

## **Sharing Our Experience....of Covid 19**

As with everyone else, Covid 19 caught us unexpectedly. We had to go into “confinement” and make emergency arrangements from one day to the next, to organize the work in the cheese department, and the shop had to arrange for products that were perishable. Telemarketing, partial unemployment, on-site teams to watch over nutritional needs, driving certificates. In the end, all of this was put into place efficaciously without too much difficulty and in good cooperation with our employees.

The guesthouse renovations, begun in February, were soon also stopped. Since we had been closed since January, we didn't have problems regarding the guests. But we had to inform people that the Church was now open only for private celebration, close the gate, and the monks went into the desert.

No sick brothers to worry about, except for one brother, the infirmarian, who was concerned about symptoms that could be those of the Covid enemy. Even though he tested negatively, because of a persistent cough, he stayed confined to his bedroom as a precaution.

Common life, current activities, good weather, green spaces, ordinary life continued simply, without noticeable changes in the common areas except for a few precautionary measures. Few outings, and always carrying a certificate of restraint. It was a problem, however, for two brothers who were held back from traveling, one who should have gone to Madagascar, and the other who was blocked in the other direction because of the lack of flights from Madagascar and could not return here. However, the Schengen borders opened “miraculously” just on time for a novice coming from Engelszell who arrived at the end of May.

It was especially the liturgical Offices that were modified because of not having any participation by the faithful, and are even now still limited, especially on Sundays. We simplified the celebration of Holy Week, and this will be a good change that we will keep for the future. But we kept the big Paschal Fire, probably the only one of its kind in the diocese.

Celebrating faithfully, as always, the Liturgy of the Hours without a visible assembly, helped us to sense that we were not alone, but made us realize that we were celebrating the prayer of the Church, united to all, for all and with all: the “Church who sings.” Concretely uniting ourselves with all those who were really affected by the pandemic, after singing the Salve, we prayed together as community one or other of the prayers by Pope Frances, our Bishop or St. Benedict, followed by five minutes of quiet prayer before the Angelus.

With the ending of the confinement, our activities one again began in a normal way in the cheese production as well as in the store. The guesthouse will probably not open until the end of October. It is just as well that that we do not have to take care of guests right now, and the guest areas will then respond better to the required norms.

Life is beginning again without thinking too much of the Corona virus. In truth, we did not feel its menace very much, and daily life was not much affected. The period of confinement was lived happily as something that benefitted us and did not ultimately make a difference in our particular awareness or have significant changes for our community life. Along with a novice, we are awaiting two observers, for three and one month(s), a change that will bring us new life.

At least it was an occasion to live life with more intensity and a rediscovery of the grace and benefits of living in the presence of the Savior, to live with more physical distance in our encounters with the exterior, solitude and calm, a somewhat more limited enclosure and trips that were not always indispensable, the gift of living all together as brothers in the House of the Lord. And that this is all that we really need!