



**Blessed Easter  
to you all !  
Alleluia!**

**¡Feliz Pascua  
para ustedes!  
¡Aleluya!**

**Joyeuses Pâques  
à vous tous!  
Alléluia!**

COVID - 19



## Index

Gerard Francisco Parco <i>TIMONER</i> III	5
Timothy RADCLIFFE, OP	6
Carlos AZPIROZ, OP	7
Bruno CADORÉ, OP	10

### **Being deprived of the Eucharist in the mystical body.....14**

Zenit – Online solutions have been very creative in continuing to spread the Word of God. But as the pandemic continues, isn't it a matter of pastoral urgency to reflect on solutions that maintain total respect for the guidelines of health safety while allowing non-virtual access to the Eucharist? 14

The impression is that some priests are resigned to this situation and that many believers have given up receiving Communion. Is it all right to resign ourselves saying that a better time will eventually come when we will be able to receive Communion? 15

But how can that actually be done? Who could handle it and how? 16

### **The Seven Last Words.....19**

### **The Quarantine Lectures.....20**

### **Poet-theologian says isolation can bring gain as well as loss.21**

Crux: Is the obvious historical parallel to what we're experiencing the plague, or is that too facile? What does the situation call to mind for you? 22

Many bishops, faced with the suspension of public Mass, have been emphasizing "spiritual communion." In light of the Catholic spiritual tradition, are there any reflections you'd like to share? 23

Are there any particular stories from the Christian past, stories from the lives of the saints, for example, which stand out for you as examples of "spiritual communion"? 24

How does forced solitude affect the spiritual life? For a tradition such as Catholicism that places so much emphasis on community, what might the long-term fall out of all this be? 26

You're a poet as well as a theologian ... has this situation stirred any poetic instincts? 27

### **Is it ethical to make us stay home like this?.....30**

The individual good needs the  
common good, and vice versa.  
30

### **Forms of Preaching by the Brothers Around the world....34**

Italy	34
Spain	34
Granada (preghiera del Rosario)	34
Malta	35
Albania	35
Portugal	35
Nigeria	35
South America	35

### **Family/home celebrations of holy week and easter triduum .....36**

### **Epidemic Danger and Catholic Sacraments.....37**

On the Civic Response of Quarantine Measures	37
Sacraments in an Era of Pandemic	38
What is Our Current Task? Hope, Interiority, Christian Empathy	41

### **Coronavirus is depriving us of touch, the nourishment of our humanity.....44**

Living well now and being grateful	44
We need proximity and touch, hugs and kisses	45

Cyberspace is not the same,  
but... 45

Confessions of a first-time  
'Skyper' 46

Fasting from the shared  
intimacy of the Body of Christ  
46

The joy of preaching comes  
from faces 47

Something good from this  
contagion 47

A single human community from  
which we cannot exit 48

Post scriptum: What I have  
learnt 48

### **Approved the particular directory of the fraternity of st Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum) 50**

### **Announcing the Launch of the Dominican Charism Modules 51**

### **Adrian Dominican Sisters And Co-Workers Sew Masks For Use At Dominican Life Center .....53**

### **A Word Of Hope.....56**

### **Their Calling Was to Lay Hands on the Sick. Then Came the Coronavirus.....57**

### **Calendar of the Master.....61**

### **Calendarium Liturgicum Ordinis Prædicatorum.....62**



ORDO PRÆDICATORUM

PASCHA



GERARD TIMONER III | BRUNO CADORÉ | CARLOS AZPIROZ | TIMOTHY RADCLIFFE  
2020

*John tells us in the Gospel: On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"*

(Jn 20, 19-21)



Portrait

Painture of Br. Gerard  
TIMONER, O.P.

88<sup>th</sup> Master of the Order  
of Preachers.

Exposition in Seminary S  
aint José,  
Biên Hòa, Vietnam.

Impact: CHÂN DUNG /

THE PORTRAIT

Author: LÊ HIÊU

Technique: ACRYLIC

Dimensions: 70 x 70

87<sup>th</sup> Master Bruno  
Cadoré, OP

86<sup>th</sup> Master Carlos  
Azpiroz, OP

85<sup>th</sup> Master Timothy  
Radcliffe, OP

## **Gerard Francisco Parco TIMONER III**

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The Lord is Risen, Alleluia! But just like the disciples who were in locked doors when Jesus appeared, we remain in the locked doors of our convents or houses because it is a charitable act to help prevent the rapid transmission of the novel corona virus that has claimed the lives of thousands, including some of our own. Even as we sing alleluia, we cannot extinguish the fear in our hearts, or find answers to questions in our minds: when could we break the Eucharistic bread again with our people? When could we visit and hold the hands of those who are elderly and vulnerable? How could our people survive when many jobs are lost



and many might perish of hunger if not of illness? How long would this pestilence last?

The brothers here in Santa Sabina told me that I should greet you and offer words of hope in this extraordinary Easter in the time of a pandemic. I could not do this alone. So, I invited our brothers who served as Dominic for the Order, symbols of our unity in the Order.

*Let us listen to Brother Timothy, Fray Carlos and Frère Bruno...*



## **Timothy RADCLIFFE, OP**

Happy Easter! Almost twenty years after finishing my term as Master, here I am still, older, fatter and with less hair, but still alive! And I am very grateful for the invitation of our Master, Brother Gerard, to say a few words.

Happy Easter! A few days ago, I finished a month of study in the Ecole Biblique in Jerusalem. I went down to the Holy Sepulchre

to say a final prayer at Jesus' tomb. Because of the pandemic, there was no one else there. The tourists were all absent.

Today we celebrate another absence. That Jesus was no longer there. The stone has been rolled away and the tomb is empty. Jesus is released from the confinement of this dark place. Soon we shall celebrate his Ascension to the Father, who is everywhere.

These days, billions of people are locked in their homes because of this terrible pandemic. Their homes have come to feel like prisons. We wait not knowing how long this is going to go on. Many people feel isolated and alone.

Today we preach the good news that Risen Christ frees us from all that imprisons and confines us. This is what the Dominican Family is doing all over the world in thousands of different ways. Just three examples out of hundreds.

I think of our brothers in the lay fraternity in Norfolk State Penitentiary, Massachusetts, USA. They are all imprisoned, some for long sentences. But in this dark place, they are bearers of hope, and preachers of the gospel. No prison can confine their message.

I think of our brothers and sisters in Iraq. Often they are exhausted, living every day with the danger of violence and persecution. But they go on teaching and preaching. They refuse to be imprisoned by fear.

All over the world, we are called to release people from imprisonment. If we are to do that, each of us we must ask what imprisons me? I suppose that it is always the fear of loving fully. Love is dangerous. Herbert McCabe OP used to say, 'If you love, you will be hurt, maybe killed. If you don't love, you are dead already.' The Risen Christ is wounded. We need not fear getting hurt. Take the risk of loving more.

Neither should we be oppressed by the fear of death either. One of my best friends in the Order, David Sanders, died recently of the covid-19. When he learnt that he was dying, he asked me for a good book on death! He was unafraid to look it in the face. He said, 'If I have been preaching the resurrection all these years, I had better show that I believe in it.'

Finally, on this Easter Day, let us reach out to any of our brothers or sisters in our communities who seem isolated. Let no one feel alone today. Let us open the door for each other. Let us breathe freely of God's oxygen, the Holy Spirit who will soon be sent. A sister in the Ecole Biblique was suffering from asthma. She was given some oxygen. She said, *'This is heaven. I can breathe.'* Let us breathe freely the oxygen of God, the Holy Spirit.

Happy Easter!

***Carlos AZPIROZ, OP***

I am grateful to brother Gerard, our Master, for this possibility of uniting and embracing each other from afar, beyond confinement or isolation through the beauty and closeness of faith, communion in the Risen Christ.



In recent years... (to recall only a few examples) we have been "affected" by various epidemics (SARS, EBOLA, COVID -19)...

We have prayed with the Psalm: In the shelter of the most high, you will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday... [Psalm 91 (90)].

The anguish and anxiety of these times we are going through are dissipated by the warmth and color of Easter.

At the Easter Vigil, even through the media and virtual networks, we will again witness very eloquent signs. Among them I highlight the following: the celebrant "marks" the Easter candle, joining these words to the gesture:

+ CHRIST YESTERDAY AND TODAY, BEGINNING AND END

(by marking on the candle the vertical and horizontal lines of the cross),

+ ALPHA & OMEGA

(marking the two letters of the Greek alphabet above and below the cross).

+ ALL TIME BELONGS TO HIM AND ALL AGES. TO HIM BE GLORY AND POWER, FOREVER AND EVER. AMEN

(marking the figure for the current year 2020).



Finally, once the inscription of the cross and the other signs mentioned have been completed, the grains of incense will be fixed to the candle in the form of a cross as we listen:

+ BY HIS HOLY AND GLORIOUS WOUNDS MAY CHRIST THE LORD GUARD US AND PROTECT US: AMEN.

The priest lights the Easter candle with the flame of the new fire while saying: May the light of the gloriously risen Christ dispel the darkness of our hearts and minds. With the lit candle he will say three times: "The light of Christ!" and we will respond "Thanks be to God".

St. Thomas the Apostle confessed "my Lord and my God" as he contemplated the wounds of the Lord. It was not a response to a new miracle or to a masterly discourse by Jesus about the meaning of pain, death or life (cf. John 20:28). The Lord did not come to explain pain, death, life, but to fill them with his presence from the tenderness and mercy of God. Brother Bruno has always wanted to remind us of this.

Like St. Dominic, we preach the compassion of God. We live communion in the same passion.

*Our preaching is COMPASSIONATE.*

This enlightens us from two perspectives. A more active one: PASSION means strength, impulse, energy, dynamism desire! (How many saints speak and experience the desire for God as the motor of the spiritual life) brother Timothy has told us a lot about the importance of desire.

Jesus died driven by the passion for the Father and the Brothers.

The other perspective is perhaps more "passive": passion understood as suffering, pain, tears... knowing how to endure all this. The Lord died

because men and women die. He died because we men and women also kill.

The wounds of the Risen One are evidence of Jesus' passion.

The life and preaching of St. Dominic is permeated by this double PASSION for God, for the brothers; of the passion for knowing how to suffer.

Fr. Damian Byrne used to summarize it simply: selling his books out of love for the poor; preaching mercy out of love for sinners (crying for them and wondering what will become of sinners?); giving himself to the mission without limits for love

of those who are far away and do not know God, the pagans (without any derogatory accent) wishing to die if necessary.

Brother Vincent De Couesnongle asked the Dominican Family "Where are my Cumans?

When talking about epidemics or diseases, the expression "they are or we are carriers of this or that virus" is often used. But in reality we are bearers of the Good News: JESUS LIVES.

May this Easter find us bearers of 3 evangelical signs, which synthesize true joy, which we really cannot contain, enclose, limit and spread without limit: THE LIGHT which we cannot put under a table because the Lord is coming and we are going to meet him! THE MUSIC that everyone listens to from a distance because there is a party! (even the brother of the prodigal son... who did not want to enter the party) THE PERFUME of Mary that flooded the whole house because this is the aroma with which one recognizes the preachers of the Gospel.

My dear brothers and sisters in St. Dominic and St. Catherine, HAPPY EASTER!

## ***Bruno CADORÉ,*** ***OP***

Good morning to all of you, my dear brothers and sisters. It is with all my heart that I join brother Gerard, our Master of the Order, and brothers Timothy and Carlos in wishing you a beautiful and holy Easter! As I do



so, many faces, many memories spring to mind and come to my heart, especially of those of you who have been even more affected than others by this pandemic that is almost paralyzing the whole world. And yet yes, even in this ordeal, a beautiful and fervent Easter to you! May it strengthen even more in our hearts the faith that the life of the Risen Christ is stronger than all darkness, fear and death.

We have experienced this ascent towards Easter during a very strange Lent, marked by the threat of a pandemic, its almost inevitable progression and the

emotion of its ravages around us. For many, it meant a time of confinement, of isolation, of distance from those we love to be sent to, in order to share with them the joy of meeting Jesus Christ. A time of anxiety for our sisters, our brothers, our families, our friends, and everyone around us. It also meant a time of pain, illness and mourning; a time of economic dramas caused by the shutdowns and confinements, which draw an uncertain and perilous horizon, with the fear that it will once again bring further harm to those who already have a difficult life. We fear that, as we recover from the crisis, they will once again be the first to be forgotten, the first victims. Indeed, this pandemic crisis has revealed, more strikingly than ever before, the inequalities, divides as well as economic and political managerial choices which are in urgent need of being challenged so that good of all may truly become our common priority.

Of course, the world will emerge from this crisis. But how? Should Easter not be an opportunity for Christians to say that the exit from this crisis should not be a return to their previous way of life? Do we not confess that all new life springs out of the kenosis of Christ, which we forget too quickly? We, ourselves, are capable of this transformation, which has its origin in Christ who shared our humanity. We will come out of confinement like the disciples when, after being bemused by the events of the Passion and barely daring to believe the announcement of the women who had found the tomb open, they came out of the cenacle. But these men and women did not come out as they had entered, and it is indeed this impetus that Dominic wanted to inscribe at the heart of the Order from its beginnings here in Prouilhe, from where I am happy to greet you today.

They came out as witnesses to the last meal shared with their Master. They came out as brothers and sisters to announce a fraternal future for humanity. A future in which everyone cares for each other's destiny, beginning with those whom the world, when it thinks it is going well, has developed the guilty habit to confine them "out of the world". This future cannot be reduced to the imperatives of economic liberalism alone, any more than it can be about the protection of biological life alone without consideration of the global dignity of each person. This year, Easter is the right time to announce the end of these omissions and rejections.

They came out as disciples taught in the Book of Charity, from the life given and shared from the cross, which has gone from being an instrument of humiliation to a pulpit whose holder is the Word of Truth. This book of life teaches that one cannot offer life without divesting oneself of one's own. It teaches that the world



cannot think of a future of life and peace for all without radically changing the priorities it wants to give to the deployment of the creativity with which humanity inhabits and transforms the world to make it a hospitable world for all, beginning with those who today barely have a place in it, barely have a name. After the confinement, the time will come for change to truly take care of the common home.

They came out of the cenacle as missionary disciples, happy to go out to join every language and every culture, to prolong the conversation of friendship initiated by the Word of God who came to fulfill in fullness the promise of covenant made by God at the beginning of all beginnings. This implies a conversation which can no longer be reduced to games of influence and power between nations, which can no longer mix up truth and lies in politics, which can no longer be summed up in a record of success that crushes the most humiliated of the world, which can no longer accept that fear between people is the only possible matrix for building a future.

They came out as missionary disciples.

Strengthened by the risen life of Christ, they wanted to proclaim that communion among men cannot be the fruit of the confrontation of forces and powers, derisory hiding of vulnerability and ignorance, but that communion is precisely the fruit of the humble acceptance that man cannot master everything. The disciples announced that man's greatness is not in the construction of a world that can be mastered because it would be made to man's measure and image. They announced that man's greatness lies in his ardent desire to humbly inhabit a world that he receives and that he offers freely to those near and far. This world is made out of fraternal communion and a future in common. It is a world in which each person can grow with all, in the shared hope of a future with all and for God. Let us celebrate Easter to transform us, at the school of Dominic, to witnesses, preachers and promoters of this communion.

Happy and blessed Easter to all of you!

Thank you very much Brother Timothy!

¡Muchas gracias fray Carlos!

Merci beaucoup frère Bruno!

Our novice master told us years ago: to be a Dominican is to belong to a Family! And this Family is all over the world. Brother Timothy sends his greetings from Oxford, England, Fray Carlos from Bahía Blanca, Argentina, frère Bruno from

Prouilhe, France, and I am here in the room of St. Dominic in Santa Sabina. We are all in this together, facing the threat of illness and death, caring for those who are sick, mourning the passing of some members, finding new ways of preaching and sharing reflections, inviting people to join us online in our prayer and liturgy, doing concrete works of mercy such as sharing food and protective equipment to those who take care of the sick.

Many Christians celebrated the Easter Triduum in locked doors. Would our lives be the same after the pandemic? More importantly, should our lives be the same after Easter? Our Risen Lord enters through locked doors, greets us with his peace and tells us not to be afraid. When everything seems hopeless and we feel helpless, our Risen Lord assures us that he will see us in “Galilee”. It is the place where the apostles found their vocation. Our “Galilee” is our vocation story. It is where Jesus asked Peter, “do you love me?” As preachers, lay or ordained, active or contemplative, we became Dominicans because we said “yes” when we heard the same question deep within our hearts. And Jesus tells us: “feed my sheep”. There is so much hunger today: hunger for the Bread of Life, hunger for the Word of God, hunger for food, hunger for compassion and solidarity. For the love of Jesus, let us continue to feed the flock of the Risen Lord.

## BEING DEPRIVED OF THE EUCHARIST IN THE MYSTICAL BODY

*The idea of a domestic church*

*“What would be the repercussions consequences of being deprived of the Eucharist in the Mystical Body?” On Holy Thursday, when the Church gives thanks for the priesthood and for the Eucharist, Br Jean-Ariel Bauza Salinas, op answered Zenit’s questions about the current situation created by the pandemic and by the need to adopt rigorous health regulations in order to block contagion and defeat the virus. Br Jean-Ariel Bauza Salinas, a Dominican friar, who has a degree in theology, and teaches sacramental theology, was for 10 years chaplain of the Bergonié Institute, Centre for the fight against cancer (CLCC) in the region of New Aquitania; he was also diocesan chaplain of artists in Bordeaux. Since 2016 he has been Secretary General of the Order of Preachers in Rome.*



[Read online](#)

***Zenit – Online solutions have been very creative in continuing to spread the Word of God. But as the pandemic continues, isn’t it a matter of pastoral urgency to reflect on solutions that maintain total respect for the guidelines of health safety while allowing non-virtual access to the Eucharist?***

The Word of God is addressed to our hearing, it reaches our ears, so it can be broadcasted by the media. Still, we mustn’t neglect what the “real” presence of one person means for another– but the Body of Christ touches our bodies from within. It is a true body-to-body experience that is offered to us when we receive



communion. The living Christ embraces us when we receive him and that can't be experienced virtually.

There is a pastoral urgency, as your question clearly suggests. But what worries me – and my concern is shared by brethren and theologians I have spoken to this week – is the lack, at times, of a substratum, a “humus” that's not so much moral as theological, which makes it possible for us to reflect on the basis of our relationship with Christ so that we can give a full, complete and nourishing response on this theological basis and from this theological standpoint. If the pastoral need leads only to a multiplication of the presence of the clergy on the social media, something is lost. The multiplication of the Bread of Life must go hand in hand with this multiplication of church visibility and must nourish it.

As regards virtual reality, it is of course valuable, when someone is ill or isolated or in lockdown, to be able to follow the celebration of the Eucharist on the internet or on television. You may not be able to take part, but you can be directly linked with the celebrants, and many pastors have done all they can to reach those who are entrusted to their care. But this can't be the habitual state of affairs for Christians, and at Easter, when we are facing the central mystery of our faith, I realise that many worshippers feel a lack, an emptiness. That's a sign that they are healthy! It's obviously not a “Eucharistic fast” to be indulged in – Fr François-Marie Léthel spoke of this in one of his articles – but rather a case of being deprived of what gives us life. How can we face up to this? Virtual reality is not a miraculous solution, and the approach to virtual reality is not the same everywhere. The Orthodox theologian Jean Zizioulas recently said that he disagreed with the broadcast of the divine liturgy on television.

***The impression is that some priests are resigned to this situation and that many believers have given up receiving Communion. Is it all right to resign ourselves saying that a better time will eventually come when we will be able to receive Communion?***

There is a dimension of Christian virtue that is put into practice when we accept things as they are. Reality speaks the truth! It's obvious that the sanitary measures recommended and indeed imposed by our governments must be scrupulously observed. The Christian is not above the law. True law is always at the service of the common good. This is true of the efforts we are asked to make today. Priestly

ordination doesn't allow the priest to avoid physical and biological pressures. And a parish priest whose pastoral ministry means that he meets large numbers of different people, if he falls ill, may contaminate all those he wanted to serve!

But we may also think of the comparison Pope Francis made of the Church to a "field hospital". The ministers of the Lord, who are also, by definition, "nurses or doctors" of souls, may be inspired in exercising their pastoral role by the necessary health measures taken by the medical profession.

There are two sides to the problem raised by the impossibility for the Christian people to gather in church for the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice: presence at Mass, and Communion. It is undoubtedly impossible in the current situation to celebrate Mass in the presence of the assembly. This is painful and regrettable, but the gathering together of all those who make up the congregation amounts to a significant risk factor, according to the specialists. But there's another side to the question: Eucharistic Communion, contact with the living, live-giving Body of Christ. Can we not imagine, in full respect of the tradition of the Church, a way for the Eucharistic Body of Christ to be taken to believers so that they can receive Communion? Isn't that done normally for the sick? What is more, the presence of the tabernacle and of the reserved hosts is historically justified by the need to take Communion to the sick. I was for ten years chaplain of a centre in Bordeaux for the fight against cancer, the Bergonié Institute. Hundreds of times I took the Body of Christ to people in hospital.

### ***But how can that actually be done? Who could handle it and how?***

During the Synod for Amazonia, one of the proposals was the ordination of viri probati. The Synod Fathers were concerned, according to one bishop, to find a way of "making the Eucharist present in isolated communities". The Holy Father didn't adopt this solution in his Apostolic Exhortation. But what was felt three months ago regarding the need for the Eucharist in these isolated communities in Amazonia is relevant now. Today the world is experiencing a worldwide situation of isolation, suffered by our families, by our religious communities, by our unmarried or isolated friends shut up in their homes.

We have probably not yet developed sufficiently all the wealth offered by the idea of the domestic Church. Perhaps we ought to resume some of the Eucharistic practices experienced in the Church of old, in times of danger or war, to uphold

the faith of believers. For instance, why not entrust the reserved hosts to those heads of households who go to Mass every Sunday and are faithful to the Sacrament of Penance, so that they can give Communion to their families on Easter Day, after receiving the Lord under their roof as worthily as possible? This applies of course to those believers who are spending this period of lockdown together, or to isolated believers. Of course this would entail a judgment, a “discernment” on the part of the pastors, and there are also practical problems regarding how it could be done. For the priest, this would require the greatest possible hygienic precautions in preparing the pyx and the hosts, never touching them with his bare hands. There should also be available a handbook (text or video) with the liturgical texts on the administration of the Eucharist. As for the faithful, there would have to be preparation for those who would come to receive the Body of Christ to be taken to their homes. In France, Spain and Italy, in many castles, even today there is a private chapel! Without actually building a chapel, those who were to receive the Eucharist in their homes could prepare a suitable, lovely, prayerful space. Just as we symbolically welcome the humanity of Christ in our cribs, we could really welcome him into our homes.

This would bring us closer to the idea of the “outward-looking Church”, “close to the people and less clerical”. Why is it only the clergy who currently can really have access to the Body of Christ, while the laity are the recipients of the virtual initiatives offered by the clergy? Christ cannot remain in the sacristy, his Body in the tabernacle, while the faithful cannot have access to him. It is exactly the same as when some museum-churches are visited more by tourists than by people who come to pray. Who should go forth to preach on the roads of Galilee? The subject of the action in the phrase “the outward-looking Church” is Christ, and those Christians who are united to him. As Christians we are Christophori, bearers of Christ through our baptism, and in the case of ordained ministers, sent forth to offer the gift of his merciful love. This is why priests are marked with the seal of Christ, configured to him. The great challenge is to be open to Christ, to allow Christ to act through us – Christ who is already ahead of us in the power of the Spirit.

To conclude, I feel that we cannot neglect something of great importance in this time of crisis. We must not miss this opportunity for inner renewal, in the heart of the Church, in the bond and union of its members. Here there is something vital, essential, that touches the very roots of ecclesial ontology. The Church, the Mystical Body, lives on the True Body – on that alone, by the action of the Spirit.

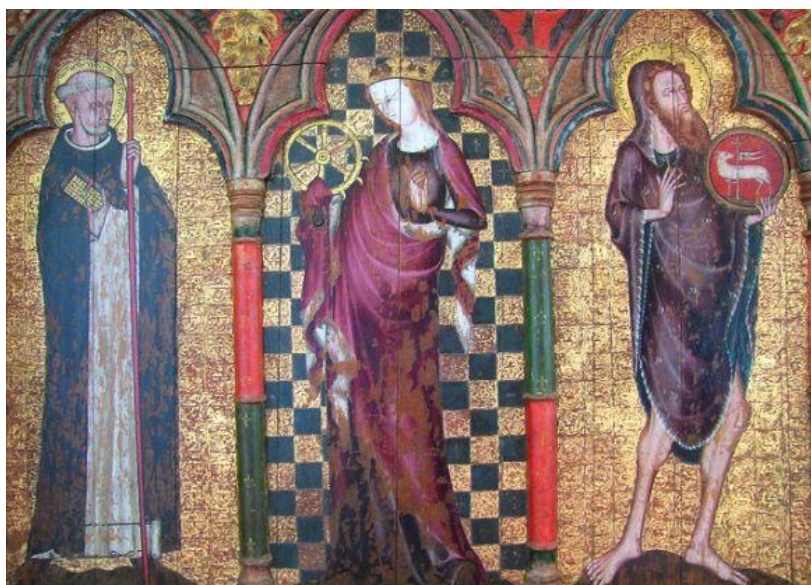


No virtual undertaking, no pious practice – not even indulgences – can take the place of this spiritual nourishment, the Panis vivus, of which hundreds of thousands of laypersons will be deprived in these Easter celebrations. What would be the repercussions of this deprivation of the Eucharist in the Mystical Body? Deterioration, death. Without the life-giving Body, the Church dies. “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life”, says the Lord (John 14:6). Take and eat.

## THE SEVEN LAST WORDS

*From the Friday before Palm Sunday until Holy Saturday, we will upload a daily podcast meditation on the Seven Last Words from the Cross, to accompany you and help you prepare for the mystery of Easter.*

April 03, 2020



This Holy Week, the Dominican student brothers at Blackfriars Oxford invite you to meditate on the Seven Last Words. In this ancient devotion, the Church ponders Jesus' last words as he hung from the Cross, finding in them a great source of spiritual nourishment and consolation.

From today until Holy Saturday, we will upload a daily podcast meditation, to accompany you and help you prepare for the mystery of Easter.

We are also launching this initiative on Hozana, an online community of prayer where you can receive and share a great variety of spiritual resources, Scripture readings and commentaries, meditations, novenas, prayer campaigns and much more.

 [Godzdogz - The Seven Last Words](#)

## THE QUARANTINE LECTURES

St. Thomas Aquinas teaches that God always brings good out of evil. That's why we're launching our live streaming Quarantine Lectures. We'll keep it going until the quarantine is lifted!

*(Schedule and video stream below.)*

Subscribe to the Quarantine Lectures (includes Holy Week Retreat) to:

- Get your TI Holy Week Retreat booklet
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- Actively participate in each lecture: ask live questions by video or chat, join post-lecture discussion groups, and participate in instant polling, via Zoom. (Or just watch on YouTube Live or Facebook Live.)



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The next lecture will be live-streamed here on YouTube:



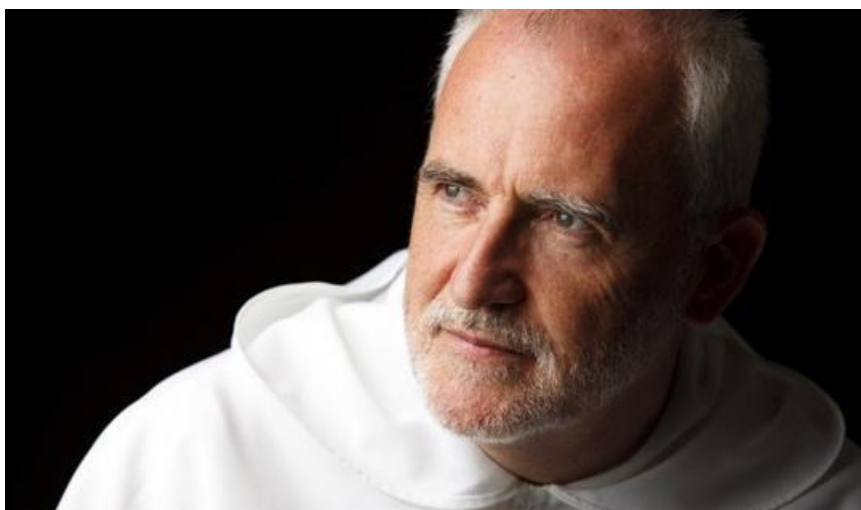
[LiveStream](#)



## POET-THEOLOGIAN SAYS ISOLATION CAN BRING GAIN AS WELL AS LOSS

Apr 3, 2020

Dominican Father Paul Murray is one of English-language Catholicism's most prominent contemporary theologians and poets, and he reflects on the spiritual significance and fall out of the coronavirus pandemic.



*Dominican Father Paul Murray. (Photo Credit: Laici Domenicani della Provincia Romana.)*

ROME Dominican Father Paul Murray is one of English-language Catholicism's most prominent contemporary theologians and poets. Born in Northern Ireland in 1947, he joined the Irish Dominican Province in 1966 and was ordained in 1973.

Murray has published five collections of poetry, including *Scars: Essays, Poems, and Meditations on*

*Affliction*, and most recently, *Stones and Stars* in 2013, in addition to numerous books and essays on theology. He teaches the literature of the mystical tradition at Rome's Dominican-run University of St. Thomas Aquinas, universally known as the "Angelicum."

Crux recently reached out to Murray via email to talk about the spiritual significance and fallout of the coronavirus pandemic. The following are Murray's responses.

***Crux: Is the obvious historical parallel to what we're experiencing the plague, or is that too facile? What does the situation call to mind for you?***

**Murray:** I'd say there are real parallels between what is happening today with the present pandemic and the plagues and pandemics of the past. What's more, there are things which we can learn from the wisdom of the Christian response in those early centuries.

I have particularly in mind here the response of St. Cyprian, the Bishop of Carthage, to the pandemic which afflicted the Roman Empire in the third century. It's said that in Rome, at the height of the outbreak, approximately 5,000 people were dying every day. This pestilence was the second of two pandemics which marked the very first transfers from animal hosts to humanity, something that's characteristic, of course, of the present corona virus.

St. Cyprian, while recognizing the appalling nature of the pandemic, saw it first and last as an opportunity for the strengthening of faith and hope. In his opinion the situation called for enormous courage and enormous trust.

"What a grandeur of spirit it is," he declared, "to stand up with living faith before "the onsets of devastation and death" and, instead of being paralyzed by fear, to "embrace the benefit of the occasion." By this Cyprian meant the opportunity for Christian believers to manifest to those around them a willingness to bear the cross of the moment and, at whatever cost, to do everything they could to assist those in the greatest need.

But why had this pestilence come upon the world? If God really cares for us, where is God to be found in all of these catastrophes? The response Christian spirituality gives to this question - and it is the question of all questions - possesses little or nothing of the bright cleverness of a well-argued, academic answer.

Instead, with humility and reverence, all four Gospels together, and with them the great spiritual tradition, direct our attention first and last to the figure of Christ Jesus on the cross. It is to that presence, and not to some kind of abstract,

indifferent deity, that we are encouraged to bring all our doubts, and all our anguished questions.

And while we ourselves are engaged in searching for answers, while we are presuming to put our questions to God, there is a sense in which, St Cyprian reminds us, God is questioning us, God is engaged in probing and searching our hearts.

Cyprian writes: "How fitting, how necessary it is that this plague and pestilence which seems horrible and deadly, searches out the justice of each and every one, and examines the mind of the human race, asking whether or not those who are healthy are caring for the sick, whether relatives dutifully love their kinsmen as they should, and whether doctors are refusing to abandon the afflicted in their charge."

***Many bishops, faced with the suspension of public Mass, have been emphasizing "spiritual communion." In light of the Catholic spiritual tradition, are there any reflections you'd like to share?***

First of all, let me state the obvious: for countless thousands of Catholics today it is nothing less than a tragedy to find themselves unable to attend Mass, and so unable to receive Christ in Holy Communion. In light of this unhappy situation the advice now being offered by the bishops for all those at present in isolation to begin practicing what has been traditionally called "spiritual communion" is unquestionably wise.

Of course, as a spiritual practice, it is nothing as great as actual attendance at Mass. And it may well appear, at first, as a very poor substitute indeed. But "spiritual communion" is in itself a tremendous grace, as has been attested by saints and theologians over the centuries. St Teresa of Avila, for example, has this to say: "When you do not receive communion, and you do not attend Mass, you can make a spiritual communion which is a most beneficial practice; by it the love of Christ will be greatly impressed upon you."

Spiritual communion, when it is authentic, always has at its core a desire to be one with Christ in the Eucharist. Desire of this kind I was privileged to witness once in the life of a prisoner on death row.



Catholic Mass had not been celebrated in that particular part of the prison for several years. The prisoner in question, a Catholic, struck me as a very ordinary guy. All the more striking, therefore, was the strength, the force, of his desire to attend Mass and to receive the Eucharist. He asked the authorities of the prison that Mass be celebrated at least on Sundays, and he kept on asking although ordered to stop. After some considerable time, permission was granted, but only after he had suffered a great deal.

When, some months later, I celebrated Mass for him and for a small number of other prisoners on Death Row, I noticed that he wept at the moment he received the host. And, just after the Mass, when I spoke to him through the bars, I noticed that once again tears were flowing down his cheeks. He said to me: "It's only when you are deprived of something that you realize how precious it is!"

***Are there any particular stories from the Christian past, stories from the lives of the saints, for example, which stand out for you as examples of "spiritual communion"?***

There are, of course, a great number of stories which could be recalled in this context. But the story which, for me, most stands out is the story of the imprisonment of the Carmelite poet and mystic St John of the Cross. Captured and taken from his priory, John was forced to live in appalling conditions, beaten regularly, and almost starved to death. He appealed to the authorities to be given permission to attend Mass, but this request was refused.

Astonishingly, it was in these dreadful conditions that John began to write what is arguably the greatest mystical poetry in the Catholic tradition. One of the poems speaks of the fountain of living water welling up in the heart of the believer, but always within the darkness of faith:

"How well I know the spring that brims and flows, although by night!" The poem's brief concluding stanzas constitute a meditation on the Eucharist. The first begins: "This eternal fountain is concealed from sight / Within this living bread to give us life." Here, although John is cut off from the Mass, he finds that in a real way he is present to the mystery, his whole attention focused on the Eucharist. The final stanza reads: "I long for this, the living fountain-head, / I see it here within the living bread, / although by night."

Over the centuries, Christian men and women, when deprived of the sacraments, discovered in their need some rather surprising ways of practicing spiritual communion. A bishop from Bulgaria told me many years ago that, during a certain period of Communist persecution in his country, almost all the priests of his diocese were either dead or in prison. As a result, the people of God, when they wanted to go to Confession, would go to the graves of the priests, and it is there they would confess their sins to God.

Murray has published five collections of poetry, including *Scars: Essays, Poems, and Meditations on Affliction*, and most recently, *Stones and Stars* in 2013, in addition to numerous books and essays on theology. He teaches the literature of the mystical tradition at Rome's Dominican-run University of St. Thomas Aquinas, universally known as the "Angelicum."

Crux recently reached out to Murray via email to talk about the spiritual significance and fallout of the coronavirus pandemic. The following are Murray's responses.

Crux: For people today who are feeling deprived not only of the immediate grace of the Eucharist, but also of contact with friends and family and with fellow workers, is there any particular reading you would recommend?

Murray: Yes, there is one text which comes to mind, a remarkable prose-poem by the Jesuit priest, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. Finding himself, on one occasion, out in China's Ordos Desert where he was unable to celebrate Mass, Father Pierre sat down and composed a work entitled *The Mass on the World*. It contains radiant lines such as the following:

Since once again, Lord, I have neither bread, nor wine, nor altar ... I, your priest, will make the whole earth my altar and on it I will offer you all the labours and sufferings of the world ... I call before me the whole vast anonymous army of living humanity, those who surround me and support me though I do not know them ... I know we cannot forestall, still less dictate to you, even the smallest of your actions; from you alone comes all initiative - and this applies in the first place to my prayer ... Do you now, therefore, speaking through my lips, pronounce over this earthly travail your twofold efficacious word ... Over every living thing which is to spring up, to grow, to flower, to ripen during this day, say again the words: This is my Body. And over every death-force which waits in readiness to corrode, to wither, to cut down, speak again the commanding words which express the supreme mystery of faith: This is my blood.

De Chardin may or may not be a great scientist or a great theologian but he was, on the evidence of this meditation alone, a remarkable poet. Even Jacques Maritain, who was passionately opposed to the Teilhardian vision, could speak of The Mass on the World as “the great text of Teilhard.”

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, referring in July 2009 to St Paul’s vision of the world itself becoming a living worship, remarked: “This is also the great vision of Teilhard de Chardin: in the end we shall achieve a true cosmic liturgy, where the cosmos becomes a living host. Let us pray to the Lord to help us [all the baptized] to become priests in this sense, to aid in the transformation of the world, in adoration of God, beginning with ourselves.”

***How does forced solitude affect the spiritual life? For a tradition such as Catholicism that places so much emphasis on community, what might the long-term fall out of all this be?***

In Christian history, apart from the story of Christ’s solitary experience in the desert, and that of John the Baptist, the first reported incident of self-isolation is when the disciples out of fear gathered together “with the doors locked” (John 20:19). They were together, yes, but cut off from the rest of the world.

That sense of isolation is further indicated in Acts when we read of how the disciples were once again together, this time “in the upper room.” What is at once worthy of note is that, at this time, they did not allow their hearts to become frozen with fear, something which might very easily have happened.

Isolation can, as you know, all too easily breed fear or breed anger or breed feelings of bitterness and despair. What made the difference for the disciples, what transformed their experience completely, is that “together with some women, and with Mary the mother of Jesus, they devoted themselves with one accord to prayer” (Acts 1: 14).

Prayer, we are told again and again in the great spiritual tradition, is what can transform a dark and unhappy experience - something that may well feel like a curse - into an experience of profound inner transformation, a beginning sense of peace, and even, after some time, of unexpected joy and blessing. And this is something which - astonishingly - holds true, whether the solitude which is experienced is something forced upon us or something chosen.

All that being said, in the history of the Church, in the history of the world, no one has ever witnessed what we now find ourselves experiencing: forced solitude, forced isolation as a global phenomenon. Almost impossible, therefore, to know what the long-term fall out will be. Our identity as a community of believers, will it in some measure be undermined by the sustained loss of contact with the visible, sacramental character of Catholic life and liturgy? Or will that very isolation itself quicken in our minds and hearts a new hunger for what we have, perhaps, over the years, taken for granted, or have been prepared to live and to understand at a merely superficial level?

I am no prophet, but I have absolutely no doubt that if, in our days, God is permitting the entire world to be shut out from all its own ordinary bright and busy activity - and if the world, as we used to know it, has begun in this new state of isolation to look almost like a monastery - then when finally the threat of the virus has gone, the world, and the Church at the heart of the world, chastened and humbled by this unique experience, will be greatly renewed, greatly transformed, and in ways we can hardly imagine.

***You're a poet as well as a theologian ... has this situation stirred any poetic instincts?***

I'm not at all sure that the Muse is going to befriend me at this time. To my cost I've come to realize that she can behave very much like an abandoned cat. And, in recent years, if the truth be known, I've busied myself far too much with writing prose!

But, speaking of poetry in general, I've no doubt that, at this testing time, when writers will almost certainly discover they have more pains and sorrows to cope with than distractions, their new, enforced solitude will breed new forms of creativity. "Afflictions," Henry Vaughan reminds us, "turn our blood to ink."

But what, it might be asked, is the point of poetry at a time of affliction? Is it not the case that, when confronted by someone in great affliction, our words - all our words - seem to die in our throat? And why, in any case, should a poet or an artist expect that their words or their music will bring any kind of help or consolation to those men and women living through a truly dark time?

Etty Hillesum, a young Jewish woman from Holland, although she knew that she was about to be taken to a concentration camp, and to a certain death, found time to acknowledge in her diary - it was the final entry - the enormous debt which she



owed to creative writers and artists. She wrote: "Far too easily we shrug off the spiritual heritage of poets and artists, saying to ourselves: What use is that sort of thing to us now?" And she went on: "In turbulent and debilitating times we can and should turn to the poets for support and a ready response to our bewildered questions."

Needless to say, art and poetry cannot offer anything approaching a rational answer to the questions which are rising in our hearts, especially at a time of great distress. So, what then is the nature of the support, if any, which they can offer?

Allow me to give one example, taken not from the life and work of a poet, but from the life of Ludwig van Beethoven. Beethoven's close friend, Dorothea von Ertmann, first lost one of her small children, then another, and then another, until all her small children were dead. Beethoven at first found no words to say to her.

But, finally, he went to her house, and when he had seated himself at the piano, he turned and said: "Let us converse in music." And he played for over an hour. Later, Dorothea remarked to a friend: "He said everything to me, and also finally brought me consolation."

No small part of that consolation, I would say, is that Dorothea's anguish, her experience of loss, was named. It was given a voice. That is one of the things which art and poetry can achieve. And it is also, of course, a significant part of the consolation which we find in reading God's Word.

It is no accident that so much of Scripture - so many of the books in the Bible - assume the form of poetry. Instead of communicating the Word through clear and distinct ideas, God sometimes prefers to speak through parables, short stories, and poems. Witness, for example, the Psalms, the Book of the Apocalypse, and the Book of Job. God, it is true, often comes to us in the guise of a teacher, and with a word of challenge.

When, however, we find ourselves in affliction, is it not the case that God comes to us in a humbler way, the way Ludwig van Beethoven came to his grieving friend? Is it not the case that, in and through the living Word, God sits down with us, as it were, and through inspired poems, parables, and stories, speaks to our heart?

*Dominican Father Paul Murray. (Photo Credit: Laici Domenicani della Provincia Romana.)*



[Poet-theologian says isolation can bring gain as well as loss](#)



[Under lockdown, has the whole world become a monastery?](#)

# CRUX

Taking the Catholic Pulse

## IS IT ETHICAL TO MAKE US STAY HOME LIKE THIS?

Apr 03, 2020

***The individual good needs the common good, and vice versa.***

What are the ethics of large-scale quarantines?

At the outset, I have to acknowledge that I am writing as a Catholic moral theologian and bioethicist who has learned much from the philosophical and theological synthesis of the great Dominican saint, St. Thomas Aquinas, O.P. We live in a pluralistic society and there are alternative ways to justify social quarantines. Nonetheless, I find that the classical ethical account that appeals to the common good is a compelling one.

Ethics is about human flourishing. It is about living a truly fulfilling and full life. It is about crafting a joyful and resilient life amidst a broken world. And because I am a Christian and because I have seen the data in my life and in the life of others, I would have to add: And only with God's grace!

For many people, ethics is about what "I" should do. Should "I" do this? Should "I" do that? For many people, ethics is about the individual and how he or she should pursue the good. This is the good that we call *the individual good*.

However, we are social organisms. We live in communities. We flourish – or not – in our communities. Thus, there is a dimension of ethics that must be communitarian. This part of ethics talks about what "we" should do. Should "we" do this? Should "we" do that? Here, ethics is about the community. It is about how we, together, pursue the good. This is the good that we call, the common good.

*These two aspects of ethics are necessarily and inextricably entangled because individuals cannot flourish without their families and their societies.*

These two aspects of ethics are necessarily and inextricably entangled because individuals cannot flourish without their families and their societies. It is hard to thrive when you are living in an impoverished country. It is a challenge to read in a town without books. It is difficult to be healthy when you are living in a virus-stricken city. The individual good needs the common good, and vice versa.

Large-scale quarantines only make sense in the context of the common good. We have quarantines, not to protect the individual *per se*, even though individuals are protected, but to protect the herd. Social quarantines are not about YOU or ME. They are about US. They are ethically justifiable precisely because they protect the common good.

In our contemporary public health crisis, large-scale quarantines are being established to protect and to preserve the healthcare systems of a community. Without a healthy healthcare system – pun intended! – many patients will die unnecessarily, not only from COVID-19, but from heart attacks, strokes, and appendicitis, simply because they did not receive the care that they would have needed to survive. As the tragedy playing out in northern Italy has revealed, without social quarantine, COVID-19 can overwhelm and crush a community.

But should social quarantines be mandatory? I am currently living in Manila where we are in a 24-hour lockdown. I can only leave the house to buy groceries, and only if I have a quarantine pass that is assigned, one per household, by the local *barangay*, i.e., local district authorities. It is a mandatory lockdown and quarantine violators have been arrested and fined.

Shouldn't individual citizens be given the freedom to decide whether or not they are willing to assume the risk of infection and disease? If you do not want to get sick, then you should stay inside. But if I am willing to take the risk of COVID-19, then I should be able to go to the bar! Is this still not a free country?

These self-referential questions misunderstand the purpose of a social quarantine.

Quarantines are not about protecting you or me alone. Take the example of a viral infection as the falling action of dominoes in a domino circle. During a quarantine, dominoes are separated not just to protect the individual domino but, more importantly, to protect that domino and every other domino that could fall if it



falls. By their very nature, quarantines are in place to protect the herd! They are not set up primarily to protect the individual.

Individuals should not be given the freedom to determine whether or not they submit to a quarantine, because individuals should not have the prerogative to make decisions that directly affect the others around them.

The single college student who becomes infected on spring break in Clearwater, Florida, has the potential of infecting numerous persons. She could survive COVID-19, but her elderly neighbor may not. She should not have the liberty of toppling the other dominoes around her. There are times when the common good can and should limit the individual good.

I have read posts on social media from people who are upset that stricter lockdown procedures have been established or are being established in their community. They are upset because they have self-quarantined. They have been practicing social distancing. They have followed the rules. Shouldn't these be enough? Tragically, no.

As we have seen in Italy and in Spain and in Florida, there are enough biological cheaters in every society that undermine the efficacy of social distancing practices. It takes just a handful of these cheaters to continue the viral spread that threatens a society's health service and therefore the common good. It takes just one domino to topple all the dominoes behind it.

Stricter lockdowns are meant to prevent these cheaters from continuing to cheat.

Finally, what about the economic consequences of social quarantine? Social quarantines devastate an economy and can trigger a recession. They bankrupt individuals and businesses. They can ravage whole industries. And because of these consequences, they can increase suicide rates and trigger a rise in overall psychological distress. Some on social media have wondered: Is the cure worse than the problem itself? Is extended social quarantine an over-reaction?

The honest truth is that social quarantines will devastate economies. They will bankrupt individuals and individual businesses. Tragically, the burden of these economic effects will also disproportionately hurt the poor and the most vulnerable among us.

Which is why the legitimate authorities of a community must provide adequate food and shelter and the economic and psychological support that citizens will need to endure extensive social isolation. Here in the Philippines, *barangay*

officials have been regularly distributing food parcels and supplies directly to households in social quarantine.

But we have to consider the alternative. If the pandemic is left to run its course, there will be tens, if not hundreds of thousands of deaths, and not just from COVID-19. There will be millions of sick. There will be devastated healthcare systems and broken health care professionals. These too have an economic impact. These too can trigger extreme psychological distress.

In the end, it is about prudence. It is about making wise decisions about an uncertain future with limited and uncertain data. I would rather err on the side of fewer lives, rather than on fewer dollars, lost. We can recover an economy. We can never recover the dead.

[Interestingly, after reviewing 80 empirical studies, it is striking that one epidemiological review of the health effects of the Great Recession (2007-2008) concluded: "The literature did not support a clear impact of the Recession on mortality" (Margerison-Zilko et al., 2017). In other words, the Great Recession did not increase the number of deaths in society.]

*Fr. Nicanor Austriaco, OP*

## FORMS OF PREACHING BY THE BROTHERS AROUND THE WORLD

### Italy

-  Dominican Province of the Philippines Official "Siete Palabras" on Good Friday
-  Frati Domenicani di Santa Maria Novella
-  Convento San Domenico Cagliari
-  Basilica Cateriniana di San Domenico
-  Parrocchia domenicana di S.Maria del Rosario in Prati
-  Convento San Domenico di Bologna
-  Santuario Madonna dell'Arco
-  Vitae Fratrum - Frati Studenti San Domenico
-  [L'Osservatore Domenicano](#)



[Frati Domenicani dell'Italia Settentrionale](#)



[Domenicani - Provincia Romana di S. Caterina da Siena](#)



Centro Domenicano di Studi Familiari

### Spain



Dominicos Jerez



Convento de San Pablo. Dominicos-Palencia



Dominicos Orden de Predicadores



[Dominicos](#)

### Granada (preghiera del Rosario)



Basílica de Ntra. Sra. de Atocha

## Malta



Rabat Dominicans

## Nigeria



St. Jude Apostolate Yaba

## Albania



Famullia Shën Dominiku – Durrës

## South America

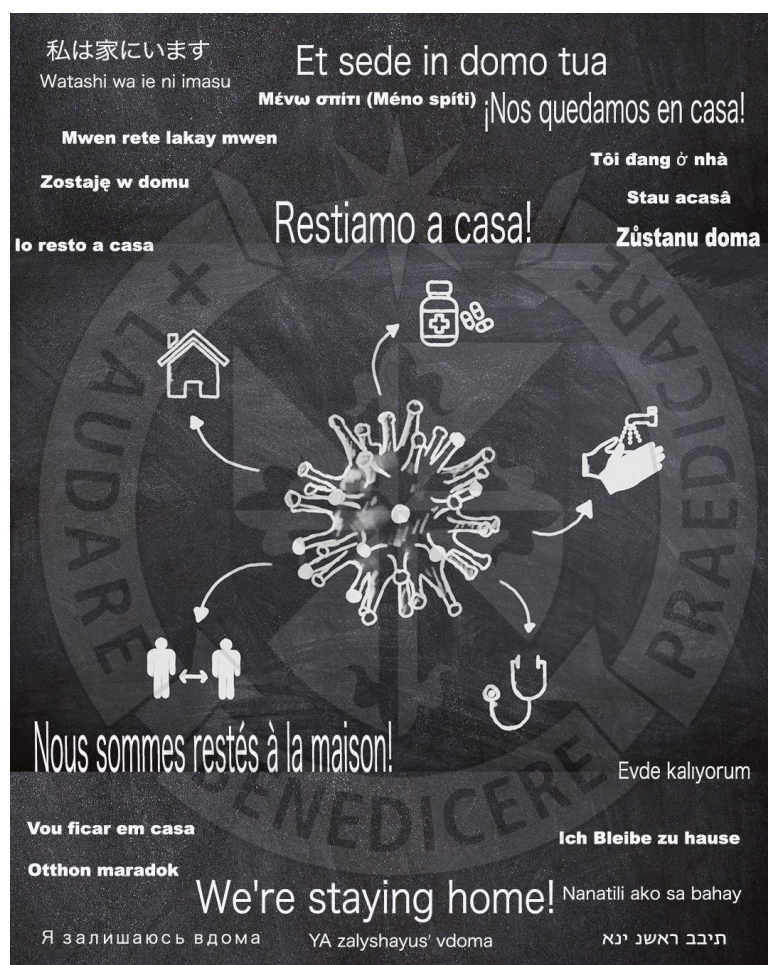


[Adorar En Espíritu Y Verdad](#)

## Portugal



Paróquia de Cristo Rei – Porto





## FAMILY/HOME CELEBRATIONS OF HOLY WEEK AND EASTER TRIDUUM

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) in its Supplement to the Recommendations for the Holy Week and Paschal Triduum Celebrations in time of COVID-19 states that with regard to the:

*"Holy Week and Paschal Triduum Family/Home Celebrations: These we offer to our faithful so that they can use them even if they cannot be physically present in all our liturgical celebrations. It is to be noted that these Family/ Home Celebrations are different and are to be used apart from the liturgies we offer to our faithful to watch and listen to. These Family/Home Celebrations can be used after the family has followed the liturgical celebrations of the Church through radio, television, and social media. The father or any of the elders of the household can lead the celebration."*

Below you can download the pdf of the Family/Home Celebration during the Holy Week and Paschal Triduum. Stay safe and may you live the Holy Week in a holy manner.



Family-Celebrations-of-Holy-Week-and-Easter-Triduum-at-Home.pdf

*Source: Archdiocesan Liturgical Commission Manila*



## EPIDEMIC DANGER AND CATHOLIC SACRAMENTS

9th April, 2020

As the Church enters a Triduum where a great majority of the faithful lack public access to the sacraments, I'd like to offer some reflections that stand in sharp contrast to those currently being promoted by the editor of First Things, my friend Rusty Reno, regarding the current pandemic, civic responsibility, and access to the sacraments. In fact, I take his views to be rather misguided, though well-intentioned, and am

grateful for his magnanimity in inviting me to offer an alternative position. I realize the issues are fraught, and anyone's view is necessarily subject to a fair amount of fallible prudential judgment. I hope, however, to at least ground my arguments in both Catholic principles and a realistic assessment of our current situation, so as to develop what I think are measured and appropriate positions.

### *On the Civic Response of Quarantine Measures*

My first claim is based on a basic given of natural law. The state has a fundamental obligation to protect human life, especially when it is gravely threatened. This obligation is compounded in a time of epidemic if there is a danger of a generalized collapse of the medical system through a rapid and overwhelming influx of new cases of a deadly disease, which COVID-19 certainly is. In a context where the medical system breaks down, deaths from the disease multiply and many other maladies cannot be safely treated. The state, then, has a moral obligation to seek to halt or slow the spread of the disease. In requesting a thoroughgoing but temporary quarantine, governments across the world are following both traditional, time-tested procedure and proven scientific advice. In doing so they are acting in accord with human inclinations to protect life that are

both basic and intrinsically good, even ineradicably so, despite the effects of sin on political organizations. Civic governments are wounded by sin, but not radically depraved. They can still pursue and uphold basic natural goods, as they are seeking to do in this case.

Furthermore, because temporary (two to three months) quarantine measures are the essential key to stemming transmission rates so that societies can learn to deal with this illness more competently, quarantine is also a necessary first step in the restoration of public economic well-being and civic freedoms. Opposing the two (health vs. civic flourishing) is scientifically unrealistic and ethically irresponsible.

The Catholic perspective on the common good and solidarity can and should naturally align with the act of public reason requiring temporary quarantine, not protest it in the name of a misbegotten exaggerated libertarianism. It is true that Christians can and should maintain measured reserve regarding political regimes and the state, especially when they illegitimately ignore the moral obligations of natural law or encroach upon arenas of religious freedom. But Christians should also be on guard against exaggerated individualism, magical thinking that ignores scientific evidence, and religiously rationalized narcissism. Protesting quarantine because it disrupts one's lifestyle choices can be a sign of displaced individualism, denial of reality, and bourgeois entitlement. Furthermore, it is obvious at this time that the national community must agree on measures of public health as a precursor to resolving larger political and religious disagreements. Here Christians should exhibit a sense of solidarity in pursuing the common good, and foster a sense of greater empathy for those who are especially vulnerable: the elderly, those with pre-existing medical conditions, people with disabilities, and the poor who frequently have a lower quality of health, to say nothing of the young and ordinarily healthy people who are also dying from this disease. To cause division on the fundamental good of protecting human life during a pandemic by way of moderate quarantine measures seems to belie these efforts.

### *Sacraments in an Era of Pandemic*

The first thing to be said about the suspension of public masses is that it is not innovative nor is there any evidence that it stems from undue influence of a secular mentality. In fact, there is clear evidence that in medieval and modern Europe, as well as in the U.S., this form of response on the part of the Church is a very traditional and time-tested one. St. Charles Borromeo has been mentioned much in these discussions. He closed the churches of Milan due to a plague in

1576–77. During this time, he arranged for masses to be celebrated outside and at street intersections so that people could watch from their windows. There wasn't any question of distributing communion since it would have been rather unusual in this period for most people to receive regularly at mass. This lasted about two years. There are many other medieval and early modern examples that could be cited, but much more recently, in 1918, the churches in many parts of the United States closed for public worship during the Spanish Flu. In New Orleans (hardly a Protestant city) the city ordered that churches had to close, which did prompt some outcry from Catholic pastors who said that this had not been done during earlier epidemics. They were in error. Old moral theology manuals classically indicate that one of the reasons a priest can celebrate mass privately without a server is due to plague, which shows that earlier moralists understood that priests might not be able to celebrate publicly during such times. The bottom line is that the Catholic Church generally did whatever was reasonable to prevent the spread of disease and to comply with rational city ordinances. It chafed a little and pushed back against things that seemed unreasonable, but when it needed to suspend gatherings for mass, it did so. By contrast, in 1918 some Christian Scientists in the U.S. refused to close churches based on the premise of their spiritual superiority, and argued that if they were pious enough, the gathering would not be affected by the illness, nor would they transmit it to others. Here nature is replaced by an appeal to permanent miracle, and common sense and natural reason have given way to vain spiritual presumption. This is what good old-fashioned theology calls a heresy.

Secondly, it is in fact seriously unethical to attribute to the leaders of the Catholic Church the principal intention of selfishly trying to protect themselves from getting sick. (The technical word here is “calumny.”) Bishops and priests do have the right to try to avoid getting sick, as a matter of fact, and it is a natural right that cannot be denied to them even if one disagrees with their prudential decisions. More to the point, they also can infect older members of their communities who will be likely to die. (As I write this, two older Dominican priests I know have died from the virus this past week, and dozens of others are struggling with the illness. I wonder how many of my confreres will have to die before critics will concede that it is reasonable for younger priests who live in rectories with them to take serious precautions?) But this set of concerns, while legitimate, is in fact secondary. The primary issue the bishops are concerned with is the protection of others. This virus spreads through social contact, purely and simply. Often those who have it are asymptomatic and can transmit it even when they think they are



healthy enough to say mass or attend mass. If priests have public masses, and then they visit anyone who is older than 50, or if they visit the sick and then say public masses, they will help spread the illness both indirectly (by gathering people together) and directly (by becoming transmitters). Under these conditions the temporary suspension of public masses is not only reasonable, but strongly morally defensible.

This is the case even when there are also priests who decide to heroically expose themselves to the illness for the sake of others and their spiritual care. In the Catholic tradition, the practice of heroic virtue on the part of priests and religious is not mandated but should be invited and lauded. Even here, however, one has to be reasonably prudent. It is one thing to make a martyr of one's self, and another thing to eradicate a nursing home in the process. In a case like this, priests may only minister to those who are infected if they themselves are taking sufficient precautions not to infect others, which requires some kind of ongoing quarantine for the duration of the crisis (at least in its most acute phase). This is precisely the practice that has been undertaken in my own Dominican province (and I've heard of other such cases in both Italy and the U.S.), where members of the province living under quarantine apart from others are ministering to the sick. The decision is not a trivial one. At least one priest I know has already contracted the illness and recovered, but is back again serving at the hospital. In Italy, meanwhile, the fact that the churches are not having public masses allows for the priests to visit the sick either at home or in the hospital. In doing so, many of them have contracted the illness and some of them have died as a result. What this approach prevents is priests spreading the illness either to healthy laity or other priests, who in turn may die from it.

In saying this I am presuming that some essential services can and should be made available to the laity, such as keeping churches open for public prayer or Eucharistic adoration with spatial distancing. Churches should be able to provide confessions in safe circumstances, facilitate anointings, and carry out private marriage ceremonies and baptisms, all under the guidance of due prudence. I'm also presuming that the measures enacted by the bishops are temporary, as clearly they are intended to be. A worldwide pandemic of this nature is not an ordinary event, and thus leads to many uncertainties in the short and long term. That the Church should suspend public masses temporarily is defensible as the most reasonable course of action given the novel and unpredictable nature of the illness. It is objectively the best course in such circumstances to err on the side of

safety in the protection of life. This gives one time to re-evaluate. Once the quarantine reaches some initial degree of success, standards of practice will evolve and there will be questions of how to safely re-engage public sacramental practices while minimizing public risks. This is not bourgeois reasoning. It is prudential public responsibility.

### ***What is Our Current Task? Hope, Interiority, Christian Empathy***

We might ask, what should we be doing as a Church in this time, one that is extremely trying for a great number of people, both religious and non-religious alike? Currently around 1800 to 2000 people are dying in the U.S. daily from this virus, the vast majority of whom would not have died if it had not broken out three months ago. These are not mere statistics. These are people's parents, brothers and sisters, children, friends, and loved ones. The medical staff of our country are currently experiencing the greatest medical crisis in generations, and it is costing them a tremendous amount spiritually and physically. In Italy over 100 physicians and 20 nurses have died from the illness in just two months. Something similar is to be expected in the U.S. and is already happening across much of Europe. These people go to work every day knowing that they might die, and along with janitors, grocery store clerks, and public transport personnel, they are risking their lives for others. Currently priests like myself are being contacted daily by people struggling with the illness or with the death of loved ones. We are living in a time that is deeply troubling for many of our fellow human beings.

In this context the instinctual move of some conservative Christian commentators to practice social criticism while fomenting division among priests, bishops, and laity is spiritually corrosive. (What does it do to a priest's soul, by the way, when we incite him to break the vow he made to God to obey his bishop?) Nor is it helpful to utter the tone-deaf claim that the COVID-19 pandemic is not so bad and that people are overreacting. People are not overreacting when they grieve as their patients, friends, or family members die by the thousands. In fact, the Christian message in this context is one of basic evangelical hope. What we are to learn first in this crisis is that there is life after death, that God loves those who die, that there is the possibility of the forgiveness of sins, that our littleness in the face of death is also an opportunity for surrender, that Christ too died alone from asphyxiation and that he was raised from the dead, that God can comfort the

fearful, and that there is a promise of eternal life. In the face of death, Christians should be precisely those who put first things first.

Second, Christians ought to treat this pandemic as an opportunity to learn more about God. What does it mean that God has permitted (or willed) temporary conditions in which our elite lifestyle of international travel is grounded, our consumption is cut to a minimum, our days are occupied with basic responsibilities toward our families and immediate communities, our resources and economic hopes are reduced, and we are made more dependent upon one another? What does it mean that our nation-states suddenly seem less potent and our armies are infected by an invisible contagion they cannot eradicate, and that the most technologically advanced countries face the humility of their limits? Our powerful economies are suddenly enfeebled, and our future more uncertain. Priests and bishops are confronted with a new obligation to seek interiority over activism as their sacramental ministry is rendered less potent, and laypeople have to find God outside the sacraments in their own interior lives, discovering new ways to be grateful for what they have rather than disdainful in the face of what they lack. We might think none of this tells us anything about ourselves, or about God's compassion and justice. But if we simply seek to pass through all this in hasty expectation of a return to normal, perhaps we are missing the fundamental point of the exercise.

# FIRST THINGS

Finally, what can Christians do to console both their religious and secular neighbors? What about the people heroically risking their own lives to serve others at this time, or those who are ill and afraid, especially those who do not have a religious recourse or perspective? What about those grieving, or those who are isolated? How can we be creative in our hope and empathy? Bishops, priests, and laity alike should work together in the coming months to discern how we can safely return progressively to the public celebration of sacraments, and have interim steps of public worship in limited ways. But we should also be thinking about how to communicate Christian hope and basic human friendship and compassion to people who suffer, in our words and gestures, both individually and collectively. The life of the heart is as real as the life of the mind, and in our current moment, for however long it should last, charity is itself the most basic

prophetic activity. “By this they will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35). I’m citing him because in this and in every other case, his authority comes first.

*Thomas Joseph White, O.P., is director of the Thomistic Institute in Rome.*

## CORONAVIRUS IS DEPRIVING US OF TOUCH, THE NOURISHMENT OF OUR HUMANITY

March 26, 2020

*Timothy Radcliffe ponders the 'new world' being created by  
necessary social distancing*

Queuing up  
to go through  
security in Tel  
Aviv airport  
last week, I  
was  
fascinated by  
the balletic  
movements  
of the man in  
front of me.

He almost  
danced as he  
maneuvered  
his suitcases  
so that no  
one could be  
nearer to him  
than two  
meters.

He was  
probably  
wise, but for  
me he vividly  
evoked two  
aspects of the  
new world in  
which we live  
as best we  
can.

First of all,  
insecurity.  
The menace  
of death  
hangs in the  
air, literally.  
We are  
vulnerable.

### *Living well now and being grateful*

When I had cancer three years ago, I  
was confronted with my own mortality.  
This is different since it touches all  
whom we love.

The two people to whom I am closest in  
my community in Blackfriars are both at  
high risk. One of them is only fifty. But

he already has an illness, which means  
he has no immunity at all.

Both of them are the brothers with  
whom I have been on holidays every  
year for many years. Maybe I never will  
again.



The only way that I can respond is to enjoy them now. Their lives are a gift for which I can give thanks every day.

I went and bought a bottle of wine so that I can have a drink with the one who can still share space with me.

Gratitude floods my being. We shall have a wonderful evening. But he has just phoned to say we must delay since he is not well.

### ***We need proximity and touch, hugs and kisses***

The young man with the suitcases also was an image of isolation.

Every stranger, and even friend, is seen as a possible threat to one's life, and I to him or her. Safety is found only in keeping apart.

But how can we live in isolation? We need proximity and touch, hugs and kisses, to be really alive.

In the Sistine Chapel, Michelangelo shows God's finger touching Adam into life. We are all the hands of the life-giving God when we touch others with kindness and respect.

Touch is the nourishment of our humanity. Grandparents and grandchildren who cannot hug each other are living a deep deprivation!

### ***Cyberspace is not the same, but...***

I am deeply grateful, as never before, for living in a community, so that even in this terrible time, I can leave my room and find brethren.

And I live in a beautiful city filled with parks in which I can walk and see the signs of spring. I have no reason to complain.

But millions of people are deprived of the physical closeness that we need to flourish.

On the other hand, cyberspace is filled with messages expressing love and

care. 'Are you alright?' 'Have you got back from Israel?'

I have received three since I began to write this short piece.

Suddenly, when I must not touch, I am in touch with people whom I have not seen for years. Yes, there is isolation, but also a new and wide communion of those who care.

Of course it is not the same. I miss the faces of those whom I love.

## *Confessions of a first-time 'Skyper'*

Yesterday for the first time in my life – what a confession! – I used Skype. I contacted a friend who lives abroad to find out how he was.

In the evening I skyped the other brother who is isolated from us all. It was better than nothing, but it is not the same as seeing a face three dimensionally.

Usually we do not sit in front of screens staring each other. Faces are best seen in side-glances, unexpected glimpses, caught unawares when one enters a room.

We do not stare at the faces of those whom we love, as we focus relentlessly at the screen when we Skype or Zoom. When we are physically together, we look at each other gently, discreetly, from every angle.

The brother whom I first skyped told me that in Hebrew, faces give light. It is as if the light shines forth from our eyes, illuminating those whom we love.

We bask in their radiance, like sunbathers on a beach; we rest in their gaze. I miss so many faces at the moment.

## *Fasting from the shared intimacy of the Body of Christ*

And touch! Yesterday we celebrated the last of our public Eucharists for a while. As we processed out a friend waved. We will be fasting from the shared intimacy of the Body of Christ.

The early Christians shocked the pagans by the intimacy of our touch in the kiss of peace. It was really a kiss on the mouth! All that stops for the moment.

How can we deprive people of the Eucharist?

Interiorly, I rebelled against the Church's decision to close all public liturgies, even though rationally I know it is unavoidable.

Of course, pastoral work and the hearing of confessions still continue, often discreetly on benches in gardens, letting the fresh air keep us from mutual contagion.

## *The joy of preaching comes from faces*

As members of the Order of Preachers we must find every way we can to proclaim the gospel. Our Dominican students are exploring new ways of reaching out on the web; our university classes will be on-line.

Never has there been such a vast effort to reach out with the gospel on the digital continent. Wonderful!

And yet most of the joy of preaching comes from the faces, the smiles and the laughter, of the people one is addressing.

St Augustine says that we should teach with *Hilaritas*, exuberance and even ecstasy.

It is intensely mutual. When the occasion is blessed, the preacher and the people inspire each other.

A fifteenth century Sufi imam, Mullah Nasrudin, said: "I talk all day, but when I see someone's eyes blaze, then I write it down."

So for me this is both a time of intense communion but also of deprivation, of rediscovered friends and of absence, of reaching out but not touching.

All that we lose in this time of plague will, we hope and trust, be recovered before too long. The coronavirus will pass.

## *Something good from this contagion*

But something is in the air that may be contagious for the good. I pray that we in Britain may look back to this time as when we recovered some sense of being a single national community.

The Conservative government made an extraordinary announcement: If a company lays off an employee from work, rather than dismissing them, the government will pay 80% of their wages.

This is an intervention of the State that is unparalleled in the history of Britain and the cost of which is hard to imagine.

But slowly our politicians are coming to realize that unless such drastic action is taken in favor of the poorest, the people on zero hours contracts, those who earn least, the result might be a social unrest that Europe has not seen since the French Revolution.

## *A single human community from which we cannot exit*

We can only survive as a society by radical change. The vast inequalities of wealth have so weakened our common bonds that extreme financial suffering could provoke social dissolution.

The cry of conservative politicians ever since the financial crisis of 2008 has been 'We are all in this together'. But it was not true.

Maybe at least some of the political elite needs to see that if we are not really all in this together, the consequences will be almost unthinkable.

Of course, as unshakeable European, I hope that we may eventually come to see that we cannot flourish without our European friends as well!

Brexit could not have happened at a more unfortunate moment.

Let us hope that we shall discover that just as the virus reaches beyond national boundaries and does not need visas, so we shall renew our sense that we belong to a single human community from which no exit is possible.

## *Post scriptum: What I have learnt*

I was at the Tel Aviv airport, returning home from a month with my brethren at the *Ecole Biblique* of Jerusalem.

The virus had disrupted life of the *Ecole*; most of the professors had been stranded abroad, unable to return, but I still had a wonderful time reading the latest research on the New Testament.

After almost 50 years of priesthood, and incessant preaching, teaching and writing, I was having a break. It was time for a Sabbath.

But after a month, I was becoming hungry to work again. I had lectures to prepare for the summer in America, France and England.

Now they are all cancelled. There are just a few articles to write about the crisis. Thank you *La Croix* for asking me!

I have discovered that I am more driven by tasks and goals than I had realized. Now I must learn to live differently, which most people have to at my age of almost 75!

An Australian friend had sent me CDs of his favorite composers. Can I learn just to sit back and listen, even in the middle of the morning?

Will I read a Shakespearean play just because it is wonderful and for the pure pleasure of it? Can I live in this moment, attending to

the people who need me now, and be content even if no one calls?

Can I learn that I do not have to justify my existence and prove to others that my life is worthwhile?

I can just live, day by day.

This Sabbatical time invites me to prepare for the coming Sabbath of the Lord, when we shall rest in his peace.

The twelfth century theologian Peter Abelard evoked this glimpse of the end of the journey:

There Sabbath unto Sabbath  
Succeeds eternally,  
The joy that has no ending  
Of souls in holiday

*source: La Croix International – 25 Marzo 2020*



## APPROVED THE PARTICULAR DIRECTORY OF THE FRATERNITY OF ST THOMAS AQUINAS (ANGELICUM)



from the left: fr. Juan Ubaldo López Salamanca, OP; Mr. Augustinus Demirbas, OP; sr. Collette Keane, OP; fr. Marcelo Solórzano, OP

*The Master of the Order approved the Particular Directory of the Fraternity of St Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum) according to the Rule of the Lay Fraternities of St Dominic and General Declarations (2019)*

The Fraternity is an English speaking Lay Fraternity established at the Pontifical University of St Thomas Aquinas in Rome.

The Conditions for Admission to the Fraternity “English speaking students and staff of universities or other institutes of higher education in Rome are eligible for membership of the Fraternity, as are their spouses”. (Particular Directory, 3)

General Secretary fr. Marcelo Solórzano, OP

General Vice Secretary sr. Collette Keane, OP

Fraternity President Mr. Augustinus Demirbas, OP

General Promotor of Laity fr. Juan Ubaldo López Salamanca, OP

## ANNOUNCING THE LAUNCH OF THE DOMINICAN CHARISM MODULES

*We are happy to announce that the long-awaited Dominican Charism on-line learning platform will be launched Easter Monday, April 13th with the activation of the first two modules.*



### Dominican Charism Initiative

*“The Life, Spirit and Mission of St. Dominic”* is presented by Sr. Connie Schoen.

*“The Call to Preach”* module involves sessions by Sr. Sara Fairbanks, OP, Fr. Timothy Radcliffe, OP, Sr. Angela

Mwaba, OP and Sr. Megan McElroy, OP. This module also includes short video clips of diverse members of the Dominican family and video clips focused on the preaching of the community of Barry University, the Sisters of Peace, the Summit Nuns in New Jersey, the Racine Dominicans, and the Maryknoll Sisters. An additional video by Sr. Barbara Schwarz, OP focuses on preaching through the arts.

Each module includes six 20-minute interactive sessions. The session is self-paced and consists of prayer, video presentations, guided reflections, and concludes with a collaborative question connecting the participant with others engaged in the same session.

This on-line learning platform provides a space where members of the Dominican family and our lay partners can

- deepen understanding of the Dominican charism through various themes and perspectives
- expand global consciousness of Dominican life and mission
- access additional resources.

It is our hope that this will become a cyber space welcoming creative input and dialogue across our Dominican world.

Registration for participation in the learning platform is open and available through your congregation or this link:



[Registration Link](#)

Following registration the participant will receive a welcome email with information for accessing the modules.

The Dominican Charism learning platform may be found at:



[www.opcharism.org](http://www.opcharism.org)

Feel free to contact us at [opcharism@gmail.com](mailto:opcharism@gmail.com) to address questions.

We celebrate this moment with profound gratitude to the GHR Foundation for funding this initiative, to Catholic Faith Technologies for partnering with us in the creation of the learning experiences, the Dominican Sisters Conference, and all of the members of the Dominican family who have been and are engaged in the creation of the modules.

*Mark Butler, Rita Cutarelli, Gloria Marie Jones, OP, Diana Marin, Angela  
Mwaba, OP,  
Vimbai Privy, OP, Jenn Schaff, OP, Agnes Chipso Tererai, OP, Andrea Wirgau,  
Dominican Charism Initiative Planning Team*

## ADRIAN DOMINICAN SISTERS AND CO-WORKERS SEW MASKS FOR USE AT DOMINICAN LIFE CENTER

April 6, 2020, Adrian, Michigan



In these days of the COVID-19 pandemic, protective equipment for healthcare workers is in high demand and in short supply. But at the Dominican Life Center (DLC) – the residence of retired Adrian Dominican Sisters – Nursing Co-workers are getting a supply of masks, thanks to the efforts of Sisters and Co-workers.

*“The truth of the matter is, we can’t even get [the masks] from other sources,”* said Lonnie Kison, Nurse Manager at the DLC. *“There are other places that have a greater need than us.”* Yet, she said, the masks are crucial for the protection of nurses and nurse’s aides who work with the Sisters.

Lonnie and Wendy Pooley, Nurse Manager, had already begun sewing masks, but Lonnie realized they would need at least 300 masks to provide two apiece for all three shifts of nursing, environmental services, and food service Co-workers. This allows each Co-worker to have one being laundered while the other is being used, she said.

To meet the demand, Lonnie sent an email to Sisters and Co-workers, inviting them to sew special masks using material she provides and a specific pattern for a mask



*Sister Rose Ann Schlitt, OP, standing, watches as Sister Jean Fitzgerald, OP, sews a mask for use by Nursing Co-workers at the Dominican Life Center.*



with one end open, allowing a filter to be placed inside. While the pattern calls for elastic to fit over the ears of the wearer, Lonnie noted that elastic is also scarce. Participants are instead creating four ties for each mask out of folded material.

The project is giving experienced seamstresses the opportunity to use their skills for the greater good.

Sister Rose Ann Schlitt, OP, an experienced seamstress and a resident of Weber Center at the Dominican Life Center, earlier received an email from another Sister about how to make the masks before she received Lonnie's invitation. She and a team of Sisters at Weber Center have already made more than 225 masks. *"For me personally, this was a delightful contribution,"* she said.



Sister Tarianne DeYonker, OP, sews a mask while Sister Racquel Rones, OP, presses another.

Sister Tarianne, DeYonker, Vocations Co-director who is staying home to stay safe, said she is glad the call to help went out. *"It's nice to have a project like this, and I love to sew."*

Sister Racquel Rones, OP, an Adrian Dominican Sister from the Philippines who is staying in Adrian with Sister Tarianne for several months, added that she's glad to be productive and helpful. The Sisters work together on the labor-intensive project and have so far completed about 80 masks. Each takes 15 to 20 minutes to complete, given the complexity of making and adding the ties.

Sister Tarianne hopes that she – and the rest of the world – will learn more from the pandemic crisis than how to make masks, however. *"I think we're learning some things about life and we've got long enough for it to sink in,"* she said. *"I'm hopeful that it'll make a difference on the other side of this event, whenever it comes."*

Debe Blohm, a general accountant with the Finance Office, had already decided to make masks for her family before she received the email from Lonnie. *"It's straight stitching and not hard, but very labor-intensive,"* she said. *"Anybody who can sew a straight stitch can make a mask."* She has already made 12 and hopes to make 25 or 30 more for the DLC, where she worked for 16 years before transferring to the Finance Office.



Making the masks “gives me the feeling that I’m doing something,” she said. “It alleviates the feeling of helplessness.”

Katherine Dusseau, Manager of the Weber Shop, has been sewing for most of her life. When Sister Janet Doyle, OP, Director of Weber Retreat and Conference Center, invited her to participate in the mask-making project, Katherine said she was thrilled. “I was feeling the need to help in some way with our current situation with COVID-19,” she said. “My daughter is a hospice nurse and I had started making masks for her and her team. Now I’m happy to make some masks for our Co-workers.”

In the midst of a period of fear and uncertainty, Katherine said, “this project gives me a small sense of certainty in helping our Co-workers. I am so thankful for all that they are doing to care for the Sisters.”



Debe Blohm, a Co-worker from the Finance Office, at her sewing machine.

Not all volunteers came to the project with sewing experience. Lisa Schell, Congregation Archivist, first thought of making masks when a friend of her sister’s told her that the hospital where she works needed more masks. Lisa took on the project, using the sewing machine belonging to her mother – an expert seamstress who died five years ago – and taking a lesson in sewing from a neighbor. She made her first mask and, after receiving the email from Lonnie, used the pattern and material








Sisters Maurine Barzantni, OP, left, and Joan Mehney, OP, try on the masks made by Sisters residing at Weber Retreat and Conference Center for use at the Dominican Life Center.

from Lonnie to make masks for the DLC. “Everything kind of fell into place,” she said.

When she began staying at home in March, Lisa said she struggled with the best way to help during the COVID-19 situation. “For me this feels like the best way that I can contribute because I want to help the Sisters,” she said. The benefits are two-fold, she said. “It’s a way to support the Sisters and the nurses and to honor the memory of my mom. I do think this is something she would have done.”

## A WORD OF HOPE



-  A Word of Hope for April 25, 2020
-  A Word of Hope for April 26, 2020
-  A Word of Hope for April 27, 2020
-  A Word of Hope for April 28, 2020
-  A Word of Hope for April 29, 2020

## THEIR CALLING WAS TO LAY HANDS ON THE SICK. THEN CAME THE CORONAVIRUS.

*How the pandemic transformed the lives and ministry of eight Manhattan friars, and what their example can teach the rest of us.*

April 13, 2020

*Hugh Vincent Dyer, a 45-year-old Catholic friar, begins his days now in a sealed nursing home in Manhattan. He celebrates Mass in an empty chapel. The service is broadcast over closed-circuit television into residents' rooms.*

*"And I preach," he told me, "because the people are listening," even though there are no eyes in the chapel to reflect recognition, and no heads to bow in thanks. "I say a prayer of spiritual communion, because they can't physically receive the sacrament."*



*Hugh Vincent Dyer, a Catholic friar, moved into a nursing home to better serve, and protect, its residents*

He spends the rest of his time making phone calls to residents and their relatives, praying the rosary or stations of the cross on the closed-circuit chapel channel and



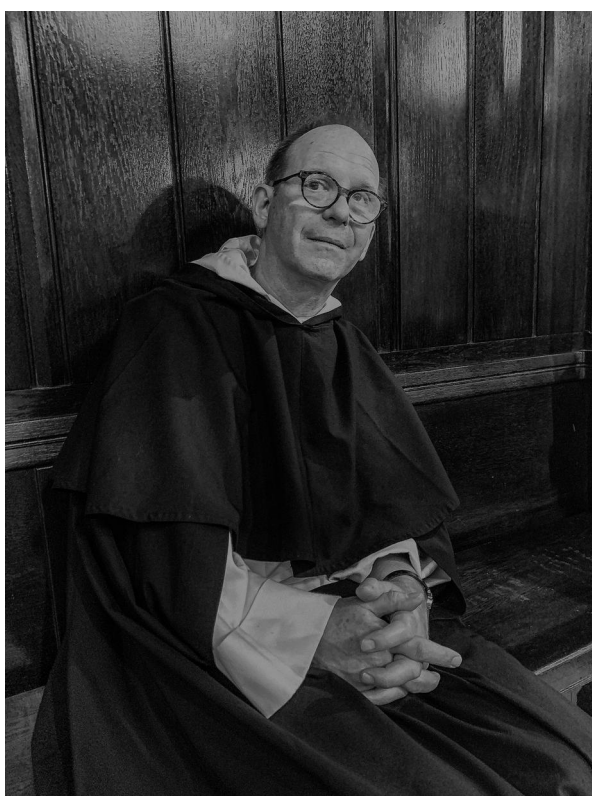
sometimes sharing poetry, recorded concerts or films. Signs on doors demarcate the rooms of patients suffering from the coronavirus. Father Dyer visits these patients only at a safe distance, clad in the white habit of the Dominican Order and a pale surgical mask. He tries to help residents and the staff maintain hope, even as death has become an increasingly regular occurrence.

"I hear from people who want to know, Is this the end of the world?" he said. "And I don't know. But in some sense, we're to live as though it's always the end."

A few weeks ago, the apocalypse didn't feel so near. Before the coronavirus began its sweep through the nation, Father Dyer spent roughly 20 hours a week at the nursing home. He lived in a community of eight Dominican friars at the St. Catherine of Siena

religious house, on Manhattan's Upper East Side. There, the brothers lived much as Dominican friars have since the order's founding in the 13th century: praying, eating and ministering together.

For this particular community, that ministry has primarily entailed



*Walter Wagner has often found himself alone due to the restrictions of the coronavirus.*

chaplaincy at local hospitals and nursing homes since the 1940s. On any given day, the brothers could expect to offer Mass at on-site chapels, anoint the sick, administer last rites to the dying and pray with patients and their families. Then they would return to their community, where they found peace, solidarity and spiritual sustenance in their brotherhood.

But as the coronavirus spread, the friars realized their common

life could be a source of danger. In light of his work in the nursing home, Father Dyer first stopped making hospital visits, fearing he might contract the virus and spread it to the vulnerable elderly. "Then by the 10th of March," he said, "we figured, maybe I should just move there."

The brothers also made the difficult decision to send three elderly friars away, concerned that they, too, might fall ill living in such proximity with active

chaplains. In all, the number of brothers living at the residence is down to four — half of what it was in early March.

The loss has been difficult to bear. “Our life is founded on doing things in common,” Walter Wagner, 58, one of the remaining brothers, said. “We pray in common at least twice a day if not more, we eat in common, and we spend a lot of the day in common.” Now, with social distancing, he said, “all of those forms are challenged.”

The friars no longer gather for communal prayer or meals. Father Wagner used to be a substitute chaplain, making hospital runs when the other friars were occupied. But since medical facilities have vastly restricted entry, his visits have stopped. Father Wagner also celebrated Mass as the pastor of St. Vincent Ferrer and St. Catherine of Siena on Sundays, but with all public Masses in the Archdiocese of New York canceled, he has found himself often alone. He fills his hours with work: live-streaming Mass and prayers on Facebook, recording audio messages to his parishioners, writing letters of encouragement. “It’s been this moment of trying to figure out, How do you live the gospel when you don’t have some of the fundamental means of living it?” he said.

That question has weighed on lay Catholics, too, as the pandemic has withdrawn the familiar comforts of the faith, including confession, public worship and most crucially, communion. I asked Father Wagner how he would counsel them. He recalled a passage from St. Thomas Aquinas: “God is not bound by the sacraments,” he said. “God gives us tangible signs and effective signs, but God is not locked into that.”



*John Devany finds hope in the belief that death doesn't have the final word.*



John Devaney, 44, another of the brothers, has continued to venture into the city's hospitals. Where he had once been able to stand near his patients and lay his hands on their bodies in a final gesture of solace ("Christ always laid his hands on the sick," he reminded me), coronavirus protocols now require that he adopt gloves, gowns, masks – and usually a great deal of distance.

He has also wrestled with his own fear. Walking the halls of temporary coronavirus wards amid the pumping hiss of mechanical ventilators and shellshocked hospital workers, he said: "I started to think about, maybe I could get this. Maybe it could kill me." Yet Father Devaney still finds avenues of grace. "What gives me hope is that in the Catholic funeral liturgy, it says, life hasn't ended, it has changed. So for me the hope is that there is a supernatural reality we can't see, that there is eternal life, life in eternity. And that death doesn't have the final word."

Yet these sacrifices make up the core of the faith. The Gospel of John recounts that after arising from his tomb, Jesus Christ appeared to Mary Magdalene, who had come to tend to his body. He called to her by name, and recognizing her beloved teacher, she rushed to embrace him. "Do not touch me," he said. How jarring that must have been to hear, and how painful to refrain – impossible, perhaps, save for the belief, held close in her heart, that the time would soon come to touch him again.

*Elizabeth Bruenig (@ebruening) is an Opinion writer.*

## Calendar of the Master



*We stayed in the Convent.  
Stay at home – Stay Safe.*



## Calendarium Liturgicum Ordinis Prædicatorum





*"You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen!"*

Mark 16:6-7







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