



## *Special Edition – Spring 2020/2*

Dear Confrères,

This morning, the spokesperson for the Belgian Crisis Unit told us that we are taking part in a marathon... Moreover, to win the marathon, we need to remain focused and aware!

Authorities almost everywhere are starting to talk about undoing lockdown ... The doors will open, alleluia, but maybe not for all! In addition, protective recommendations will remain necessary for a long time to come. So be brave and be patient! A marathon is 42,195km, which means for us long, perhaps very long, days of patience and perseverance.

The Provincial Financial Council held its meeting by video conference to approve the 2019 financial statement. On the same day, the Provincials were in contact with the dispersed General Council. The Provincial Council will hold its meeting in the same way at the end of April, since the Society and the Province remain operational. Moreover, here is some news received from the Sectors.

Gérard and I have been re-elected to our service for the Province. We thank you for your confidence and count on you to support us during the next three years.

Fraternally,

Georges Jacques

### *Some news from the Province and the Sectors.*



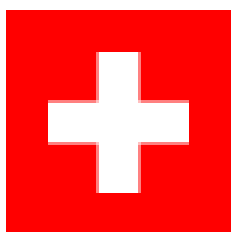
#### **From Ireland – 21 April by Ian Buckmaster**

We are in the 3rd week of lockdown imposed on the whole country on the 28th March. We knew things were serious when the Government cancelled St. Patrick's Day. Since the 28th March, we have no staff except for somebody who comes in to clean. I am happy to report that we are still surviving. There is a very good community spirit in the house and everybody is playing their part. We are cooking and shopping for ourselves and we have washing up teams. We have home cooking five days a week and at the week end we bring in food from

outside. It has proved very satisfactory up to now. Nevertheless, the present situation makes very big demands on the confreres living in the community. We are being challenged on all aspects of the spiritual, mental and physical areas of our lives. Obviously, we can be together in prayer but at 2 metres distancing, it seems a bit artificial at times. We celebrated Easter as best we could in our little chapel and there was general satisfaction that we had, at least, made the effort.

We are fortunate in that we have a property covering six acres which gives plenty of room for those who wish to wander about. A local neighbour has helped us to clear up an old track around the perimeter of the grounds.

The news of the Irish abroad is that they are still at their posts from Glasgow to Johannesburg. For those due to come home this year, there is the problem of travel as travel to and from Europe has been severely curtailed. And when confreres arrive home, there will be period of self-isolation before they can join their families. What will happen in Africa is still not clear but predictions are gloomy. We can be so concerned with our own well-being that we may forget our younger confreres who are still working away and who are also concerned about the welfare of their families back home. Let us keep them all in our prayers.



**From Switzerland – 21 April (Extract from the Letter to Swiss confrères)**

**In Fribourg**, we celebrated Holy Week among ourselves here in the privacy of our little chapel. Moreover, everyone did their best to make these Holy Week celebrations beautiful, dignified and prayerful. We did not omit any. We even had two Fridays, the Stations of the Cross, using a projector, meditating on the events that are affecting the world at the moment: the pandemic crisis and the problem of migrants left to their own devices. We contacted our confreres who are unfortunately isolated in their residential homes and who are in lockdown: no visits. Bernard Jobin, for example, reads the Apocalypse and said that it is the text that is best suited for these days ... The health of others seems good.

**Veyras Community** is well, despite this unfortunate gift generously sent by China. It has not yet appeared on *Route de l'Eglise*. The six confreres are doing as well as can be expected. They take their daily stroll to stretch their legs and get some fresh air; the strongest among them work in the orchard. In fact, we lead an almost normal life, washing our hands regularly and keeping a regulated distance in the chapel and the refectory ... Speaking of chapel, we are very lucky to continue celebrating the Eucharist every day; we had the celebrations of Holy Week as usual, except the Easter Vigil, replaced by the Office of Readings.

The death of Hansjörg Gyr, who was for 3 years at the *Foyer St-Joseph*, did not surprise us; he suffered a lot from various illnesses in 2019. He displayed an exceptional supernatural spirit, without ever complaining, living the Passion of Christ,

as he said. The urn with his ashes was placed in the columbarium in the strictest privacy, as required by 'corona'.



### From France – 21 April

Here are some excerpts from the **diary of Mours by Jean Chaptal**. He tells us how the Mours community of Missionaries of Africa experienced the seasons of Lent and Easter, in harmony with the other communities of the Sector of France.

'On the 26<sup>th</sup> February, under a light snowfall - the only one of this year - we began this Lenten Season Mass with the distribution of Ashes. On Friday the 28<sup>th</sup>, we learned of the death of Jean-Yves Chevalier at Bry-sur-Marne. On the 29<sup>th</sup> February, we learned of the death of René Januel in a nursing home at St Etienne. (Loire). On the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Lent, we had already observed a decrease in Christians at our Sunday Mass, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday, March 15<sup>th</sup>, everything was cancelled by order of the diocese. Masses were stopped in the parishes and therefore for us, in our chapel, for the Christians who come every Sunday as well as during the week.

Our GP recommended that we mark a distance between ourselves in our chapel as well as in our refectory: so, we occupied the entire chapel by arranging for one person per pew, for the Office as well as for Mass. The celebrant purifies his hands with a liquid disinfectant at the Offertory and before Communion.

After the death of Fr. Louis Faivre-Rampant in Billère on the 8<sup>th</sup> March, we received the news of two other deaths: Fathers Maurice Redouin and Jean-Claude Ceillier in Bry, on March the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>. Here in the house, Fr. Pierre Lafollie had a high fever and, on the 18<sup>th</sup> March, he was hospitalised in Pontoise with the news that he has been infected with Covid19.

From the 20<sup>th</sup> March, we decided therefore to take our meals individually in our rooms: the meals were distributed on trays by the kitchen staff, helped by a confrere. The 'lockdown' thus becomes stricter for each of us. However, we meet daily for Lauds followed by the Eucharist and in the evening for Vespers. On Friday, as planned, the confreres, either led the Stations of the Cross, a special prayer, or on the 3<sup>rd</sup> April, a prayer for the sick with the possibility of receiving the Sacrament of the Sick. On Good Friday, it was in the grounds that we were able to follow the Way of the Cross.

Our confrere Pierre Lafollie in Pontoise was getting worse and worse. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> March, he was able to receive a visit from our confrere Jean Louis Godinot, in charge of the community, who had to put on the necessary isolating clothing to enter his room. However, on the morning of the 26<sup>th</sup>, we learned that he had died overnight.

For several days, Jean Chaptal had been feeling very tired. After consulting the doctor, he was invited to go and take the Covid19 test. The next day, he learned that he was positive. Regular medical follow-ups take place either by phone or by a doctor's visit

on site. On the 7<sup>th</sup> April, he received a message from the doctor who considered him 'cured'.

We learned successively of other deaths of confreres in Bry: Henri Frouin on the 29<sup>th</sup> March, then François de Gaulle on the 2<sup>nd</sup> April. On the morning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> April, we learned that our confrere Joannès Liogier had passed away.

Two burials took place at Mours: Pierre Lafollie on the 31<sup>st</sup> March, and Joannès Liogier on the 8<sup>th</sup> April. For each of them, a Mass was celebrated in our chapel and a celebration organised in front of the entrance of the house, at the foot of the statue of the Virgin Mary with the coffins of the confreres, before their transfer to the cemetery. And on the 8<sup>th</sup> April at Bry, our confrere Bruno Chupin passed away to meet his Lord. On Good Friday, we learned of the death of our confrere Michel Lelong. Thus, our Lent will have been marked by the departure of 11 of our confreres.

It was also without fuss that we experienced these Easter celebrations, but that did not prevent us from living it in a way that was creative and vibrant. Thus, the Easter Vigil, the account of creation – the only reading of the O.T. that we read - was read by 7 confreres; everyone had their say and celebrated it after hearing that 'God saw that it was good or very good', bringing a small night-light in front of the Paschal candle, before reading us a few sentences of 'Laudato si' in connection with each of these days of creation

Our celebration continued, on Easter day, with a 'lockdown aperitif', prepared in the glazed awning, at a regulatory distance, of course! There, with our cook, we discussed the events we experienced, but also, sharing the small chocolate gifts hanging on a 'tree of life' planted in the middle of the glazed area before raising our glasses of champagne to everyone's health.

Yes, at Easter, life triumphs over death. Moreover, we hope that the 'Easter season' can bring us all the new life that we all hope for, the joy of being able to meet together in our refectory without delay.'

In addition, here is an extract from this charming **letter from François Richard to the two stagiaire candidates** in France, setting out the objectives of the stage during the lockdown period. This could inspire us all, in a lockdown stage!

'Don't close up on yourselves. Know how to open your eyes to what is happening around you: in the neighbourhood, in parishes, in times of distress, in signs of solidarity. What does it mean to be an apostle in these conditions?

How do you experience fraternity in your community? A time of lockdown can be a time of stresses, a time when everyone is closed in on themselves, but also a time to strengthen community spirit. It can be a time when we can do things or take initiatives to strengthen unity, to improve the living context, to provide unasked-for services.... Know how to be creative in the service of unity.

Last but not least! Your spiritual life. Lockdown can offer times of desertification, suitable for reading or extended prayer times. How do we pray in this context of

suffering and mourning? How do we pray faced with the silence of God who seems to have deserted our poor world? How do we live in faith, hope and charity? The Lord has risen from the dead and invites us to live in fullness.'



### **From Belgium – 22 April (Extract from Flash 07)**

Because of the confinement, Jacques Hermans, secretary of the sector, has been staying at home for a month. From a distance, he therefore works for us. Which is not easy for a secretary.

Paul De Vinck is suffering from a mild coronavirus. He is in quarantine in Varsenare (kasteel). His brother André is his 'foster brother'.

Paul Devigne: because of a long waiting list at the crematorium ... after the cremation, his ashes will be transported to Banneux Notre-Dame.

Jean-Pierre Claude tested positive and died on April 15. As a result of Jean-Pierre's coronavirus infection, all Evere confreres, including chaplain Yvo Wellens, have been quarantined and can no longer leave their rooms.

Arnould de Schaetzen, who arrived from Uganda on Sunday 6 April, spent some time in quarantine at La Plante in Namur. He left to join the community. Because of the confinement he will remain temporarily at La Plante, taking advantage of the good library of the Namur community.



### **From Spain – 21 April, by Jesus Zubiria**

I am happy to inform you that there is nothing extraordinary in the situation of our confreres and our communities in Spain. This is good news!

We note, however, this message from the General Council asking the stagiaires in their second year of their stages to continue their stages until the day when they can safely join their families. This concerns **Simon Apuri**, our stagiaire candidate, who is in Roquetas.



### **From Great-Britain – 21 April**

#### **From Liverpool by Ferdinand Van Campen**

The four of us are well. We are in good health, thank God. We try to live through this time as best as we can. We pray a bit more, and we try to remain in contact with people by phone, mail and Facebook. We enjoy cooking (and eating) and we play scrabble and learn new 7-letter words!

From what we hear and see in the wider community we have the impression that there is a lot of good-will and caring going on. People do the shopping for their elderly

neighbours or relatives, or take their dog for a walk. Many phone-calls are made and food-parcels are delivered. The food bank which was in the church continues, but now in front of the church.

But of course, for most people this is a time of great trial. For those living with anxiety, this time makes it worse. I heard of a young mother who was not able to sleep anymore, plagued by anxiety. Things have improved since her own mother has welcomed her and her family to stay in the parents' house. There are those living with an elderly parent, some of them suffering from dementia and not understanding what is happening. There are those who have lost a relative or friend. They remain very much alone in their grief. They cannot receive visits of those who wish to show their sympathy. There is no funeral service in the church; there are only some prayers at the graveside or in the crematorium with a maximum of ten people.

There are also those, usually with a busy life, who appreciate the advantages the lock down brings. Someone told me about the amount of money she saves now that the shops are closed. People have more time to pray and meditate. Someone told me that they are eating better because they take the time to cook. Some people get to know their neighbours, talking with each other from their gardens.

Our Sunday Mass is streamed. Many parishioners follow the Mass and write how happy they are to assist the Mass on their computers. The 'virtual liturgy' offers us a sense of community these days of lock down. But its limitations are becoming also very clear. How much we are looking forward to meet our parishioners again, to sing and pray together, to hear their laugh, to touch and embrace them!

### **From Rutherglen by Donald MacLeod**

Our Lock-down began on March 23rd. Since then, in concert with the Diocese, we suspended all public Masses and worship in our chapel, as well as gatherings for prayer groups and recreational Bingo sessions. We also thought best to cancel our annual gathering at the end of August at a local hotel, which also brings together our community, the members of the P&F Association and local clergy.

Our daily community timetable has not substantially changed, except for the absence of our regular friends of the Society who normally attend our daily Mass and our weekly Friday Prayer Time & Benediction.

Our programme has continued as usual in other ways, except that we are all seven of us together for everything! Before now, there were always absences of members of the community for local or distant supplies and appeals, as well as local parish visits. For the moment, we are 'confined to barracks', so to speak.

Our secretaries in the top Promotion Office are working from home and collect the incoming mail once a week, which is laid out on the porch table.

In house, we have separated the tables in the dining room, and we communicate with the staff at the stipulated distance, while they are with us during the morning.

There are three staff members who are themselves in lock-down in their families and the work of running the house affairs turns around those who remain. Our gardener is

naturally separate from the internal running of the house and continues his work as usual.

Our confreres, families and friends are in constant contact by every means, not least by greetings cards at Easter and other occasions.

As they say, 'You never miss the water till the well runs dry'. We look forward to resuming full communication with all our families, confreres and friends.

### **From Little Ealing Lane by Richard Calcutt**

The community of Little Ealing Lane is following the requirements laid down by the Government during this time of Coronavirus epidemic. This is especially important for us because of the advanced age and health of so many of the community. In practice this means "staying at home". But we are extremely fortunate in being looked after by our outside staff. So far none of these have fallen victim to the virus and we are grateful for what they are doing for us.

Luckily we have a garden at the rear of the house. It is great to have the opportunity to sit there. Meals are served in our dining room but effort is made to distance ourselves from each other. In order to keep the deadly virus at bay within the house, every morning a confrere goes around wiping all the handrails, lift buttons, etc. with disinfectant. Also anti-bacterial gel is placed at strategic points within the house.

We did manage to celebrate Holy Week and Easter Sunday as a community. Once a week we have a time of adoration, and this is followed by a light supper together in our community room. Obviously our prayer intentions frequently include the victims of the virus.

Every Thursday evening, at 8 p.m. we take part outside together with our neighbours in saluting the National Health Service and other carers who are doing such brave service in looking after victims of the virus. This is done by clapping our hands. Some neighbours have a loudspeaker and a trumpet playing. We all wave to each other. It certainly serves as a bond of unity with each other. That we are NOT ALONE.



### **From Germany – 23 April, by Hans Vöcking**

The image of the Pope alone in St. Peter's Square impressed and the closure of churches, synagogues and mosques for weeks was uncritically accepted. Political decision-makers were surprised at the positive attitude of Christian, Jewish and Muslim leaders towards this decision. On the other hand, the concerns and preoccupations of Christians have changed. Some of them wonder how to organize the prayer life since there is no longer a Eucharist in the parish. Parishes, thanks to social media, offer Eucharistic or prayer services by creating a "virtual" community. Others are concerned about losing their jobs or having their private homes transformed into "home offices". There are also Christians who are looking for ways to help the elderly or large families who have to live in overcrowded housing. Generous gestures are therefore entirely justified.



The restrictions imposed have also limited the activities of the Missionaries of Africa in the Afrika-Center in Berlin and the Lavigerie Gemeinschaft in Karlsruhe. Both Centres were closed for four weeks. However, the state of Berlin has given permission to open their doors from 20 April 2020.

The churches are in a situation where they have to give up a lot, both personally and socially. Surprisingly, only a few days ago, in the press or on the internet one can also read criticisms of the religious communities in general and of the churches in particular. Bishops, theologians and pastors or priests are being noticed for their "theological silence". This is surprising given that these representatives of different religious communities give their point of view on every social, ethical or political problem. At present, there are many people who are asking themselves the fundamental human questions: Where is God? Why does he tolerate such a pandemic? Theodicy is appearing again.



### **Concerning the Provincial Team:**

Nothing to report. We continue to follow what is happening in the different Sectors and prepare the retreats that we will lead in the future. Therefore, a very spiritualising time!

As for Didier's surgery: he is still on the waiting list.





**We have received from our confreres in Mozambique this very beautiful message addressed to us all.**

Dear Brothers,

Easter greetings in the Peace and Joy of the Risen Lord.

This year, most of us celebrated the Triduum and Easter behind closed doors, not for the fear of the “Jews” but for the fear of the Covid-19. Though an unfortunate event happening to the whole world, it is giving us the opportunity to get down to the depth of our faith.

For us here in Mozambique, last year, around this same time, we were being affected by the devastations of cyclone IDAI. We are very grateful to the confreres from all the sectors in the world who sent us their support in various forms.

As the Covid-19 is shifting its epicentre from China to Italy, from Italy to Spain and from Spain to the USA, we the confreres of the Mozambican Sector come in the same spirit of fraternal solidarity to express our support and union with all the confreres at the level of the Society in general, and for the Sectors of Europe and AMA in particular. We know that we cannot manage to reciprocate in equal measure the support that you gave us during the desolation caused by Cyclone IDAI. But the least that we have – our heartfelt thoughts and prayer in the Lavigerian spirit – that is what we are offering to you. That is what we want to express to you in these few lines.

We pray that the Risen Lord who vanquished death after three days come to our rescue and vanquish the Covid-19 as soon as possible, in accordance with His will.

United in heart and prayer,

In the name of all the confreres of the Sector of Mozambique,

Raphael Gasimba, Provincial Delegate.

