make the Youth Hostel available (there are no young people there at the moment) for people suffering from Covid-19 who do not need to be hospitalized. We gave them two of the three houses so that they could be isolated from us. Thank God the virus did not come to our town and so far, the house hasn't had to be used. But it is still available. Our Retreat House in Resistencia was also asked for.

We also use the time for some online formation and are grateful that there is so much in offer at the moment. It is another

example of human solidarity.

Covid-19 also affects our community life, beautiful and fragile as it is. And we realise that we have to care for it as if we would care for a delicate plant with delicious fruit. We do this by living maturely and freely, nourished by prayer and the strength of the Charism. But our disagreements and unresolved conflicts also emerge and we must pray and work on them.

The pandemic has given rise to marvellous gestures of solidarity and commitment which are wonderful to see and be grateful for. But it also brings great selfishness and nastiness to the surface. As a result of the lock-down, deforestation has increased massively, indigenous lands have been invaded, authorities have got salary increases while the people go hungry.

Will we come out of this with a heightened consciousness? Will we be able to join up the different threads of our human and cosmic web and experience ourselves as a family of living beings supporting one another by mutual love and help? Or will we go back to doing what we have always done and continue with the same destructive and discriminatory structures?

I want to affirm my faith in the words of the prophet that “something new is being born”; it will continue to grow and we will become more aware and free. We are learning!

The COVID-19 pandemic in Canada

Violette Bouffard

IT'S GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT! These are the words chanted by the Premier of Quebec, Mr. François Legault, since the day of the first press conference on March 13. And since then, families from all over Quebec have wanted to add a little colour to the crisis and have posted a rainbow on their doors and windows; a sign of hope with words of hope.

Covid 19 brought the whole world into our home, into our hearts and prayers. More than ever, we realize that borders are breaking down and that humanity forms an intimately interconnected whole.

Is it possible that such a microscopic thing has put the world on its knees? Our scientific certainties and our collective omnipotence are shaken, and whoever we are, we experience great vulnerability.

In Canada, the lockdown has generated a movement of great solidarity and sharing, and we have seen that even social distancing has given rise to surprising rapprochements. We are also becoming acutely aware that there are many people around us who are confined for life because of their infirmities, their physical or mental health.

At the same time, this crisis has exposed social inequalities in our health care system. Unfortunately, our social values and government laws have left minorities at the bottom of our priority list: the elderly, the physically handicapped, the chronically ill and the mentally ill.

It is precisely in the homes of the elderly and sick that the pandemic is hitting. A shortage of staff in these settings has led to very serious outbreaks among both patients and staff. Staff shortages are still a major concern for the Department of Public Health and calls for help are being made.

For the communities of Sillery and 350, Père-Marquette, the confinement rules are courageously followed, with good collaboration and as serenely as possible. Thanks to religious programs offered by television, radio and Internet, we can be in communion with the universal and diocesan Church. Each in our own way, we try to live these moments as a time of grace.

As for our Sisters of Montreal and Aylmer, new technologies have stimulated their creativity: skype, zoom, and other programs have been well used. Thus, they were able to continue their catechesis with children and young people and they led small prayer groups and a Bible study group.

The telephone is truly a privileged means of communication for us. It seems very important to us to reach out to people, to our families and friends who need to hear a Word of comfort and friendship, a Word of hope that breaks their loneliness.

Daily national and international news allows us to keep an open eye on what is happening on our planet, and of course

we particularly monitor the news which affects the countries where our Sisters are. We note that international news largely covers the countries of economic influence, fortunately however, interviews or conferences enable us to hear the cry of forgotten peoples. Sometimes, more than coronavirus, famine and exile from the city to the countryside put populations in danger. And how is this pandemic being lived in refugee camps or on makeshift boats?

This is enough to feed our prayer. We

make the cries of the world ours, to present them to our God of Life. May he raise up prophets all over the world who will help us to hold our hands and our hearts open to do our part, however humble.

Let us remain in communion among ourselves, and in communion with all our brothers and sisters in the world whom God looks upon with tenderness and compassion.

My Experience of Evangelisation during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Doreen Philipiah, CANADA

When this time of quarantine began I was not allowed to go out to help my parish with on-line Masses even during Holy Week. I found this very difficult. But I accepted it as being God's will and I asked the Lord for guidance. Then, with the Lord's help I began to improve the quantity and quality of my prayer-life through penance and sacrifice so as to overcome laziness, remaining in my comfort zones and selfishness. I spent a long time in the presence of the Eucharistic Lord praying for those who were suffering and dying around the world. I felt very grateful for the privilege of being in the presence of the most Holy Eucharist when millions of lay people are deprived of this gift. Little by little the Lord showed me his plan. This is what happened when I responded to his daily calls.

First of all, I was invited by the women of our parish to join them in an on-line prayer service directed by the German Catholic radio station. We pray for an end to the COVID-19 pandemic. I joined them several times and I received inspiration and encouragement from doing something with the people around me.



Then, as a result of the lockdown, two family rosary groups were formed on Viber. There are nineteen families from the parish of Our Lady of Deliverance in Group A and nineteen families from Toronto and Europe in Group B. They

come together three times a week to say the Rosary and also spend thirty-five minutes doing *lectio divina*. The way the families take part and get the children to read and share the word of God is impressive. Sometimes, especially at weekends, they get the texts and the bible quiz beforehand. Both adults and children discuss these after the Rosary. This means that children and teenagers as well as adults are involved.

The parents are very happy and cooperative. They attend the on-line meetings enthusiastically. This gives them great spiritual strength in this time of crisis and alleviates their tensions and worries. They prepare the children and teenagers for the lessons and quizzes.

The Lord inspired me to form two groups of young people on Viber to study the Bible. There are twenty-four boys and girls in one group "Young People for Christ" (Montreal, Toronto and Europe) and twenty-three boys and girls in the other group "Jesus Alive". Each group has two meetings per week. At one, they spend half an hour saying the Rosary of Divine Mercy and at the other they spend an hour studying the Bible and having an open discussion. I feel that the young people are more open to God and God's word than they were before. So I am doing my best to use this opportunity to plant the word of God in their young hearts and to deepen their faith in God

their Creator. However, there are a few exceptions since some take part only because of pressure from their parents.

While I continued to pray for the people who are suffering, one question challenged me a lot, "What am I doing for my neighbours?" We are surrounded by non-believers. I pray for them, of course. But what else could I do?

Then, one day I followed an on-line conference on "How to evangelise during this time of COVID-19". This was recommended by our diocese. One point struck me very much. "Why not make a poster with a comforting word of God and put it outside your house so that passers-by will see it?" I prayed about it and spoke to my community. I suggested having pocket-size copies of eight gospel passages, some pictures of Jesus and Divine Mercy Rosaries. We could begin evangelising our neighbours with that. They were so happy that they supported the idea. They helped me to make the poster and we put it on a chair outside our house. We said to Jesus, "We have done our best. The rest is up to you. They are your children". This is the third day and we have noticed that five gospel passages and seven Divine Mercy Rosaries have been taken. Our community of Charlemagne is so happy to see our neighbours' response. All glory and honour belong to God Alone.

Covid-19 in La Tablada (Buenos Aires, Argentina)

This time of lockdown has brought changes to our everyday life just as it is for people all over the world. It also means that we must make a commitment to life and, where possible, take part in some activities in the Parish of St. Roque González and his Companion Martyrs.



As a result of the effect social distancing has on the economy, there is an increased shortage of food among families. So, every day the army brings food for the evening meal. As well as that, the Parish provides lunch and a snack for about one thousand people. Since lockdown came into force, Rani is helping with the preparation of the meals and says that “they need to do what they are doing. She feels in her heart that they are sharing in the people’s suffering and are not distancing themselves from the world. They are suffering with the people. Working in solidarity with the most needy brings a lot of joy and a feeling of being close to the people. When people express their gratitude for the food they receive and say that God is blessing them, the helpers are very

moved. It is obvious that the small everyday gestures are done with much love”.

The Hostel of San Miguel for homeless people gives us another possibility of getting involved and Alicia is helping out



there. Here lunch is provided for over five hundred families and lunch is also cooked for about three hundred families from the San Alberto area. As she accompanies the families who come looking for food, Alicia says, ‘We notice people who have never asked for anything and are coming for the first time. They are embarrassed to ask for food for the whole family and say that they just want food for the children”.

On the other hand, Patricia’s and Alicia’s work during the lockdown accompanying people in the hostels for those with addictions means that they need to be close to them and available to listen deeply to the boys and girls who are insecure and fearful as a result of the pandemic. We accompany each one and care for their mental and physical health. In the area of social welfare, Patricia looks

after the finances of the Family Emergency Fund for the young people who are being treated for addiction in the hostels. This financial help is a grant of \$10.000 from the government to families who have health emergencies.

As a family, we feel we are in solidarity with the people who are suffering. During these difficult times, we can bring them human warmth, comfort, a listening ear and encouragement. We know that we have to look after ourselves as well as looking after the most vulnerable people. We support one another especially in

community prayer so that we can be effective in the mission.

