

Santa María de la Paz Monastery - Nicaragua

October 21, 2020

Our community in the time of pandemic

During this time of world crisis, the Lord has kept us in his Providence, and we give thanks that we have seen this at every step of our community life.

In March we started taking community measures, such as closing the church, the guesthouse, and the gatehouse. We have distanced our outings for necessary purchases, but whenever necessary, some acquaintances have been kind enough to do the buying and bring it to us. This was at the beginning of the Pandemic. Gradually we have resumed our outings; and we similarly take pertinent precautions with the monastery workers.

Also back in March we experienced the restrictions imposed by the border authorities: when one of our novices had to travel to Honduras for family reasons, she had to extend her stay there after the border closed. When she returned, she had to be quarantined at our guesthouse.

During this time God has blessed us with a chaplain, Father Phil, a priest from the US, enabling us to celebrate the Eucharist and live our normal monastic and liturgical life. He also had to extend his stay from three months to six due to border closures and canceled flights. After him came a Nicaraguan priest, Fr. Efraín, who is staying with us through November. So, in spite of the difficult times, we had the grace to hold our annual community retreat with a priest from Managua, who focused our reflection on the Beatitudes.

In addition, we are thankful we have been able to continue with the field work projects of setting up a cattle fattening program, doing our forestry work, planting our garden, and continuing the rosary workshop in expectation of future sales.

All this has clearly influenced our already fragile economy, given that we cannot generate our own income and must cover expenses through the generous help of the Order, whom we cannot thank enough.

Between the months of September and October, two of our workers came down with Covid-19, so we started keeping strict quarantine in community, with measures that transformed our life: mutual distancing in choir, in the dining room, and generally in our common life and work. It was certainly an interesting experience, in which everything in common was suspended for fifteen days; thank God, no sister was infected. Little by little we started getting news that some of our relatives and close friends had been infected; but providentially they did recover. Still, we were deeply saddened by the passing of some Nicaraguan priests who had shared with us some weeks and months as chaplains in the past.

Our vocations have also been affected: two youngsters who are in next-door Guatemala could not arrive as planned. On the other hand, a young novice who was away from the monastery for a few months was able to return and is in quarantine at this writing, before joining the community.

This time has allowed us to be more united in prayer and communion with our sick and deceased brothers and sisters, as well as with all who face this reality at close quarters: doctors, medics, nurses, and volunteers. We have been getting together for special prayers daily after Terce with Psalm 50 and for Blessed Sacrament adoration every Sunday. We have likewise been holding days of fasting, in communion with the Church and the Pope. And, by dint of sheer Providence that never leaves us, we have been able to help our poorest brothers and sisters who keep arriving at the monastery month after month.

This entire time has provided us a chance to center our life on what is essential and to give witness of Hope and fidelity to God's Love.

God bless our entire human family!