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CORONA VIRUS HAS CRIPPLED THE LIFE IN LUDRU

After 18 days of first phase of lock down, I went with one of the village man named Mr. Debendra to



a nearby town called Mohana. As we were going by bike we saw no one going or coming. When we reached the town, no one was on the road, so we were afraid. After we have crossed the church road, a vehicle stopped us and one of the police men came towards us and asked why we were out on the road. He told us that since that day was a day of complete shut down as a fact no one should be on the road. Mr. Debendra, an old man said that his wife was sick

and we were out to meet the doctor. Then the police man allowed to see the doctor. Immediately we met the doctor, took the medicine and went back through a different route.

The central government has given orders and guidelines to all the local authority to make people stay at home. The government had not given any warning or information before the pandemic hit the country. It seemed normal to all until the declaration of the lock down. It came all of a sudden so people were not ready for anything. As it is said that the holy cows roam freely but people were locked inside their rooms. No travelling, no social gathering, no ceremonies or even parties were allowed but only medical travel and that to with permission token. This was something never happened before. The whole area was like a prison and no one was allowed to walk freely.



The villages and especially the church were visited by the local police and the authority. We were told not to have any

liturgical services in the church. Since 22 of March, I have been celebrating the Eucharist in my room with only three or four people. The people are told to stay at home and pray in the family. The government put restrictions on even for the funeral services. I had to cancel the first Friday services and confessions.

This pandemic has made the poor farmers and daily workers to face lots of hardships. The central and the state government allotted some grants but not enough. From the parish community we are not

able to extend our services for we have no funds. It is a newly established parish with poor faithful. However, we visited time to time to console, encourage and making aware the people to follow the guidelines of the government. The government has taken some preventive measures to control the virus. Now we are in the second phase of the lock down and awaiting the down fall of the corona virus from the earth.



This year our Easter celebration was very quiet. The local police and local authority called us and warned us not to gather the people even outside of the church for prayer services. I celebrated Mass in my room and invited the faithful for Holy Communion. I felt like it was the time of Good Father during the French revolution. Always we were vigilant of the coming of the police to our

residence. As I was celebrating the Eucharist, I always look into the window for some sign if any authority coming. There is always fear in me but deep inside there is hope that we shall overcome with this corona virus.

- **Francis Subal, SS.CC.**

REFLECTIONS FROM THE LOCKDOWN

As Bala invites us to share some reflections in this time of confinement, here are a couple of them.

1. Although this year, because it fell on a Sunday, we have not used the readings of the **Saint Damien** Mass, a phrase from the first reading, taken from the letter to the Romans, has made me think about our situation. *"We even boast of our afflictions, knowing that affliction produces endurance, and endurance, proven character, and proven character, hope, and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us."* We are not going to boast of our lockdown, but we can understand it as an **opportunity** to recognize more acutely the presence of the Spirit poured into our hearts and its work to make us resistant, resilient, tested, hopeful ... Let us not miss the opportunity; let's tune into the Spirit.



2. *"Allow me, in contravention of all the rules of rhetoric, to insist once again: it takes more personal prayer, deep, prolonged, and to know how to share it with others. **Without prayer, neither conversion, nor evaluation, nor discernment, nor apostolic commitment are possible**".* These words are from Fr. H. Kolvenbach, former Superior General of the Jesuits, addressed to the Congregation of Procurators, (one of the Jesuit organizing bodies), written on September 23, 1999, (Cf. "Escritos (1991- 2007), p. 133.)

I am convinced that the future of the Congregation in India, its quality (which does not necessarily mean quantity) passes through fidelity to **personal adoration** and **community discernment**. Again, is this confinement an occasion to root in us personal adoration, deep and prolonged? Are we learning to dialogue with the brothers, to consult, to listen with the heart, to tune in with the Spirit?

- *Felipe, SS.CC*

ADORATION IN THE HOLY BIBLE

Adoration is an intimate relationship with our divine Master. When we contemplate him, present in the blessed sacrament of the Altar, Christ draws near to us and in his presence before us in adoration he becomes more intimate with us than we are with ourselves. He grants us participation in his divine life in a transforming union in the spirit. He gives us access to the Father, as he himself said to Philip: *"He who has seen me has seen the Father"* (Jn. 14:9). Therefore, when we are in adoration we experience the Trinitarian God.



When I was reflecting on Adoration in the light of our Constitutions and Holy Scriptures, that consideration led me to see the origin of our Congregation, because our birth was of reparative adoration. Hence, our calling is to repair through adoration, prayers, and sacrifice. As the prophet Isaiah reminds each of us saying: *"Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundation of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in."* (Is. 58:12). This allows us to realize that our reparative adoration is not only a duty to satisfy my own needs, times, desires, but it is an opportunity to sit in the presence of our loving teacher, who is the source of our lives and our mission. As our Good Father said: *"Adoration as being at the feet of Jesus, at the foot of the cross, I left it at the foot of the cross and I am going back there again"*. This means that he experienced the support, the newness, the company, the union, the blessing in his ways and source of consolation. In the same way, the apostles experienced their loving Master, like our founder's experiences in adoration. *"Suddenly Jesus met them and said 'greetings' and they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him"* (Mt. 28:9)

When we reflect on the Old Testament about reparative adoration that was seen in the covenant relationship concept. We know that God restored the brokenness of his people through a covenant relationship, that is *"I am your God and you are my people."* When the people went against God, they returned with atonements for hearts. We read the book of Genesis 3:9: *"But the Lord God called to the man and said to him: where you are?"* That is the emphasis that God seeks, that graciously confronts and offers reconciliation to the brokenness of people. Therefore, when we come to adoration, we deal with our guilt not by hiding from God but by drawing near to Him and

recognizing our brokenness, sinfulness, smallness. In adoration, God asks each of us “where you are”. These words are hope, love, care and courage to renew our relationship. For that reason, in the Bible we find the expression "where are you" about eighty-one times.



Therefore, our Adoration is an act of love that flowed from his heart to experience him, face to face, in the form of divine bread. As Mary Magdalene felt it in her life and showed that love by anointing him. As we find in the Gospel of St. John: *“Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.”*(Jn. 12:3). The act of love filled the house with fragrance; in the same way that our adoration fills us with the attitude of Jesus. As we read in our Constitutions *“We identify ourselves with the attitude of Jesus and with his reparative work”* (art. 4). Therefore,

in the Eucharist Jesus comes to us; in Adoration we enter into relationship with God.

“Eucharist adoration is the greatest of actions. To adore is to share the life of Mary on earth, when she adored the word incarnate in her virginal womb, when she adored him in the Crib, on Calvary, in the divine Eucharist”. (St. Peter Julian Eymardsss).

- **Suraj, SS.CC.**

COVID – 19 PANDEMIC IN INDIA: A CALL TO HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

One of the effects of Covid – 19 pandemic in India is the plight of the poor and the marginalized both in the rural and in the urban India. Ever since the pandemic struck India, lockdown after lockdown were announced with the hope of arresting the spread of the virus among the citizens of the country. The poor and the marginalized in the society were the worst hit persons as a result of such lockdowns *although they were not the carriers of the invisible virus*. The actual carriers were the rich and powerful



international travelers. The daily life and the daily living of the poor and marginalized depended on the earnings of their daily labor-work both in the rural villages and in the urban cities, particularly the migrant workers who had migrated to cities in search of works for income generation. These migrant workers, who were from rural villages, were working in urban cities in various business sectors and were sending their earnings to their families back at home. However, when the nationwide lockdowns were imposed, these business sectors came to a total standstill and the migrant workers

lost their jobs. As a result, they lost their earnings as well plunging their families into further poverty and hunger.

Today thousands and millions of urban daily laborers in cities, particularly those who live in slums and colonies have no work and no income, and thus they too have been forced to live in poverty and hunger. On the other hand, being forced by the realities of joblessness and fear of contracting the virus, the so called “migrant workers”, who used to work in urban

cities in various business sectors, are walking back home to their rural villages treading hundreds of kilometers on the highways under the scorching summer heat without money and without food. Many deaths have been reported of these migrant workers who died of dehydration, cardiac arrest, hunger and thirst, and road accidents as they walked without ever reaching their destinations.



The scenes of migrants’ exodus still continue on the highways and byways of India today. The scenes of such human exodus on the highways and byways and their human plights are, in conscience, bothersome and disturbing begging many humanitarian, moral and faith questions about the poverty, hunger and death of these poor and marginalized of our rural villages and urban cities. Who understands their plights? Who feels their miseries? Where is God in all this? If He is there at all in all this, does He have a name and face who can hear their cry or in whom they would dare to place their HOPE? As it looks, in the eyes of the ruling dispensations both in the Center and in the State



and in the eyes of the rich and powerful, these poor and marginalized (*The anawims of God*) have become *non-persons* who are to be *seen* and *treated* with utter *apathy and indifference*. The very ones who build and contribute to the growth of the nation and its economy with their sweat and blood have suddenly become *non-existent persons*. *There is a complete lack of recognizing a suffering humanity with compassion and mercy, and with solidarity and dignity*. These are gospel calls ...these are Christian calls for fundamental options for the poor and marginalized of *God’s anawims*.

Nonetheless, the theological virtue of HOPE which gives meaning to and purpose of our human existence in the midst of such human suffering and death remains in all its truth. It still calls on



people of good conscience and people of good-will to shed “rays of hope” of compassion and mercy, and of solidarity and dignity to this suffering humanity who have been forced to bear the brunt of Covid – 19 pandemic. There are voices still calling on people, “Let us not lose hope; for not all hope is lost. We can still care for. We can still *be being human to another human person*.” There are people of good conscience and people of good-will still going out of themselves with a heart of humanity caring for the

humanitarian needs of these poor and marginalized of our society. These are “rays of hope” which instill HOPE in them that *they can still walk the path of suffering and death, and yet they can still Live with Hope.*

It is in this context, pricked by our moral conscience and impelled by our Christian faith call, that the SS.CC. Region of India chose to respond, in whatever ways it could, along with other humanitarian *good samaritans* and people of good will. We may not go out to the highways and byways, which is our poverty as we find ourselves in, to the rescue of the migrants walking back home, but since our presence is based mostly in the urban cities, we chose to respond to the humanitarian needs of the poor people whom we serve in our socio - pastoral neighborhoods, slums and colonies irrespective of their caste and creed. Our humanitarian response to the needs of these poor is only a “drop of water” in the vast ocean of a suffering human community; nonetheless, it is a share in the work of our “reparation of a human community” that is broken and stricken.

In the months of April and May, the Regional local communities, in their respective socio-pastoral and formative ministries areas/localities, were able to carry out the following humanitarian relief works responding to the needs of poor people they serve and co-exist with in their neighborhoods, slums and colonies.

Damien Social Development Institute (DSDI) was able to reach out 408 families in urban slums and leprosy colonies distributing food rations, masks and soaps. It still has a plan to reach out to 80 widows in Ludru Mission with food rations.



Immaculate Conception Church pastoral community in Serampore (Kolkata) in collaboration with the Daughters of Charity Sisters and with the contribution of some parishioners was able to reach out to 50 families with food rations. It still has a plan to reach out to 50 more families in the rural villages of Kunjobon and Janghipada with the support of Sevakendra – Calcutta.

St. Damien of Molokai Church (St. Mary's School Chapel) pastoral community in Dum Dum (Kolkata), in collaboration with the Missionaries of Charity Sisters and with the contribution of a few parishioners, was able to reach out to 39 families with food rations and educational assistance to students. It is still making plans to respond to other pressing needs of people post-lockdown period through family solidarity and donors.

Sacred Hearts Theology Formation House in Danga Dighila (Kolkata) was able to reach out to 81 families in their neighborhood with food rations from their Lenten Sacrifices.

Pavitra Hrudaya Sangha Trust, the legal entity of SS.CC. Region of India, was able to make fund contributions to “The Prime Minister Cares Fund” and to Sevakendra – Calcutta as part of our Civil Society Organizations (CSO) responsibility towards fighting the Covid – 19 pandemic.

As the migrant workers keep walking back to their homes in rural villages from urban cities, the pandemic curve keep rising in India instead of flattening as it is happening in other countries. Hence the humanitarian crises of people are not going away any sooner. Rather the humanitarian response from Civil Society Organizations and from people of good –will, and more so from the “disciples” of Jesus who share in his Mission remains a **call** to respond with a heart of compassion and mercy, with solidarity and dignity to the human suffering caused by the pandemic.



- *Alexis, SS.CC.*