

The Pandemic of 2020

Installment # 1 – April 8, 2020

COVID-19

An update regarding The Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity

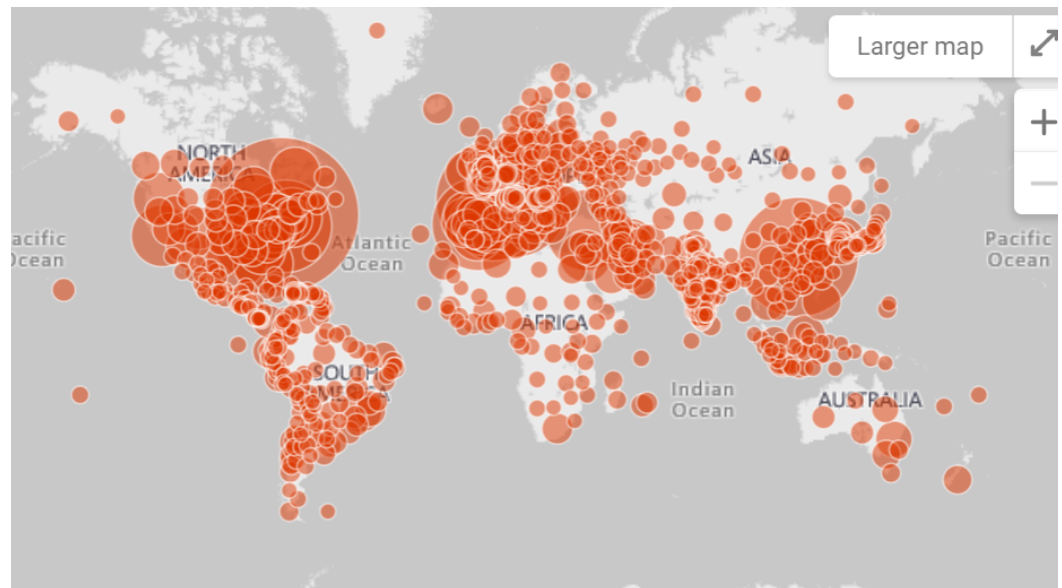
At the writing of this sharing, there have been 1,429,437 persons infected worldwide with the Corona virus with some 82,074 deaths. Every continent has individuals who have been infected...and many countries have taken dramatic measures to combat its spread.

So that we might be able to share in the plight of our sisters (and our world), and join together in this difficult time we asked these questions:

How are you doing?

How are you handling this situation?

Here are the responses of your sisters...



(Here are *some* of the responses...others are coming in and will be sent our later this week.)

The Corona virus has turned our world upside down...and we are crying with our world as we hold onto a desire for all good!

We Hope...and pray...

...to know of God's presence,

...for the welfare of those who are ill,

...for the strength and wisdom of those caring for the sick,

...for ALL who are affected by the virus!

The Generalate Community

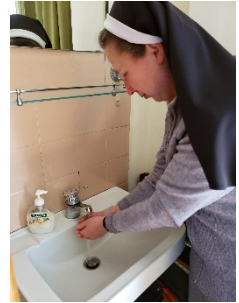
Rome, Italy

Blessings as you walk through this time. At the Generalate we hold you close in our prayer.

We are well...even in the midst of so much suffering. There are still so many who get ill and who die each day, but we are well here in this house. WE are staying home – only going out for groceries and medicine. (The “stay at home” order is still in place here in Rome until the end of this month...and even then we will be slow to move about. The good news



is that the number of new cases and the number of deaths is decreasing!!!) We are diligently washing our hands (a lot) and we have increased our “social distance” even here in the Generalate by spreading out our tables, rearranging the chapel etc. We are not sitting next to each other and are trying to maintain some distance. (And when some of us forget, others remind us!!!) We have the luxury of attending mass on TV in the morning with Pope Francis, then we walk to the chapel to receive communion.



We are blessed to have that available to us. Our prayer blesses us and we offer God our lament and our praise. We use the prayer prepared for the Congregation for the intention of the Coronavirus along with our Vespers every evening.

Because we “work at home” we do just that! We are good and have plenty of space on our property to walk and get fresh air. We are blessed. We are also grateful for the variety of communication/social media options for us to use. Staying in touch with friends, family and our sisters is really important at this time! You will often find many of us looking at our phones or other devices – then laughing as we share the current “joke,” the image of a loved one or offering our prayer when we find out about someone in a difficult situation.

We want all of you to know you are in our prayer! Blessings on your Holy Week! May our good God give you the grace you most need at this time. Peace...and love.

Christ the King Province, Lüdinghausen, Germany

Affected but not yet infected

By Sr. Katharina Kluitmann, Provincial Minister

In our province we are affected as everybody is by the virus, staying at home as much as possible, praying, hoping, trusting and fearing. But until now (Sunday 5th of April in the afternoon) we do not have anyone of the sisters or staff tested positively, which does not mean that we are sure nobody had an infection. There is around one million of testings in three weeks in our country, which is a lot but not enough to be sure. A test if you have already had the infection and have now antibodies is in development. It would be good to know, for then it seems you are immune and do not transmit any more. To know that would be a help in the convents of the elderly.

In Lüdinghausen, the biggest convent, the sisters try their very best to do social distancing, but still pray together and still have Holy Mass without having direct contact with the priest. The parish sends us a priest and then has the streaming the parish offers from our convent, from Monday to Friday at 8.15 (<https://www.stfelizitas.de/livegottesdienste>) – after hot discussions and with the clear permission of the diocese. Meals are more frequently offered to allow for lower numbers of participants and more distance. The sisters and a coworker sewed hundreds of mouth protections for our former house of the elderly. Our one sister living there cannot come to the convent any more, hard for her. A crisis team has been established doing a very good job and preparing for the worst case. The four sisters in Mönchengladbach live in a hospital and have to be careful. As the two sisters in mixed communities, Sr. Judith in Recklinghausen and Sr. Katharina in Münster, they do not have Holy Mass any more but find creative ways. In Lüdinghausen Sr. Verona (in her probation time for transfer from another congregation) had to move to a little room near the hospital where she works, not to bring the virus from Lüdinghausen to the hospital or the other way round. A special situation!

At 19.30 the church bells ring and people are invited to prayer and to put a candle in the window. Most of us participate in that. A lot of phone calls and video conferences and e-mails help to keep contact among us and with those who are lonely. For the first time the provincial council met via telephone conference. Parishes and dioceses are very creative in streaming services and giving meditation impulses. To close with: A women working at her doctoral thesis in liturgy changed the subject and asked for “corona diaries” to find out what happens to faith, prayer and liturgy in these times and what people think and feel about it. I must confess: I am looking forward to the moment when we can look back at “corona time” because it will be over then. But at the same time I am grateful that God finds ways to be near and to show his nearness even without the usual rituals.

Sacred Heart of Jesus Province, Sao Leopoldo, Brazil

By Sister Mônica de Azevedo, Provincial Minister

We, Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Province, are all well so far. We live in 4 states of Brazil with different evolutions of the pandemic. Until April 5th in Brazil we have had 11.130 confirmed cases of coronavirus and 486 deaths. In Rio Grande do Sul, where we have had the

largest number of elderly sisters and sisters, we have had 468 confirmed cases and 7 deaths. In Guatemala we have had, officially, 70 cases and 3 deaths. We are in the constantly aware of and committed to the care of life, following the guidelines of social distancing, hygiene practices and prevention measures at work and in common life. The churches, under the guidance of the Bishops' Conference of Brazil, are all closed. The Sisters, like the people, follow the Masses through social networks and TV. The communities celebrate with creativity and devotion. The dedication of the priests and bishops to the spiritual care of the people is visible. In the same way, we see the growing sensitivity and solidarity among the people. Furthermore, we intensify and prolong the time of our prayer, especially for this reality of human suffering. In addition to prayer, we are busy with reading, organizing personal and community spaces, crafts, physical activities, fraternal surprises, films, making masks and aprons for use by the Sisters and the staff of St. Elisabeth's Home, making "bunnies" to give gifts to the staff of our establishments. There are Sisters who carry out the work of management and new organization of services in the establishments in the face of the changes in this new scenario. We share information, news and also the personal experiences and life lessons that this time is teaching us. The Schools, the Social Project and the St. Joseph Center are closed until April 30th (at first). In the poorest neighborhoods, there is a lack of food and hygiene products. Our Sisters have been engaged in the distribution of these products to those most in need. The motto of our next Provincial Chapter, inspired by the Gospel, calls us to mercy: "You saw, you felt compassion, you approached and took care" (Lk 10, 33-34). One of our concrete actions as a Province in this pandemic is to allow the free use of the building of the Convent of Monte Alverne to the Municipality of São Leopoldo, for the needs of care and health of the population for coronavirus. We cultivate trust in the Good and Provident God, and seek to be messengers of Peace and Hope.

Mary Help of Christians Province, Orlik

SITUATION IN POLAND DURING PANDEMIC OF CORONAVIRUS

By S Mirona Turzyńska, Provincial Minister

With the Covid -19 virus in Poland, the Polish government made very quick and firm decisions aimed at protecting human life. Time has shown that these difficult and demanding decisions of the government and the responsible behavior of Poles are effective, as seen in slow increase in the number of illnesses and deaths. As of April 5, there are 4,102 infected and 94 dead in Poland.

An epidemic alert was been introduced across the country on March 13. Soon after that borders, schools, many factories and institutions were closed. People have been called to stay home. Shops and pharmacies remained open. Also, churches remained open. At the beginning, 50 people could participate in the liturgical celebrations, then only 5 people. These restrictions caused parishes to begin broadcasting Masses and Lenten celebrations, allowing people to participate in them online. Sisters in Orlik prepare services of the Way of the Cross for children, which are broadcast by parishes through the media. From the first days of the pandemic, priests,

consecrated religious and many lay people have been united in daily prayer at 8:30 p.m. with the intentions for the end of Covid-19 virus.

Most of our communities have the opportunity to participate in the daily Eucharist celebrated in our chapels; several communities are deprived of this gift. Almost all communities will experience the Paschal Triduum through television broadcasting, together with many millions of people.

We do not leave our houses except by sisters who supply communities with food and medicine and who have to work outside. We use disinfectants and we keep the required distances. On the streets of the big cities it is very difficult to move, we need to use masks and gloves. We follow the government and ecclesiastical directives.

The sister teachers are preparing and sending programs for their students online. All of the sisters working in hospitals are on the front line of support, e.g. sisters in Poznań and Częstochowa accept patients potentially infected by COVID-19 and have direct contact with seriously ill patients. The risk of becoming infected is high; the sisters say that they are prepared for it mentally. In hospitals, there is not always enough protective equipment and disinfectants. The atmosphere in hospitals is heavy, filled with fear and even panic. In our Senior House in Więcbork the sisters have taken all security measures, prohibited visits and are provided with the necessary disinfection supplies.

Throughout the Province the sisters actively help the people in need. They are doing grocery shopping for the elderly, look for and visit the lonely, prepare food, assist the families which need support, sew the masks for their neighbors. As much as possible we offer our financial support for respiratory equipment and other equipment for hospitals. We support a Congregation of enclosed sisters who at this time has no income for their life.

We ask for your prayers for our sisters and people in Belarus, where the situation is extremely difficult. Schools, workplaces, churches are open. There is no declared state of pandemic. Hospitals are filled with diagnoses of pneumonia. Our sisters have the symptoms of coronavirus infection: they both have fevers, general weakness and they have lost their senses of taste and smell. They have not had the opportunity to have the tests.

This time of pandemic is a time to test our responsibility. It is a test that we all live through and we want to pass it the best we can. It is also a time of trying our faith. Life shows again what is most important. We keep the words of Mother Magdalen: God is good, so good, God will provide. We live the heritage of our Foundress and remember all the sisters of our Congregation.

St. Clare Mission, Tanzania

By S. Dilsa Graff

Dear Sisters,

Peace. We hope that all of you are doing well even knowing all of the suffering in our world around us. We are trying to nourish hope and faith and believe that God will provide.

We are doing well here in the Tanzanian Mission and we are all home. The Sisters from the different schools are all home in their communities. Since the 17 of March all schools have been closed and many precautions have been taken. We are washing our hands all the time, avoiding big gatherings, wearing masks if needed, the borders have been closed, etc. Here in our Country we don't have many people infected by the virus, the maximum we have had so far is 20 people. From those: 1 has died, 3 were cured and allowed to go home. The others continue with their treatment. We have a lot to be grateful for to God, and we hope that God will listen to the prayers of this poor people. If it comes to Tanzania like it has in other countries it would be a massive holocaust.

We still are having daily mass and the people are really coming in large numbers to pray and to plea before God.

During this time we have many in our houses: the sister students have a lot of homework, we are also working in the gardens, sewing (we made our own masks), taking more time for prayer..., we are also enjoying one another and laughing a lot.

Dear sisters we keep you in our prayers and ask for your prayers and blessings. May our Mother Magdalen strengthen our faith and pray for all of us.

In love and prayers.

The Province of Divine Providence

By Lea Schoenmakers

Secretary

The Netherlands

On February 27, 2020, in a TV programme the Minister of Medical Care, Mr Bruins reports that the first official Corona patient is tested positive in Tilburg (Noord Brabant) and has been hospitalized.

According to the media, this patient had visited North Italy and there was exposed to the virus.

There are more and more patients and mainly first in the province of Noord Brabant. The intensive care units are slowly filling up with people who have severe breathing problems. The virus then spreads rapidly, also to other provinces. The northern provinces Friesland and Groningen stay almost unaffected. It is suspected that the celebration of "Carnaval", a popular public feast, where many people gather on the streets and in cafes, is the cause of the rapid spread of the virus in Brabant and Limburg.

It appears that patients have to stay much longer in the ICU than usual. Instead of 10 days even up to 21 days. This keeps beds occupied longer and there is a dire shortage of ICU beds. Patients are even moved to other hospitals to reduce the pressure on the nursing staff. Leave permissions are cancelled and care personnel have to work extra shifts.

There is a threat of a shortage of ICU beds and also of respiratory equipment.

Emergency arrangements are made, such as setting up a hospital in hotels, where less sick patients can be taken care of. Even medical students are asked to help.

In view of this, the government must take more measures that have an impact on people's social life and also has economic consequences. The government does not prefer a total lock-down, but has the vision that if people gather in small groups a group immunity will occur and already infected people, who have recovered, then can protect other people from infection. In other words. These people then create a shield for those who are not yet infected.

The government takes all decisions in consultation with leading virologists and the RIVM (Government for Health and Environment).

People should work and stay at home as much as possible. No more handshaking and preferably only contact with house members. Everyone must keep to a distance of 1.50 metres

Catering establishments, sports facilities and schools are closed on 15 March. It is quiet in the streets No more daily traffic jams. In addition, hairdressers and pedicure have to close for business. This measure applies until April 6, but in view of the progress of the spread of the virus this measure will certainly be extended. The measures also have an impact on supply companies and export of goods, now that flight traffic almost is shut down. Only limited cargo traffic is allowed. The Government also is trying to bring back all Dutch nationals to the Netherlands, who are still abroad.

Sr. Chrétienne, who has been in Tanzania for a month, returned just in time to the Netherlands. She returned safely on Schiphol on March 18th.

On the 30th of March, 11.750 Corona-patients were tested positive, but due to a lack of test this number is probably much higher.

A total of 884 people have already died on this date. And these are only the numbers passed on by hospitals!

It is expected that the peak of the virus and the number of deaths has not yet been reached. A gloomy scenario.

Unfortunately, the message reached us that at least one employee at the Proteion Care Centre had been tested positive for Corona and has also led to two infections of patients. A worrying situation, because the Care Centre has a more or less open connection with the Convent.

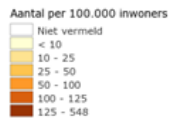
Heythuysen:

The seriousness of this situation also permeates within the Convent. Even before the Ministry of Health had announced measures that have to be taken, the Convent already has taken precautions, which have been discussed with Proteion. These precautions have an impact on the sisters' daily lives. Besides taking hygienic measures, such as washing hand and using disinfectant, not more hand shaking, keeping distance from each other, etc. etc.. Meetings and activities are also cancelled.

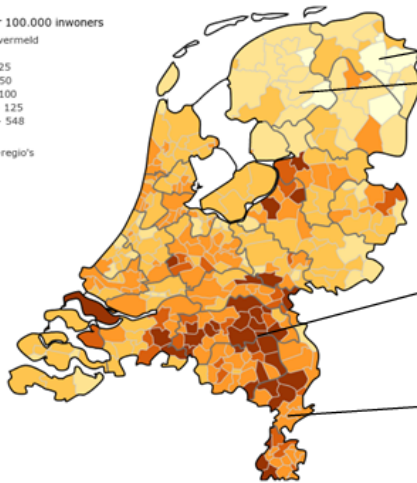
A number of measures are listed below:

Gemelde COVID-19 patiënten

Per 100.000 inwoners per gemeente tot en met 29-3-2020



GGD-regio's



Groningen

Friesland

Brabant

Heythysen

RIVM

[Deze kaart toont het aantal patiënten per 100.000 inwoners](#), zoals doorgegeven door GGD'en en gemeenten per 29 maart 2020.

Door correcties achteraf in het systeem kunnen wijzigingen optreden.

Van 305 patiënten is de woonplaats nog onbekend.

29-03-2020 | 14.00 uur

- The sisters are no longer allowed to receive visitors, nor are they allowed to drive their car and visit others or attend meetings outside the Convent.
- Singing lessons and gymnastics lessons are cancelled
- Externals and priests have no longer access to the Convent/Chapel. Celebrating the Eucharist is now impossible.
- Residents from the Care Center are also denied access to the Chapel. The sisters may still visit the Chapel.
- The chairs in the chapel are placed further apart to ensure a distance of 1.5 meters. The sisters still attend the office at the Chapel and other masses on TV.
- Grocery shopping and other things that the sisters ask for is done by the Convent's personnel.
- To enter the Care Centre and visit the Maria Catharina group is no longer allowed. Only Zusterszaken * has contact with the sisters at the MC group.
** Zusterszaken is the word for the employees of the Convent who take care of the medical and physical well-being of the sisters.) These employees are Anita van der Sterren, Marie-Louise Moors, Nellie van Beek and Nanny Hendriks.*
- Appointments for the hospital are postponed; Only urgent visits will take place.

All new measures are discussed with the sisters during coffee time in the Clara Living Room. The sisters adhere well to the situation. Sometimes some arrangements are forgotten, but sometimes happens.

With these measures we hope to stay safe.

The sisters can stroll in the Clara and Franciscus garden and visit the tomb of Mother Magdalene. This is often done by the sisters. At the grave they prayers are held for a good outcome of this pandemic.

Liturgical celebrations have been reduced, but a solution has been found. Every day a Holy Mass is broadcasted on TV. On Tuesdays and Fridays, the sisters can watch the Holy Mass on the big TV screen in the Convent's conference room. For Easter celebrations will be modified.

But there are also positive things can be put a name to:

The Sisters themselves have developed beautiful initiatives to encourage people en themselves.

- Cards are made for Proteion's care personnel. The sisters have coloured a butterfly on a card and wrote down an encouraging text. Together with a chocolate treat these cards are handed out to the care personnel at Proteion.



- Sr. Majella has opened her own "hair salon." A pair of scissors, an apron and a hair trimmer were bought. Sr. Majella makes sure the sisters get their hair done nicely. Of course with all the necessary precautions.



- Sr. Andrée and Sr. Louisa made mouth make from old cotton sheets, which can be used by the Convent's care workers (Zusterszaken). At a fast pace 75 masks were made for the Convent's employees!



- Because there are no gym classes, the sisters had the idea to dance instead.

In these worrisome times everyone contributes something in his/ her own way. Bonding and commitment become stronger. We hope and pray that with the Mother Magdalen's blessing this difficult time can be overcome. Time will tell.



We hope that "God will provide."

Peace and all good.