

## **OUR EXPERIENCE OF COVID 19, OUR LADY OF BAMENDA ABBEY, CISTERCIAN MONASTERY MBENGWI, CAMEROON**

Our Lady of Bamenda is not an exception to the worldwide crisis of the Corvid 19 Pandemic that is causing havoc and threatening everyone. As a community, several precautionary measures have been taken, including the ones from the Government and the ones from the Archbishop on the 3rd of March 2020, such as:

- Not more than 50 persons at mass
- The use of Sanitizers
- Social distancing
- The wearing of face masks
- People to stay indoors.

Personal hygiene and a sense of responsibility were strongly recommended by the Superior to keep the threat of Corvid 19 at a distance from the Community.

Liturgically, we are following the recommendations given by the Archbishop. As a community, we have not changed our program – we still follow the normal monastic liturgical hours.

Our day to day activities and work has not been greatly affected. Our workers still carry on work on the farm, at the clinic and at the bookshop. The only exception is that the weekly consultation carried out by the monks in Bamenda Town has been suspended for the time being.

Economically, we have been greatly affected because movements have been restrained. We now have very few customers for our dairy products, our books and, our herbal medicines. This has come to add to the socio-political crisis that was already existing with its own economic effects caused by the several lockdowns and the blockages of roads.

Our monastic hospitality has also been affected and so we cannot meet up with the needs of the poor who come for help. The closure of the Guest House has also affected some of our measures of hospitality since there is no income.

Our relationship with the Local Church is not an exception as retreats, seminars, pilgrimages, etc., have been suspended. More so, only a very limited number of Christians now attend Sunday mass.

As mentioned above, the two crisis facing us: namely the socio – political instability, and the Corvid 19 pandemic, have greatly hampered our economic activities, hence our present needs boil down to finances, as we still need to pay our hospital and electric bills.

To sum it up, we are still living in a very challenging circumstances, and no one can afford to be indifferent. However, we still have hope and trust that all will be fine as we continue to pray for the end of the Corvid – 19.

May Saint Benedict in union with the Cistercian founders help us at this difficult time.