

During this time of confinement, we have seen how privileged we are: space, house, garden... For us who are "professionals" of confinement, nothing has changed fundamentally, our life has unfolded (almost) as usual. And while we were confining ourselves, nature was "decoding itself." The chirping of birds has taught us the simple and profound joy of the gift of life.

The absence of the guests at the liturgical offices reminded us of the value of the liturgy in itself, and we experienced it in a positive way. However, we were not completely "alone" as a volunteer and a couple on their way to Compostela remained confined with us. The closure of the guesthouse and the store gave us more calm, more solitude and something from which we gained. Apart from one outing a week for pharmacy needs, we did not leave the abbey grounds. A person from a nearby village spontaneously offered to do our shopping once a week. One sister was even deprived of e-mail during the 2.5 months of confinement due to "piracy". Far from being sorry, she was able to savour the benefit. E-mail is a useful tool, of course, but an absolutely indispensable tool ?...

The "descent" into our inner life made us deeply aware of the tragedies that were taking place near us and around the world teaching us the "same lesson", as well as the outpourings of solidarity deployed in a thousand ways. We have taken our share of solidarity by making masks for Caritas Alsace, together with other communities in Alsace, at the request of our archbishop. The whole community participated enthusiastically in this for several weeks.

If one or two sisters has experienced in a more difficult way, the deprivation of sacramental communion, overall, the Eucharistic fast has been a strong experience lived in communion with the whole confined world like us. The Mass of Pope Francis at St. Martha's, followed by us every morning, except on Sundays when we stayed in France with the Dominican Father, was appreciated by everyone. The humanity and proximity of Francis, expressed among other things in his prayer intentions, impressed many. He is the "universal" Pope, the "priest of the world". We have discovered him better from this perspective. Every evening after Vespers we prayed and still do, the Pope's prayer for the end of the pandemic, in communion with Rome and Italy. The spiritual communion imposed by the circumstances may have prepared us for the decrease in the number of Eucharists that is bound to occur in the future, due to the decline in the number of priests.

The liturgy of Holy Week was missed by some; on the other hand, the fact that we had no celebrations to prepare also allowed us a "breathing space" ... A friend priest stayed very close to us, regularly asking news by email, and by phone. Many friends and acquaintances have also asked how we were doing. With other monastic communities the exchanges remained moderated or rare.

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