

Dear consecrated brothers and sisters,

The Lord is calling us to live this Lent of the year 2020 in a very special way, in a way that no one could think or imagine and that really requires each of us, to daily make decisive change in our style and mode of living.

Usually during Lent there are many charitable initiatives and important moments of prayer and reflection offered to prepare ourselves with a renewed and purified spirit for the Easter feasts and in our communities, moments of celebration and gatherings become more frequent. This year, however, we are called to live with strong faith, with the same intensity as always, but in completely different ways.

The most effective witness we can give is first of all a serene and committed obedience to what is demanded by those who govern us, both at the state and ecclesial level, to all that is disposed to safeguard our health, both as private citizens and as a community.

It is a duty of charity and gratitude that each of us, individually and as a community, intensify our unceasing prayer for all those who are helping us to live and overcome these difficult moments. Authorities, government leaders, health workers of all levels, Civil Protection volunteers and the Armed Forces, all those who offer their precious work for this calamity should be the object of our prayer and the offering of our sacrifices! Let us not miss the precious contribution that each of us can offer with continuous and incessant prayer.

Our thoughts go first to all the Contemplative Communities that seek to be a tangible sign of constant and trusting prayer for all humanity. We also think of the many elderly sisters and brothers who with their daily prayer accompany the ministry and apostolate of those who are active and using their strength to reach out to every brother and sister in need. In these days, with even greater impetus, intensify your precious and irreplaceable apostolate, with the certainty that the Lord will not delay in answering us and in his infinite mercy will drive away this grave scourge.

Let us joyfully offer the Lord the great sacrifice which the lack of Holy Mass and participation in the Eucharistic Table presents, **let us live it in communion with all those who, even for lack of priests, do not have the privilege to participate daily in the Holy Sacrifice.**

May those who have the possibility, not miss being concrete signs of closeness to our people, always in accordance with the provisions given by the Authorities in charge, and in full fidelity to our charisms, as in every age of past and recent history, we share the sufferings, anxieties and fears, but with the certain confidence that the Lord's response will not delay and soon we can sing a solemn Te Deum of thanksgiving.

The Holy Father Francis, just yesterday, on pilgrimage to Our Lady Salus Populi Romani and the Crucifix that saved Rome from the plague, wanted to remind us that the

means at our disposal to eradicate disasters and calamities are, in our so technological and advanced times, the same used by our ancestors. Prayer, sacrifice, penance, fasting and charity: **powerful weapons to grasp from the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus the grace of a total healing from such an insidious disease.**

Dear Sisters and Brothers, through modern means of communication we have the opportunity to participate in celebrations and formative moments; we have the opportunity to feel less alone and isolated and to make our voice reach the most distant communities! **Let us give a sign of hope and trust to all and while living these days with anxiety and apprehension, be convinced that by doing our part well, we can help the community emerge from the present hour of darkness.**

Let us enthusiastically accept the Pope's invitation and entrust ourselves now with all our faith to the dear Mother of Divine Love. Let us recite the Pope's prayer every day, morning and evening. "You, Salvation of your People, know what we need. We are certain that you will provide, so that, as you did at Cana of Galilee, joy and feasting might return after this moment of trial."

Dear Heavenly Mother, help us to live these difficult days filled with hope, with renewed unity, with a true spirit of obedience to what is required of us, with the certainty that after this trial we may arrive at the blessed and glorious hour of the Resurrection.

We greet you all with affection and great esteem, hoping that the light and love that comes from the Lord's Paschal Mystery will penetrate your whole life.

João Braz Cardinal de Aviz
Préfet

+ José Rodríguez Carballo, O.F.M.
Secrétaire