

Sixth Letter of the General Minister

COVID-19

Prot. N. 00733/20

To All Major Superiors
To All the Friars
In their Locations

Dear Brothers,

May the Lord give you peace!

For some time now, I have been feeling the urge to reach out to you again, in the interest of maintaining our connection and simply sharing about what we are experiencing.

As we all know, the pandemic continues on its path, surging in waves at different times in different places where we live, and bringing with it conditions that affect our lives and activities. Here in Europe, after the initial hardships, there were some months of relative respite, during which occurred some important events, such as the unification of the three provinces of central Italy - Umbria, Abruzzo and Lazio - into the new Province of the Immaculate Conception, the celebration of various Chapters, the beatification of Carlo Acutis in Assisi and the usual feasts of St. Padre Pio and St. Francis. Everywhere we have been very careful to apply the recommended measures for avoiding any possible infections. Ultimately, at almost all of these gatherings there were no unpleasant consequences, except for the chapter in Krakow, after which several brothers contracted the virus, including Br. Piotr Stasiński, General Councilor – though not spared the experience, he seems by now to have successfully overcome it.

In other circumscriptions - Spain, Austria, Slovenia and Croatia - individual circumstances and/or social health care conditions has convinced provincials and councils to eventually request that appointments be made in lieu of chapters. This also happened for some chapters in North America: some were able to celebrate them, limiting themselves to what was strictly necessary and postpone the discussion of issues until better times; for some others the request to proceed with appointments has been made. The same has happened in various circumscriptions around the rest of the world. On our website, you will find periodical updates about such occurrences as they develop. At the same time, given the provisions of our Constitutions, many appointments, Chapter-related or not, continue to be postponed for a number of months, in hopes that situations will improve. In short, despite the difficulty of reorganizing everything from day to day, it is also healthy to consider that life does not stop. Indeed, perhaps it's just the thing we need to reanimate

us all: if we cannot meet in person, this doesn't mean that we must also drop all the programs we've worked out for formation and growth or for agendas of Conferences, circumscriptions, commissions at every level, or life in fraternities. Many have equipped themselves with the possibilities offered by modern technology to continue with these activities. I am delighted, and invite everyone, in whatever ways feasible, to follow this example.

Since the pandemic is far from over, we must continue to cultivate prudence, which today means first and foremost, adopting those measures now familiar to us all for our own personal protection and for the safety of others, as would be fitting in any given situation. We remember that, even though the number infected in proportion to the total number of friars is not very high (at least so it seems from news that arrives here at the Curia), it is also painfully true that for several among us, the virus has signaled their hour of return to the Father. By now, in this regard, about fifty friars have left us; more than a few of the most recently deceased were under fifty years old. For them all, our prayer goes up to the Lord -- that he may welcome them in his mercy. For us, the duty remains to continue on the path of responsibility.

As you can well understand, for many months I too have been very limited in the possibility of making visits. But I am happy to know that many of you are nonetheless working, even risking something of your health, to help as best you can with those who are experiencing greater difficulty than yourselves. This may seem only a drop, but it is worth a sea in the eyes of God! Thank you, on behalf of the whole Order.

In the end, we can all confidently put our lives, our daily circumstances and the entire Order into the hands of God, supporting each other through constant prayer, while remaining certain that the Lord knows well how to provide for each one of us and for our entire fraternity.

With warmest regards, I invoke the reach of His abundant blessings upon you all!

Br. Roberto Genuin
General Minister OFMCAp

Rome; October 29, 2020