

LIFE AT MOKOTO MONASTERY WITH CORONA VIRUS FOR THE YEAR 2020

COVID19 is indeed a reality in the Democratic Republic of Congo and it is not slowing down its course. At the moment, the city of Goma located 90km from N-D de Mokoto Monastery is the second most affected city in the country (Kinshasa the capital tops the list with 7,872 cases and Goma totals 200 cases and 10,000 cases for the whole of DRC).

Fortunately, the virus did not cause the "deaths" that had been predicted in March, when it was said that there would be a mortality rate of 10% of the population of the capital Kinshasa alone, i.e. 75,000 dead!

If the DRC reports that up to now, there are a few hundred dead and a few thousand contaminated, ... we can be sure that there are fewer deaths than people who have been cured!

To protect us from COVID19 at the ND Mokoto Monastery we have taken the following measures:

- 1) We have increased the distance between us when we are in church, chapter and other places where we gather.
- 2) As for our Eucharistic celebrations, the Eucharist is presided over by a single priest. At the time of communion, all except the president of the Eucharist, takes communion under one species. Everyone walks to the altar and takes a host with his hand.
- 3) In the beginning, we placed the brothers who had returned from a trip in the guesthouse for 14 days before returning to their place in community.
- 4) At the moment we have opted for a new method which consists of subjecting brothers returning from any trip to a two-step treatment: preventive and curative. The first step in the treatment is the inhalation of the steam from eucalyptus leaves under a blanket. The second step is to take Artemisia's hot herbal tea twice a day for 3 days.
- 5) Hand washing is mandatory before entering church and refectory.
- 6) With regard to the faithful of the village who came to participate in Mass with us, we chose to send them a priest for the Eucharistic celebration once a month and on the days of the great liturgical feasts.
- 7) With regard to preventive measures for the whole community we follow the recommendations given by doctors or herbalists: for example, drinking hot drinks morning and evening; eating garlic and onion, drinking herbal teas from the same bitter herbs that cure malaria or the flu.

So far it seems to be going well, as we have not had any cases of the brothers being affected in the community.

The negative impact we are experiencing is psychologically and financially. Indeed, psychologically, in not greeting people by shaking hands or kissing we give the sense of being suspicious of one other. Added to this is the fear of contaminating each other because many of the brothers have contact with the workers and

with other people from the outside. Economically, our cheese production has fallen by 50 per cent due to the lack of the customers who used to buy from us. Similarly, the guesthouse revenues have fallen by the same percentage (50%).

However, covid19 also has a positive impact in reminding us of the basic rules of hygiene. It has also lowered the rate of pollution.

In the end, the COVID19 pandemic opens us up to a form of expanded prayer for the whole world.

Fraternally P Vedaste Prior of the Monastery of Mokoto