

St. Rita's Centre

Augustinian Recollect Spirituality Centre

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Dear Friends, as I write we are in our third lock down due to COVID 19. The first we took stoically, the second with a here, 'we go again attitude.' Now after a year, we have had enough, we miss our families and friends and are all in need of a hug. With the vaccine roll-out we can see a bit of light at the end of the tunnel.

I would like to share something with you that I heard recently. I was talking to a parishioner, who shared her experience of lockdown with me. She and her husband are both teachers working from home teaching students online. She works in the lounge and her husband works in the kitchen. They have two teenage children who do their online lessons in their bedrooms. This woman confessed to me how difficult life was working in a small London flat: "sometimes I could just scream, it is so frustrating." I thought about that and it made me sad because here was a good family, good parents and two teenagers struggling to cope. There are many families where the parents are stressed and not coping so well. Conditions in those households could become a nightmare.

Strange as it might seem St Rita was no stranger to lockdown and isolation. She had received the stigmata on her forehead, we believe from the image of the Crown of Thorns, a thorn attached itself to her forehead. What we do not appreciate is that it was more than just a saintly sign. She suffered extreme pain from the wound which also exuded unpleasant odours. For this reason, she was placed 'in lockdown' and isolation in her room away from the rest of the sisters. This lasted for fifteen years.

In 1450 she announced that she would like to go to Rome to celebrate the Holy Year. The sisters thought she was mad but on the day of the journey her wound healed and the smell faded. She went to Rome to celebrate that Holy Year. As soon as she returned to the convent the stigmata and lockdown returned which she accepted from God with gratitude.

Our novena to St. Rita begins on 14th May and finishes with her Feast Mass on 22nd May. I do hope you will be able to join in with us. This year we will remember all those who live in lockdown and isolation under great stress. The Recollect Priests will remember you all in the Mass on St Rita's feast day with a prayer of thanksgiving for your continued support.



Fr. Gerald Wilson OAR

OUR MISSION IN THE MIDST OF THE WORLDWIDE PANDEMIC

For all of us, this has been a time of suffering. We have suffered and we suffer with those who suffer in our religious communities, in our families, parishes and educational centres and throughout the world. We feel the death of eleven Augustinian Recollect friars who have left us unexpectedly, victims of the coronavirus, having in many places quite simple



bleak services said for them; their memory and the good they have done will remain among us. We feel the loss as well of some of our St. Rita's devotees who used to receive these newsletters and join in our novenas. Our thanksgiving and prayers for them all. May they rest in peace.

During this time, all of us have not stopped praying to the Lord asking for the human and spiritual health of the members of our families, of our country and of the whole world.

Our pastoral and liturgical life has been affected. As you know here in the British Isles the churches were closed for a time. When they were reopened new rules had to be adhered to. On entering the church, you have to wear your facemask, give your name and address to the track and trace person, wash your hands, and then be seated in your allocated place. Social distancing has to be maintained at all times especially when going to Holy



Communion. We have no singing. Parts of the mass are cut to a minimum. The people must leave quickly by a different door to the one they came in by and must not loiter to have a chat. When all have left, the volunteer cleaners wipe down each bench and the floor to get it ready for the next Mass.

One development is the use of computers, meetings on-line with priests from all over the world are held on Zoom. It takes a bit of getting used to but it is a great benefit which I'm sure will be used more in the future.

But these are not the worse consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic for the lives of so many people. Besides the toll paid in lives and health, this crisis is having a huge social impact, at work, in the economy, in human relations. This demands greater austerity from us while continuing to be generous in the face of the need for families that may fall into precariousness.



Many saints of our Order, such as Saint Rita of Cascia, Saint Nicholas of Tolentine, and Saint Ezekiel Moreno among others, are for us the best example of charity towards the sick, the poor, the helpless...

The Augustinian Recollects, through our International Solidarity Network ARCORES, have responded to this great challenge of charity with the implementation of various initiatives in 15 countries, focused primarily on providing basic assistance with food and sanitation and hygiene materials to individuals and families at risk of social exclusion.



In addition, some countries have incorporated initiatives to support people on the front lines of the pandemic, health care workers and law enforcement, by providing rest spaces, eco-friendly face masks and transportation for patients.



Our solidarity during this pandemic is reaching more than 50,000 people in so many countries around the world where the Augustinian Recollects are working: Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Sierra Leone, Spain, USA, UK, Venezuela...

The crisis will be long and hard, so the challenge is to sustain these programs in the medium term while incorporating lines of action to provide promotion options to the poorest people to get ahead on their own. To do this, we need to work together as an international solidarity network, committing the entities and persons who are part of the Augustinian Recollect family to collaborate with these programs.



The Augustinian Recollects of Costa Rica lived with enthusiasm the priestly ordination of Hugo Badilla Hernández

On August 1st, the Augustinian Recollects in Costa Rica celebrated the priestly ordination of Fray Hugo Badilla. The ordination was carried out at the “St. Ezekiel Moreno” Seminary in Pozos de Santa Ana, Costa Rica by Monsignor Ángel San Casimiro, Bishop Emeritus of Alajuela, Costa Rica.

Due to the COVID 19 pandemic, the ceremony had to be postponed twice and only his family and some close friends along with the Augustinian Recollect communities and the Augustinian Recollect Nuns were invited to it.

It was a celebration that was carefully prepared and followed all the sanitary protocols suggested by health institutions.



After the homily, given by Monsignor Ángel, Fray Victor González, the delegate of Costa Rica presented Fray Hugo to the Bishop emeritus to lay his hands on him reciting the formula of priestly ordination, he will bless his hands and deliver the paten with the chalice, symbols of his ordination as a new priest.

The ceremony continued with the rites of the Eucharistic celebration, in which Fray Hugo participated as the new priest. Once the ceremony was over at around noon, all the guests joined Fray Hugo to share a fraternal meal in a happy family atmosphere.

