

Monastery of Engelszell at the Time of the Coronavirus, July 10, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters of the Order.

“A brother helped by his brother is like a fortress,” the Bible tells us.

It is in this spirit of Cistercian solidarity, so fraternal, that we tell you in a few lines of these very memorable months of our community life at Engelszell.

We are in Austria! The civil and religious authorities reacted very quickly at the first reported signs of the coronavirus and issued a series of very restrictive measures that all of the population, aware of what was at stake, followed with a real spirit of discipline, so much so, that the pandemic was quickly brought under the control of the health services. Eventually — though everything is relative — with the exception of Tyrol, our country was less affected than others.

On our part, it has been painful — as much for us monks as for our faithful friends in the vicinity — to enter [this] confinement and to live our daily liturgy and Mass without any presence of outsiders. This was a rediscovery by our community, living in the nakedness of both its fragility and its smallness. Having stopped the welcoming of guests and visitors, and our with employees working only part-time, outside contacts have been greatly reduced.

All of this has won for us a very calm and peaceable community life, very beneficial for the physical health and spiritual life of each. No member of the community has been affected by the corona sickness. Another sign of Divine benevolence: the quite involuntary, prolonged stay of Father Christian, our novice from Mont des Cats in formation. He came from Engelszell for the Regular Visitation at the end of February but could not leave because of the closing of the borders until the end of May. And also that of Bro. Andreas, a postulant at Oelenberg, who came at the same time, but was also unable to leave until mid-June. They were a strong support appreciated by our community.

All this has its price: our economy, which is vitally dependent above all on tourism, on the sale of our beer and our liqueurs, has staggered under this blow. We hope it will start up vigorously again — God grant us! — to assure our income through the end of the year.

Today, the time has come for resilience. We want to assure our Brothers and Sisters of the Order of our interest and our prayer in all that they are living through. Our Cistercian Family is so great and such a beautiful reality! May God bless it!

Father Marie-Herbert and the Community of Engelszell