



**SOCIETAS DIVINI SALVATORIS  
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**To all the members of the Society of the Divine Saviour**

*Dear confreres,*

I am writing this letter to you from our Motherhouse, where we are isolated due to the COVID 19 epidemic, popularly known as the Coronavirus that continues to proliferate throughout the world. First of all, I would like to thank you for the messages of closeness to us in these intense days and the concerns many of you have expressed about the emergency situation, particularly here in Italy, but now growing all over Europe and other parts of the world.

This new and unexpected situation forces us not only to change our plans, but also makes us review even the routine of everyday gestures, such as greeting each other. And much further, the fact of forcibly interrupting the accelerated and routine rhythm of our existence makes us realize how quickly we can lose the most fundamental things; it leads us to live with our fears and to ask ourselves about the breadth of our hope and our confidence in life.

In this period of hard tests, I would like to invite you to reflect on a possible reading of the meaning of these complex times. As our Founder did in his time, I invite you to discern the essentials of the "signs of the times" and to continue your path with renewed confidence in the words and gestures of Jesus, our Saviour.

Without minimizing the dramatic repercussions of this epidemic on the lives of many families, I would like to invite you to take a look at fundamental dimensions that hopefully can serve for our personal and community reflection. I propose this meditation exercise also illuminated by the spiritual wisdom of our Founder, Fr. Francis Jordan.

1. Without having planned it, this emergency situation has come to us precisely in the Lenten season. In this period, we are called to conversion and abstinence of many things. "*Build the house of your holiness on prayer, work, strict silence ...*" (SD II / 8). Hopefully the present time of silence and desert will help us to empty ourselves of our selfishness and will lead us to a true *kenotic* exercise in our current life! Let us empty ourselves to fill ourselves only with the Lord, dedicating more time to prayer alone with Him and, simultaneously, recognizing Jesus in the faces of our confreres with whom we must live and share this imposed but necessary isolation; at the same time, let us recognize the Son of God in the suffering face of so many sick and their crying families.
2. Unintentionally and completely against our will these days confront us with the reality that we are not omnipotent. There are limits that we have to recognize and accept as such. We are not super men! Nor are we called to a life focused on the pursuit of sterile or neutral perfectionism where there is no room for what is weak or vulnerable. "*Humility, humility, humility. Oh how great treasure!*" (SD III / 11). Hopefully this time is an interpellation to have compassion for ourselves, to care for the vulnerability of those who are older among our relatives and confreres, embracing the limits and the weaknesses that are inherent in everyone's life.
3. This situation has awakened the awareness of the importance of deep and necessary relationships with our loved ones. These days we feel more than ever the value of seeking contact with our relatives, with confreres and friends to find out how they are and recommending that they take care. Spontaneously, a deep and shared concern grows in everyone's heart. "*Gentleness is so important*" (SD II / 66) because in a situation like this the profoundly human dimension that inhabits each one of us gets revealed. Perhaps we are not always aware of how important it is to put meekness and the gestures of gratuitousness at the centre.
4. This health crisis has led to the creation of different networks of cooperation and enormous generosity among people. It is exciting to hear the witness of solidarity and heroic gestures in the medical aid centres. With astronomical speed so many networks of support and cooperation with each other emerge and arise between people from all areas. This network of communion between people makes us recognize that God has sown in our heart natural impulses towards cooperation, acceptance and solidarity. "*May all people serve You! May all tongues praise the Lord!*" (SD III / 21)

5. Looking at the way the new virus is proliferating everywhere, we realize that this epidemic has no nationalistic feelings and knows no borders. No one is exempt from this disease and its possible consequences. No one escapes! This harsh reality has created barriers of division and isolation between us, causing even fear of each other. "*Poverty, suffering, contempt*" (SD IV / 22). Hopefully this experience of not having our securities any more will help us to understand better the reality of discrimination and insecurity that so many people live for innumerable other reasons. Also, it be a direct invitation to take our responsibility and ask ourselves: how can we protect the people around us? How can we alleviate their discomforts and bring a little hope? Kindness is priceless in this situation.
6. One of the restrictions is that of not being able to temporarily celebrate the Eucharist in the churches with the community present to avoid all kinds of crowds and possible infection. The media help to a certain extent to overcome this absence, giving visibility to the spiritual unity among all in the sharing of Bread. This situation leads us to think what meaning will it have for many that the Easter Triduum possibly may not be celebrated liturgically in community? Also, what does it mean to have to celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus in the midst of a situation of apprehension and death? "*In the cross is salvation, in the cross is life ...*" (SD I / 189). Hopefully this situation, never seen before, will help us to pray in a different way and with more depth and will not allow fear to speak louder than hope in our attitudes! Let us take the opportunity to become quieter so that we can hear what God wants to say to us at this time ...
7. No matter how implacable the situation of fragility and death that we live, let us not lose sight of our call to communicate life fully. "*This is eternal life, that they know You, the one true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent*" (SD I / 83). The God we know and whom we make known is the God of life and the Resurrection. The life we receive from God has no limits, nor does death have final power over it. Hopefully this situation favours us to bring out the best in ourselves to contribute and communicate this inexhaustible and decisive dimension of our existence and mission, not allowing us to be the first to succumb under the empire of fear of dying, so that we do not become a counter-testimony of the Resurrection!
8. In the different contexts of the world, let us not be overcome by fear or by the uncertainty to which this situation tries to lead us. This is an opportunity to be united and close to people, particularly the most vulnerable, to help them live this unusual situation from the horizon of Easter hope. Furthermore, I invite you not to close in on yourself, but to be creative in giving the spiritual support that people need from us the most. Let no one feel alone! So, let us continue to be united... in "*continual prayer*,

*urgent and fervent.*" (SD II / 14). That forced isolation does not become manifested selfishness, but may it be a privileged space for the propagation of the multiform grace donated by the Spirit of the Risen One, who invites us to the creativity of love that overcomes all.

I would like to end by recalling our responsibility to follow the health protection prescriptions indicated by the World Health Organization, by the respective national governments, and also by the pastoral guidelines of the local Church in this time of crisis. May this time be an opportunity to increase our sense of belonging to the Society and make us grow in the union between us, through our prayers, in the spirit of brotherhood and in apostolic service. May we all feel in our hearts that Father Francis Jordan accompanies us with his love as a father and spiritual guide.

So, let us continue forward, united in prayer and mission,

  
Fr. Milton Zonta SDS  
Superior General



  
Fr. Agustín Van Baelen SDS  
Secretary General