

## **The Cistercians of Sujong “Our Sharing experience Covid-19”**

### **The Corona-related situation in Korea and the Korean churches**

- Korea is a country with a small land mass and a high population density.
- People or organizations (including churches) who are not related to coronavirus defense or its treatment are not allowed to participate in the solid quarantine and medical system. This fact means that the church cannot play any active role in this matter.
- Since there are many large churches and Buddhist temples there are thousands of people participating during worship time. The main epicenter of the corona infection was a religious facility. For this reason, it was difficult to open our church for Masse to the people around us during the time when there was no Mass in the parish church.
- For disaster support subsidies (from central government and local governments), we donated 14,000,00won (about 10,148 Eur.) to social welfare organizations. It is the minimum participation in this situation as a community.

It was a time to share a sense of helplessness and fellowship at the global level, as everyone in the world does. In these circumstances, the Korean church was not allowed any activities, even baptizing people near death; we could only cooperate with the quarantine. It was a dramatic situation in which the priest was forced to baptize the patient in the car if he could manage to leave the hospital. Since last May, at the national level, people have been practicing social distancing in their daily lives.

To answer the questionnaire, our monastic life itself was not significantly affected. We have not accepted retreatants or lay people for about 5 months. But in the liturgy, half of the sisters say that they felt invigorated. Economically, almost everyone felt that there was considerable loss due to not receiving retreats. Not accepting retreats and not permitting people to participate in the liturgy were unavoidable choices in cooperating with the national disaster prevention program. But, many expressed their opinion that we should be open to the neighboring Sisters Adorers of the Precious Blood. Since there is no contact due to social distancing, some said that the sense of solidarity increased in prayer even though there are physical and spatial distances. The opinion that we maintain a normal relationship with the local church without any problems, and that there is more cohesion due to the sharing of disaster subsidies was made clear through the questionnaire.

About the environmental problem as a cause of coronavirus, we can only feel deeply how irresponsible human beings as a whole and as individual have been. It is very heartbreaking that mankind itself must take responsibility for what mankind has committed, but even in this eschatological situation, global decisions are not made. Buying an item for sale in itself is an act that inevitably causes environmental pollution due to over-packaging, but there are no alternatives, either as a cloistered monastery or as any citizen living in a developed country.

In fact, as we realize that this issue is calling for decisions at the national and global levels, our community has been making some efforts. For example, since dozens of years ago most nuns do not use shampoo; we use detergents that are more expensive but pollute the environment less; separate garbage collection is practiced according to the guidelines, and discarded food is used as compost rather than sending it to the sewer. We are keenly aware that we need to find a more positive method of action, but in reality, it is a long way off to find any other method than sharing the suffering of the Earth. We all feel that this little virus is a prophet who contributes to sharing the seriousness of environmental problems globally, nationally and personally.