

Our community of Sainte Marie du Rivet was fortunate and still is today, not to have had any sisters with Covid-19. We give thanks.

We have also had the privilege of having the Eucharist every day, from the first day of confinement until now since we have a chaplain on site. During Holy Week, we were able to have the great Triduum celebrations in the normal way, while taking the usual precautions.

What we greatly appreciated was the experience of a life more oriented towards contemplation: no guests since the guesthouse was closed, no visitors since the store was closed, no outside presence at the liturgy and the Eucharist. This provided us with the sense of a calmer life and quieter life, without phone calls or parlor visits, without exits except exceptionally to buy food or to go to the pharmacy. We had a closer community life between us, simpler but strongly in communion with the confined world. We were not in a “bubble” culture” to protect ourselves, but in a fraternal rejuvenation opening our hearts to the suffering of the world. There has been a greater intensity in personal and community prayer at offices and in our relationships in community, with greater attention to the most vulnerable and to those close to them affected by the virus. We have painfully felt the fact that most Christians are deprived of all the sacraments and we are in admiration of the imagination displayed by many priests, lay people, to nourish their spiritual life. It has challenged us on the way we live our own Eucharist, communion and all the sacraments.

It was also a scathing experience, because everything had to be cancelled that had been previously been planned, especially for the guesthouse. You had to accept knowing that the nursing staff was under much pressure without being able to provide concrete help to them ourselves. Our postulant describes her experience as follows: *“Since I joined the monastery a year ago, I continue my life as a postulant in the monastery in a “secure” daily life and let others devote themselves to the sick at the risk of their own health and that of their families. This was my first real struggle and renunciation ... it made me feel the price of the sacrifice of my life and my youth, giving it a new meaning, and strengthened my call to a life given in contemplation, fraternal charity and work”.*

Our more difficult area is our economic situation. Stopping lucrative activities for a few months will not go unnoticed. We are grateful for the gestures of solidarity towards our community. Now, the store is gradually resuming a normal course of activity and the guesthouse is opening its doors little by little, while remaining cautious, but the “Santon” production is precarious, because these nativity scenes do not fall into the commodities that are essential to life. The workshop got off to a good start, but now we are wondering about the future and looking for another economic niche. We have a few leads. Despite this economic issue, we made the choice - after the confinement experience - to no longer open the store on Sunday afternoon, to reduce our capacity in the guesthouse and to direct it towards a reception of individuals wishing to experience a real time of retreat and renewal. This choice was made in order to best preserve the atmosphere of silence in the place, in order to preserve for each Sister, the space for renewal that she needs.

We have experienced the universal fragility. Of course, we were not ignorant of it before, but discovering the world in such vulnerability placed us more deeply in God's hands. We feel even more in solidarity with what people are going through. This trial - which is not over - leads us to more fidelity in our spiritual life.