

## **HOW DID YOU EXPERIENCE THE TIME OF CONFINEMENT?**

Monastic life is a life of separation from the world for those who live it. It is not a burden but a free and radical choice. But our confinement is different than the obligatory confinement.

By early 2020, the media was talking about a virus that was circulating and wreaking havoc. We thought this Corona Virus would not travel to us.

But one day we learned that it was already in the Congolese capital and was gradually reaching other provinces. On 19 March 2020, the authorities declared mandatory confinement and the full range of sanitary measures to be followed.

Our Mother Abbess and her counsel came together to see how they could help us live this critical moment in human history. While keeping our usual schedule, they organized our activities differently, allowing two afternoons to relieve stress, anxiety and fears related to this pandemic. On Tuesdays after None, we met in the studio. Each sister came with her work and while knitting or embroidering, we exchanged with one another on topics of general interest or on the current situation in an atmosphere of relaxation and conviviality (for an hour). Friday after None, it was community sports. We went into the woods on the novitiate field for various sports. After an hour, we returned very relaxed for the great silence.

Faced with this Covid-19 that hit the whole world, disrupting daily life on every level, we first did as everyone else did. We followed scrupulously the sanitary measures, among others: wearing masks, hand washing, strict confinement. To this, we have added regular intake of natural plant-based preventives - preparing certain medicinal herbs to inhale once a week. We take regular herbal teas of Artemisia, Ginger, and others during the day, especially in the evening.

We closed the Guesthouse and canteen, dismissing all the workers except for a few, to ensure the bare minimum: security, farm, and vegetable garden.

From a spiritual point of view, the time of confinement has made us live in depth our vocation of praise and intercession in the heart of the Church and the world. Unlike other communities of religious who have had to close their Church, we have had the privilege of having Mass every day and we are very grateful to the Archbishop who has allowed this.

We have prayed a lot for the caregivers, the people with Covid-19, for those who died, for the people who devoted themselves to be at the bedsides of the sick, the people who did not have the joy of burying their loved ones, for the security guards, ... and especially for the end of this scourge as the Pope has urged us. Every day at the Service of Tierce we have the prayer of Pope Francis to ask for the intercession of the Virgin Mary for the end of this pandemic.

Bad news came to us from all over the world, from our communities, our families and it affected us a lot and especially in June when several of our sisters lost one, two and even three family members, it was hard, but we always maintained our monastic schedule.

From an economic point of view, it has been a disaster. Given the closure of the Guesthouse, and the canteen, we do not sell anything. In addition to those two afternoons a week that we mentioned above, we have three mornings, for field work. We work outdoors to grow, plant, weed and later harvest beans, corn, eggplant and more.

We thank God for his protection during this difficult period in human history. May the Most Holy Virgin Mary our Mother and Queen watch and intercede for all of us with her Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Your Sisters of La Clarte-Dieu.