



CURIA
GENERALIZIA
AGOSTINIANA

VIA PAOLO VI, 25 - 00193 ROMA

Prot. 042/2020

Rome, March 14, 2020

TO THE BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF THE ORDER REGARDING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Dear brothers and sisters:

Throughout the world, we are currently living in a health emergency. The coronavirus pandemic (Covid-19) has brought us face to face with a reality that none of us could have imagined. This may very well leave many of us confused or unsettled.

Let me reflect, share my feelings, and offer you, as a brother, some guidance at this difficult time.

The first is that we should not minimize the problem. The situation is very serious. Perhaps it is hard for us to accept it and we tend to downplay the issue. Make no mistake. The pandemic is advancing in an apparently unstoppable way and it is contaminating continents and nations, leaving an imprint of disease and death. We are facing an alarming world situation. Therefore, a humble attitude is essential. We must first be humble. From there we can assume the fragility of our condition and the ephemeral nature of worldly security: humanity is not omnipotent, but vulnerable. The harsh reality in which we are living must orient us towards the Lord, trusting in his mercy.

Only from a humble heart can we discern and offer the necessary response as Augustinians and as Christians. Our answer must be based, as has been correctly indicated, on four pillars: prayer, serenity, prevention and responsibility.

“We should not address God with words, but with the feelings we have in our minds and with the direction of our thoughts, along with pure love and simple affection.” (Augustine: *On the Lord’s Sermon on the Mount 2,3,13*). I thank the Institute of Augustinian Spirituality for convening a day of prayer in the Order on March 20, the third Friday of Lent, which we will share with the other two Augustinian Orders who share a special connection with us: the Augustinian Recollects and the Discalced Augustinians. I hope that all of us, men and women religious and laity, will pray together, especially on that day, as a cry from the heart of the entire Augustinian family (cf: Augustine: *Exposition on the Psalms 118,29,1*). Let us remember the sick, the health workers, the volunteers. Let us also pray for the deceased. Let us ask the Lord of Life to deliver us from all evil.

May the Holy Spirit grant us all serenity. The Christian response does not come from anxiety, excitement or destructive anguish, but from the strength that faith gives us, which is the encounter and experience of Christ. We cry out, “*Lord, save us!*” And we hear his comforting response: “*Do not be afraid.*” (cf: Mt 8,25-26; 14,30-31). So be it. Every one of us must confidently place ourselves in His hands and ask for the intercession of the Saints of the Order in these moments of great difficulty.

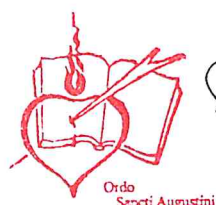
At the same time, the demand for adequate prevention impels us to collaborate decisively with the measures decreed by the Governments. Several bishops and Episcopal Conferences have also expressed themselves in this regard. Although some measures may seem drastic to us, we must follow them loyally and responsibly. Our prompt and determined collaboration, each one of us and all of us together, is essential.

But let us be careful that physical isolation or other measures that are to be taken, do not suppose an isolation of the soul. It is time to strengthen our solidarity. Let us take care of the health of those who work or collaborate with us; of the people who are in our charge and entrusted to our responsibility. Let selfishness not prevail over justice and our joining together.

And I also ask you not to neglect pastoral care. In this difficult situation, many believers are assailed by doubt and uncertainty. Let no one feel alone, or abandoned, or disoriented in these moments of crisis. Our oneness of heart and mind opens us to our brother or sister, the one who suffers, the one who is afraid. We cannot deny anyone the spiritual help and comfort of Christ, of whom we are an instrument and presence. We make visible the mercy of God. Let us offer creative possibilities. As Augustinian brothers and sisters we are with the world and we share in its sadness and anguish. There is certainly nothing truly human that does not find an echo in our hearts (cf: *Gaudium et Spes*, 1). Here is where our communities live. May our response, therefore, be a decisive witness of love and from love. “*God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him.*” (1 Jn 4:16).

Dear brothers and sisters: with the help of God we will overcome the present situation and we will be purified. From the reality we face, steadfast in faith and generous in charity, let us have renewed hope within us.

We entrust our life to the Virgin Mary, Our Mother of Perpetual Help, and ask her to protect us from all evil.



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