

How we have been living these months since the beginning of the covid pandemic

First of all, we have to give thanks to God because, in all these months since the beginning of the pandemic and the consequent quarantine, we have not been deprived, even one day, of the Celebration of the Eucharist, thanks to the fact of having a chaplain in the person of a monk of Azul. In like manner, we have been able to live all the Celebrations of Holy Week and Easter. Everything that is going on in the world moves us to intensify our prayer: every day after Vespers we recite in community the prayer recommended by Pope Francis, and we have some special moments of prayer: Rosaries, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, Masses for this intention.

Another motive of thanksgiving is that, until now at least, no one of us has been caught by the coronavirus, nor have there been any other grave illnesses, except for one of our sisters, an aged foundress, bed-ridden for a long time, whom the Lord called to his presence at the end of May. For her last rites, by contrast with other occasions, we were not accompanied by friends and neighbors, although, in fact, our Bishop was able to come to preside the Mass, as well as our local Pastor and some of the Brothers of Azul. The families of some of our sisters have been affected by the virus and are a cause of concern and prayer.

In our country, the strict quarantine, decreed by the government, began in mid-March; it came through different stages of flexibilization, but since, with winter, the number of cases has increased, there are still restrictions for many activities. Our guesthouse has been closed since March, and though our church remains open, practically nobody comes. There is just one couple, that lives nearby in the country, that usually joins us for the Sunday Mass. There is still no possibility of travel except with special permits, and there is no passenger transport such as would allow reopening the reception of guests; neither are reunions in closed places, nor liturgical celebrations in parish churches permitted. In like manner, we have reduced to a minimum our trips out; two sisters alternate for the necessary trips to buy, keeping all the health precautions of prevention.

The situation of our vocations has also been affected: one aspirant who was making her first experience, had to prolong her stay; two others that were going to come haven't been able to do so yet; and still others with vocational interest have made contact by mail, but have to wait to come until the possibility of travelling returns.

What about work? The sale of our chocolates just stopped, both in monastic gift-shops, all closed, and in another business, where the sales depend on tourism. Now in recent weeks, we are receiving some orders and are doing a light production. We continue making rosaries and icons, to be sold when the moment comes. In the meantime, the sisters are dedicated to making repairs in the house, working in the park or the vegetable garden. We are living from our own reserves and from the help offered us spontaneously by generous friends and relatives. We hope we can reactivate in the future the production and sale of our own products, although it is still difficult to forecast to what degree the general economy of the country will be able to recuperate.

We pray to the Lord and to the Virgen, "Health of the sick", that all the suffering connected with this pandemic bear fruits of salvation in the whole world.