

Dear Dom Eamon, dear members of the Council,
This idea of sharing Covid experience is a great one! Here goes...

First, some background information:

The state of Kerala had some previous experience in tackling and quickly containing the dangerous Nipah virus which was substantially more dangerous with a mortality rate of 89%!

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/anatomy-of-an-outbreak-how-kerala-handled-the-nipah-virus-outbreak/article24060538.ece>

So the government took early steps and established curfews and lock-downs earlier than most countries and the results speaks for themselves: the number of cases is one of the lowest in all of India, though the first reported Covid case in India was reported from Kerala (January 31). Thanks be to God!

<https://www.deccanherald.com/national/south/indias-1st-coronavirus-affected-student-tells-her-tale-810124.html>

The experts say that Kerala has "Flattened the curve" (this was before we started to bring in Keralites stranded in other countries of the world, especially Gulf countries) Coronavirus: How India's Kerala state 'flattened the curve'

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-52283748>

People from neighboring states started slipping past check-points (hiding in trucks with vegetables and so on) and new cases started. After a long period of strict lock-down, the government started to bring in Keralites from all over the world who wished to return. Many of them are infected, and since then the numbers of daily cases have increased steadily and have even crossed the hundred mark.

The number of people permissible in Churches were severely restricted and there are no masses for the public in local churches, but, being an enclosed community, we have never had to stop the eucharistic celebration with all members present, which is a great blessing and privilege. Most houses of active congregations had to restrict themselves to private masses with only a handful of members permitted to attend.

Our economy does not depend on a store or our guest-house, so no worries in that regard, (we have a dairy farm which produces only milk, and we have a small organic tea plantation). There was a time when the strict lock-down caused all hotels, bakeries etc. to be closed down, and that was a time when we felt affected to a degree. But now the situation is better regarding sales.

We are obeying the government regulations and have stopped receiving guests. A couple of them got stuck in the lock-down and can't go back. So they are with us. We had our Holy Week liturgical services without the washing of the feet and without processions outside the church. It's for the first time that such a thing has happened here! No classes from outside teachers now, obviously.

Please note that as a side-effect of Covid, elements of Cistercian monastic spirituality (Praying more, Separation from the world, Staying at home, Keeping your mouth shut, Simple living...) are getting some free publicity all over the world!

That light note aside, we share the burdens of the suffering poor folks around us and support them materially and financially, and our prayers are in solidarity with the suffering millions of a global human family.