You are the Light of the world! Mt 5:14

Glimpses of Light in the Life of the Congregation

Dear sisters and Covenant Companion,

In this letter, we would like to share a little of the life in the Congregation during the Corona Pandemic. A light of hope has been entrusted to us, and we carry this hope with small signs into our world.

In all areas of the Congregation, the pandemic is affecting our community and prayer life, as well as our ministries. Everywhere our sisters are subject to strict government regulations, and they keep their distance, quarantine, and hygiene rules to avoid infection. At the same time, they take care of the needy and bring their concerns and fears prayerfully before God. Let us take a little look inside the congregation!

France

After long weeks of pain and isolation, all our French sisters have joyfully returned to their communities or to the retirement home. They slowly begin again the prayerful togetherness in the chapel, the pleasant times at meals and the refreshing walks in the flowery park. The two communities in Ban St. Martin have moved together. With the death of our four sisters Christiane, Bernard, Ignace and Arbogaste and the move of Sr. Raymonde to the St. Joseph retirement home, the community has become smaller. The staff, especially Dominique & Brigitte, as well as the kitchen team, has been very helpful to our sisters with their competent and caring assistance, providing medical care, hospital accommodation and individual meals in the sisters’ rooms. Without the wonderful service of these good people the care of our sisters would have been unthinkable. We thank them from the bottom of our hearts. With the support of our American sisters, the whole house was completely disinfected so that our sisters can feel comfortable and enjoy the fellowship. They are very grateful for all the prayer support and the many signs of solidarity.

Netherlands

Our sisters in the Netherlands have been spared from the Covid-19 virus thus far. As the chapel, restaurant and other meeting rooms do not offer enough space to
keep social distancing, creative forms of prayer and togetherness were found. Via television the sisters participate in the liturgy of the hours and other prayers in the chapel, led by Marlies & Pastor Al. The King’s Birthday and other events were celebrated in the open atrium. Even the reflection on the theme and logo of the General Chapter was transmitted from the newly re-decorated chapel. Sr. Auxiline encouraged the sisters: “Even though we are no longer able to physically support all the concerns of the Congregation, we want to participate in the preparations for the General Chapter. With our contribution we express our confidence in the future of the Congregation. We want to give prayerful support to our young sisters in the different countries so that they can shape our Congregation in the future. We want to keep our light burning so that it radiates for the people in our world - whether near or far.” In the days to come, this meditative introduction will be followed by conversations in small groups of 4-5 people, so that the sisters can share their insights. Preparations are underway for this year’s Regional Assembly with the installation of new leadership. It remains to be seen whether it can happen in September as originally planned, or if it needs to be postponed.

Germany

In Germany, none of the sisters, associates, residents, or staff have been infected by the virus so far. The strict segregation of the motherhouse from St. Clara nursing home is painful because visits are not allowed, and prayer times can only be watched on television. However, many small joys lead our elderly sisters and residents out of their isolation. Sisters and other volunteers sang spring songs in front of the residents’ windows; Sr. Birgit & Sr. Melani gave short concerts with meditative thoughts from the church; creative letters of friendship were written by students; the hospice service sewed breathing masks for St. Clara’s. Sr. M. Cornelia uncovered a swindle with faulty breathing masks and saved a medical company great harm. There are sing-along concerts in Marialinden, and the blessing with the Blessed Sacrament, because been allowed to celebrate Holy Mass in the house.
USA

All the Sisters and Covenant Companion in our American province are doing well. They are dealing wisely with the limitations of contact. Visits to the community living in the Motherhouse is not allowed for the protection of the elderly sisters. To maintain relationships with each other, there are numerous online meetings that help sisters to connect and strengthen each other.

Weekly spiritual suggestions and live streaming of the liturgies unite everyone in prayer. Sr. Magdalena was lovingly welcomed into the community since she could not yet return to Rome.

Sr. Trish with other sisters and associates made hundreds of facemasks. Sr. Maureen is involved in the distribution of food to the needy in Cape Girardeau, Missouri.

Indonesia

The many schools, kindergartens and boarding schools of our sisters are closed, but a lot of teaching material is offered online which presents a great creative challenge. At the same time, our sisters take care of the poor and needy families. For example, in Onan Runggu, donors contributed relief supplies for the sisters to distribute. The sisters of our community on the island of Flores in Were, led by Sr. Martha, tirelessly sewed face masks which they passed out to those in need and now offer for sale in their small shop. Not only our sisters are caring for the poor, but there are also our institutions in need of help, such as the Panti Pius Orphanage in Pematangsiantar, which received a donation from a woman who had collected food with friends. A large area of the sisters’ land which will be used in the future for a health care project around Lake Toba has been intensively planted and is showing wonderful growth.

Everywhere the sisters and young women in formation are praying intensively for the protection of all people from the contagious viral disease and its consequences, as well as for solidarity among peoples and a rethinking of the human family.
**Brazil**

In Brazil, our sisters are also confronted with the Covid-19 virus. At first the northeast part of Brazil was spared, but now the infection is spreading there as well. One brother of our Sr. Aleunice is in the hospital in Manaus sick with the virus. His wife and children are also infected but not as severe. Let us pray together for their recovery and for the care of so many who are helplessly exposed to the virus due to the lack of health care. Let us also support Sr. Romilda in her loving care of the needy in the nursing home in Santarem.

Since some of our sisters were partially or completely released from teaching and coordination in school, they had the opportunity to hold their yearly retreat planned for the summer. From the example of M. Clara, they joyfully drew inspiration and new strength to face the challenges. In drawings (here from Sr. Raimunda & Sr. Emily) and in mutual exchange, as well as in prayer, the sisters made our charism shine again in a sensitive way.

**Malawi**

In Malawi, we have a small number of confirmed cases of Covid-19 and already some deaths. Public life has been slowly restricted in recent weeks. The borders and airports were closed on April 1, and the sisters were grateful that their MaZ volunteers (temporary missionaries) were able to leave in time.

The Malawian government is trying to gradually introduce contact and curfew restrictions. This is still feasible without risking a major famine. The population had just brought in its harvest. At the school there are no poor and old people coming and asking for help now, but this can quickly change.

Most of the time our sisters work from home, where they also pray. The school and the kindergarten are closed, but some of the employees still do gardening and handicrafts. The women sang the song "Corona, go away, we do not need you! Hallelujah!".

Thanks to donations, our sisters were able to provide the hospital in Madisi with urgently needed protective clothing, and the "Easter candle" campaign in Germany made it possible to purchase 2...
oxygen units for the hospital. One device supports the respiration of 4 people each suffering from Covid-19. This will be a great help if the virus continues to spread due to the lack of health care, people living in confined spaces and poverty.

**East Timor**

Although the educational institutions of the sisters are currently closed, our sisters remain in touch with the families of the children and young people and continue to take good care of their orphans. In addition to their loving presence and educational guidance, the sisters also do gardening in Dili with the orphans. Together they enjoy the sprouting of the fruits. The sisters were entrusted with relief supplies which Sr. Blandina and Sr. Livania distributed to the needy by car. They were supported by the local police, who ensured order in the district.

**Romania**

Our sisters in Caransebes came up with an idea for Easter Monday. They prepared small packages with eggs, Easter bunnies, cake, and an Easter candle for the elderly and lonely people. Sr. Mariana, Sr. Maricica & Sr. Lydia surprised the people, who were moved to tears and speechless. "We bring you the Easter light, which you could not receive in church this year!"

Some people later expressed their sincere gratitude in letters and phone calls. An elderly woman recently had a birthday. She said: "My joy is so great that I can now die in peace." Daily Sr. Iuliana serves a hot meal from the Caritas kitchen, bringing a little light into the lives of the elderly.

A chemical company in Germany produced a substitute disinfectant for this time of crisis and generously donated boxes to the Motherhouse and St. Clara. They even brought a load to Caransebes where it is now being used at an ambulatory health care facility to help protect the sick. When the kindergarten is reopened it will be urgently needed there.

**Suriname**

The start of the new mission in Nickerie/Suriname had to be postponed indefinitely due to the Corona crisis. The country closed its borders at
the first sign of infection because it does not have sufficient health care services. Our 3 missionaries continue to live in our community in Jakarta because flights within the country are only available with special permission.

We were invited to the online celebration of the Holy Week and Easter liturgy in the Cathedral of Paramaribo. The renovation of the sisters' house will be completed soon. The faithful joyfully await the coming of the sisters. Let us pray for Sr Clarenia, Sr Zita and Sr Gisella for patience and a burning heart for the people of Suriname.

şı Rome/Italy

Our Sisters in the Generalate are doing well despite strict stay-at-home rules. They were only able to go into the city to buy food and medicine. Now these rules are gradually being relaxed until June. The state is in discussion with the Italian Episcopal Conference to work out plans for the beginning of church services. Until this happens, our sisters participate online in the Holy Mass with Pope Francis in the chapel of the Vatican guesthouse, St. Marta. In this way they are spiritually united with millions of the faithful. Every day the Mass has a special intention so that different social groups are prayerfully supported, and no one feels forgotten. During mealtimes, Sr. Emmanuela, Sr. Marie Therese, Sr. Rosalia & Sr. Aurelia reflect on the situation in Rome, in Italy and in the world and include these concerns in their prayers. On Saturdays during the rosary, they unite themselves with the Holy Father, who called all families, communities, and groups to pray for the end of the Pandemic. With special Marian prayers, they implore the help of the Blessed Mother so that all people can endure the challenges of this time in faith and hope and act in solidarity.

We are together in this special time - praying and helping to shape our changing world.

Pace e bene! - God protect and preserve you all!

Your Sisters of the General Council,

Sr. H. Hopalenna
Sr. Z. Alice
Sr. M. Johanna
Sr. E. Emmanuela