

COVID-19 AND US - Report 2020

Following the request of the Abbot General and his Council, we have had a community sharing on our personal and community experience of the last few months. First, it would be useful to point out that our community is small but old, that we only have two employees working inside the monastery and the enclosure, and that our sub-region has had very few cases of Covid-19.

From the beginning of March, a series of guidelines was issued by the Directorate of Public Health and the Quebec Conference of Bishops. We have taken these different directives very seriously.

In mid-March we closed the reception area, the guesthouse, and the church. As a precautionary measure, our cook had to be laid off. However, we have retained the maintenance employee, both inside and outside the monastery, while respecting the recommended distancing with him as best as possible. Our routine of life, for the most part, has not really been disrupted. The brothers therefore live very peacefully this time of confinement. It was not until June 24 that we reopened the church, but only for the Eucharistic celebration, with measures to disinfect the de area, to wear the mask and to distance people.

This containment, which continues to do much, has allowed us to have a more peaceful climate in the house and to help us to better live the monastic enclosure: less exits and extremely limited interaction with the outside.

Since most newspapers have suspended their paper version, keeping only an electronic version, we have changed our schedule a bit to allow brothers who want it (some do not have access to the internet) to watch the early evening news. This allows us to stay in touch with what is happening in the world and to show solidarity, through prayer, with all those who must suffer the effects of the pandemic much more harshly than we do.

As well as the positive developments, the pandemic also had negative effects on the community. During the 4 months of our cook's absence, two brothers saw their task increased significantly, having to take on the kitchen service.

For a few years, a Capuchin from the region has come to give a Day of Reconciliation a few times a year and acted as an extraordinary confessor for the monks who wanted it. In March we had to cancel this day. However, we hope to resume these days shortly.

Although we have heard from other monastic communities via the internet, some brothers have lamented the lack of direct connection with the Father Immediate and other members of the Order.

Our chocolate factory has not been affected too much by this pandemic. Most of our sales are to food markets and these have always stayed open.

Following the example given by the community at the Generalate, we recite the prayer of Pope Francis to end the pandemic at the end of Vespers.

Despite the circumstances, or perhaps because of them, we give thanks to God for what He allowed us to experience.

The brothers of N.D. de Mistassini.