

Suggestions from the Prelate for Confronting the Coronavirus Emergency

Monsignor Fernando Ocáriz offers some practical guidelines for confronting this extraordinary situation. "The Communion of Saints leads us to make our own what affects the others, because 'if one member suffers, all suffer with him.'"

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My dear children: may Jesus watch over my daughters and sons for me!

Faced with the difficulties that, in greater or lesser degree, can arise in these moments with the growing pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus, let us renew our confidence in Our Lord and resolve to confront this situation “with the strength of faith, the certitude of hope and the fervor of charity” (Francis, March 8, 2020). The situation varies in the different regions of the world, but the Communion of Saints leads us to make our own what affects the others, because “if one member suffers, all suffer with him” (*1 Cor 12:26*). In the face of any emergency, we unite ourselves in prayer to those who are going through critical moments, as now is the case with

those gravely ill with the coronavirus, the people who have been forced to migrate to survive (the Syrian exodus during these days), families who have experienced a tragedy, etc.

COVID-19 has in some places produced an emergency situation that has altered the normal course of life and affected people's spirits. It is good to recall that God gives us his grace also to sanctify these circumstances of uncertainty. Let us help one another to confront these rapidly changing situations, knowing that when we are obliged to reduce our external work we find an opportunity to "grow on the inside."

In responding to the spreading pandemic, the civil authorities in each country are providing some norms for prevention and control. Faced with the effort and inconvenience that following these

may entail, it is good to keep in mind Saint Josemaria's advice: "Love and respect the norms of behavior required for living in harmony. Have no doubt, either, that your loyal submission to duty can be the means for others to discover Christian integrity, which is the fruit of divine love, and to find God" (*Furrow* 322). For the good of the faithful, and of society in general, the ecclesiastical authorities too are giving or could give indications regarding the celebration of the Sacraments and pastoral care. We will receive these with gratitude and trust in our mother the Church. In this regard too, it is good to be very prudent and to suspend, when necessary, the planned activities of formation, without taking unnecessary risks.

We need to think especially of creative ways to keep alive our apostolic mission and service to others, when prudence and the

indications of the civil and ecclesiastical authorities make it impossible to get together for activities. The first thing is to try to ensure that every person in the Work and your friends and family members know that they are closely accompanied. For example, we can phone them more often, including other relatives and friends whom we perhaps have not seen for some time. We should take advantage of all the possibilities that technology offers to carry on the means of formation (circles, talks, meditations, get-togethers, etc.), and share formation materials found on the internet. (People are working now on special material for www.opusdei.org, and there is other material that can be a help for the spiritual life: texts, audios, videos.) We can encourage people to meditate on the readings and prayers of the Holy Mass for weekdays in Lent (the Pope's daily Mass is being live-

streamed at www.vaticannews.va). We can share experiences on how to further the apostolic work in these circumstances, etc. These are exceptional moments and it is even more necessary than ever to help one another and to practice charity, trying to ensure that no one feels alone.

To the extent possible given the circumstances and respecting the guidelines laid down by the civil authorities, living charity might mean taking on creative initiatives to help others (neighbors, fellow workers, etc.). Special attention should be given to those who are more vulnerable, especially the sick and elderly: while being prudent, we should do all we can for their spiritual and material care.

In places where the norms regarding social contact are even stricter, we should try to create a positive

environment in the homes of the associates, supernumeraries and friends, and also in the centers of the Work. Let us try to discover the opportunities for friendship and fraternity that these circumstances offer us. Some attitudes and activities that can help in this regard are: facing hardships and unexpected annoyances with a sense of humor; not blaming anyone; thinking about a plan for reading and watching videos; planning games and entertainment so that the children or our brothers and sisters can have a good time; tackling projects that have been waiting for a more relaxed time; doing physical exercise at home, etc.

Let us show special gratitude to the health personnel who during these days are serving with a generous spirit of sacrifice. Let us be especially attentive to them, and try to support and encourage them in their work.

And especially, let us pray so that this period too may be an opportunity for us to draw closer to Our Lord, being “sowers of peace and joy” to those around us.

Your Father blesses you with all his affection,

Rome, 14 March 2020

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