



# Coronavirus

## Lent in quarantine with fear and courage!

*Dear Missionaries, relatives, friends and benefactors,*

For several months we have been experiencing the most devastating period of our history, attacked by this unknown, very small, hidden enemy: the coronavirus (COVID-19). And, while we all try to obey the orders of governments, advised by scientists, try to stem the scourge, the concern increases and sometimes becomes fear. We are concerned for our community, for our family, for the mission community in which we live, for friends and certainly also for ourselves. We are worried now for Italy and Europe, but we also think about what will happen shortly, when this deadly virus will spread to other countries, to other continents. We all ask ourselves, what will become of us? What will become of our life? What future awaits us? These and other questions mature within us these days and we have no answer.

The emergency caused by this deadly virus, which spreads and infects everywhere and anyone in the whole world, generates such a new situation that even in the event of earthquakes or conflicts has never been experienced. In war, you can save yourself by running away, going down to the shelters, but with the virus, this is not possible, there are no escape routes, and the only defense is to prevent it from spreading, through the restriction of normal behavior, avoiding as much as possible any contact between individuals. If during the war people found comfort by going to pray in church, now with the virus that is not possible; the churches remain closed because otherwise they become privileged places of infection.

In this situation, our bizarre isolation connects us not only to the people with whom we share it materially, but also with others, other strangers and brothers at the same time. The tremendous lesson of the virus forcefully introduces us to the narrow door of universal brotherhood. In this strange and weird isolation, we establish an unprecedented connection with the life of the unknown brother and with the widest life of the world; we truly feel missionaries. Undoubtedly, what is bad remains bad, and what is emergency remains emergency. But, even a painful and very negative fact in itself takes on a different value for our life from the way we live it; we choose to live it and, as believers, we try to understand how to go through it in the light of the Word of God. Then even the time of Covid-19 can become an opportunity to rediscover some aspects of our faith, while the time of Lent that we are living can teach us to cross the difficult Coronavirus desert.

The quarantine (forty days) of lent has something to say to the virus quarantine. In its bi-millennial history, the Church for this liturgical time has always indicated "remedies", and "medicines" to cross the Lenten desert and reach, renewed and "healed" from our wounds, the celebration of Easter victory: listening to the Word, and praying and fasting, and through charity. These Lenten "medicines" can indeed show us how to live this time, which is so difficult even for our faith. Instead of protesting for the reasonable and necessary suspension of public celebrations, for our own sake and that of others, could we not "brush up on" some practices that come from the wise Christian tradition? Perhaps then, even the quarantine could say something to our forty days and "force us", as often happens when we are necessarily restricted to the essentials, to rediscover some fundamental elements of faith. In conclusion, I would like

to remind all of us about some fundamental points and invite you to respect them in full with commitment and love.

1. Respect and total adherence to all the rules that come from our governments and the official Church: wash your hands several times a day, do not organize gatherings, do not leave the house, pray respecting the allowed distance between people ...
2. Use time well, do not waste it. Take advantage of this time and dedicate it to something useful and important for us.
3. Pray for all, to pray a lot, helped by the Word of God, which in this time of Lent is particularly significant.
4. Be in solidarity with others, near and far. Not being able to meet concretely, we can be close to others with text messages, with prayer, with availability for small possible services.
5. Take more care of yourselves, for your sake and for the sake of others.
6. Think of the elderly while doing everything possible to protect them and to protect those who, at this moment, are the most vulnerable.
7. To love the other means to look after him, to respect him, to protect him. Love in the time of the coronavirus means attention to those who have no qualifications and are poorer.
8. Let us put new order into our lives, our scale of values, to find out that which is important.
9. Remember to reconnect with the Earth and the ecosystem: only by respecting its balance, will we be respected and preserved by it.
10. Do not forget that we are really connected and not only on the net, that borders do not exist and that we are all on the same boat.

Dear friends, for the moment, considering the information we have, we have a community attacked by the virus and in quarantine: it is the community of Biella where three Consolata missionaries live together with 5 guests. Certainly, our thoughts and prayers go for them and for all those who belong to our family of the Consolata, have been affected by the virus or are afraid that it will arrive devastatingly. Thoughts and prayers also go to our missionaries and our communities who live in poor countries and less structured in terms of health. It's time to stay away from one another physically but closer than ever to the heart. It's time to worry about everyone, it's time for consolation. May St. Joseph be and make us custodians of all!

Courage and forward in Domino!

Rome, March 19, 2020, feast of St. Joseph!

  
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*Superior General*

