

Our Experience of Covid 19

In many ways, our experience of Covid at Tautra Mariakloster was similar to other communities: containment early on, closure of guesthouse and shop, closure of the Church for Mass (but with the blessing of our chaplain, Fr. Anthony, here almost the whole time), but of course, following the norms of the universal church. We pray for the victims of Covid and their care givers every Compline, as well, of course, at Mass with a weekly Mass for this intention.

However, there were some particularities in our community that may interest you. First of all, one of our Sisters giving a retreat to the community at Conyers, in very early March, found herself quarantined there, and unable to return to us until the month of July.

Another Sister celebrated her diamond jubilee, but of course, with no guests. A third Sister, who broke her wrist, spent seven hours in emergency, but that whole time, those accompanying her had to wait in the car outside, because of Covid. Then two of our Juniors wanting to set the dates of their Solemn Professions, were unable to do so, for a long time, because our delegated Father Immediate was still in lock-down, and even though those dates are now set, they still are not completely sure that he will be able to come. Even if he can come, these Sisters' families might not be able to come.

Also, the Junior Course for our Region had to be cancelled.

Six of our serious applicants, are also prevented from coming, one to enter, three for observerships, and the others, for a discernment retreat.

Another of our Sisters went home for her mother's 100th birthday, but with quarantine on both ends (one of those periods with the kind hospitality of our Sisters in Arnhem.) One unique feature to her mother's celebration was that all the extended family (who could not come to the party because of Covid) met outside her apartment balcony to wish her well, while the fire company extended one of the long ladders from their fire trucks up to her balcony where her eldest grandson climbed up with a bouquet of flowers!!

Our country of Norway also found a unique way to celebrate the national holiday, May 17th. This is always a huge celebration, with each city having parades, and local communities having cake together and singing the national anthems. None of this was possible, but instead, Norway had their celebration only on Television, and even that, in a completely new way. Instead of interviewing persons, they showed parades with vehicles. For example, in the Oslo Fjord, there was an armada of ships of every kind that paraded down the fjord. Up North, the Sami – our indigenous people – had a parade of snowmobiles. In another city, it was fire engines going down the main streets...all of these two meters apart. It was a creative way of having a parade. One very meaningful gesture was that the entire country was asked to go just outside their doorways, and sing the national anthem, at 13:00 in the afternoon, so this was a strong moment of solidarity.

Coming back to our own community, certainly there were some Sisters who experienced stress, especially over all the uncertainties of the situation along with economic worries. For example, we were not able to get some of the raw ingredients we need for our creams and have lost a lot of money from that. Some also experience a deep pain from their solidarity with so intense a global suffering.

By and large, however, our community also experienced the deepening of our monastic values: enclosure, poverty, sense of community, quiet from not having guests, visitors, or tourists. It was a gift to know that Sisters would be home: not traveling to meetings, home visits, retreats, etc. It brought us together in a deeper way, made us more sensitive to one another.

We also see that the future WILL be different: in our world, in our country, in our community. We doubt that things will ever go back to “the way they used to be,” and in many ways, we experience this as a positive value and a blessing from God. “God has given. God has taken away. Blessed be God.”