

August, 2020

**Dear brothers and sisters, Shalom**

Greetings from Our Lady of Praise, Abbey, at this turbulent time in history.

Sharing our experience of COVID 19:

When we heard of the outbreak of Corona Virus pandemic in February, 2020, we were touched and moved spiritually, emotionally and physically. There was an atmosphere of great sorrow and distress. We were frightened and insecure of each other as well as the people around us. Most of us were preparing for eminent death at an moment, which helped us to prepare for our passing on to our eternal reward. Meetings were held; how to be in solidarity with the suffering humanity, how to safe-guard ourselves and our employees.

Prayers were intensified in response to the requests of the Holy Father, to appeal to the Virgin Mary. On Fridays, we have been having adoration and fasting the whole day for three months.

We were very much tensed by the Lockdown of our nation for we continued praying together 28 sisters in choir. We were scared that any moment we could be attacked by the police for disobeying the orders of the president. Social distance became the order of the day even in the church and it has affected our prayer life since the voices are not in unison as we are scattered in the choir. Social distance affects everyone psychologically as we are suspicious of the people around us; for example: when we go to public places like hospitals, markets or when we take public transport. We are neither secure among ourselves. We miss the loving warm embrace we have been experiencing in our community, when one celebrates her favorite feast day or birthday. When Sr. Placide Ngabirano celebrated her silver jubilee on 24th June, 2020, it was unheard of and very strange that we could not shake hands nor embrace her for fear of COVID 19! Two of our sisters, are stranded in Kenya because of lockdown and it has affected the community life.

OCSO/OSB Formation Seminars, were postponed, Schools were closed we kept Lamenting 'But Lord how long will this last?' to this day! Worse still Uganda Martyrs Celebration on 3rd June, which is always an international Celebration was limited to a few people, celebrating with facial-masks, no pilgrims! It was so painful especially for our Diocese which was to be the main Celebrant with a newly Elected Bishop! Oh, it was terrible!

The facial-masks, one of corona-virus preventive measures whenever one steps out of the enclosure to the town/hospital, works on us psychologically/ socially, no shared smile, in fact people look cartoons, with these masks!

Our chaplains from the nearby parish stopped coming for fear of reprimand. We are grateful to God and to our father immediate for the temporary residential priest we have of our Cistercian Order from Our Lady of Victoria, Kijonjo at Masaka in Uganda. He is a gifted man of God, skilled in carpentry work; he has helped us with some repairs.

COVID 19 interfered with our Economy as many people are going through the same painful experience. Our shop, alovera-cream and cassock making projects and the retreat guest house were under national lockdown, no customers for our products. Employees were stopped for 3months which made us work harder to earn our living. However, we thank God for therewas willingness and cooperation among the sisters. And there has been a heart-felt silence-prayerful atmosphere which we vividly experienced when our employees were off duty. We are grateful to providence, for we have had enough food from our gardens since Corona outbreak, and we share with the needy.

When we look at how high the death rate of other countries and the anxiety of the people around us, and our families as well, we remain in tension. And seeing the churches closed where people get consolation and togetherness as a family of God, we are greatly disturbed!

So we appeal to God to increase our faith.