

READING FROM SAINT AUGUSTINE

I will sing and play the lyre to the Lord. We shall be free from anxiety, and carefree we shall sing, and carefree we shall play the lyre when we contemplate the delight of the Lord and are protected as his temple, in that incorruptibility where death is swallowed up in victory. But what of the present? Already we have spoken of the joys that will be ours when that one petition is granted to us. But what of the present? Hearken, Lord, to my voice. Let us groan now, let us pray now. Groaning is proper only to people in misery, prayer only to those in need. Prayer will pass away, praise will take over; weeping will pass away, joy will take its place. In the meantime, when we are in the days of our troubles, let our prayer to God not cease, and let us go on asking him for that one thing. Let us not interrupt that petition until it is answered, by God's gift and through God's goodness. Hearken, Lord, to my voice, with which I have cried to you; have mercy on me, and hearken to me. He made that one petition; through his long begging, weeping, groaning, he asked only that. He has made an end of all desires; that one plea alone is left (Exposition 2 of Psalm 26, 14).



AGAINST THE CORONAVIRUS PRAYER

+ Almighty and merciful God, refreshment in our weariness, support in our weakness, comfort in our sadness. We come to you to invoke your mercy, since today we still experience the fragility of the human condition in the presence of a new viral pandemic. Listen to the prayer we offer, comfort your children, save us from the present distress and open our hearts to be people of hope.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.
R/. Amen.



A Letter to our Friends St Rita's Day, 2020

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THE AUGUSTINIAN RECOLLECT FRIARS

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Dear Friends, Brexit has faded from our television screens and has now been replaced by the Corona Virus. A panic seems to have set in with supermarket shelves almost empty. Everywhere, everyone is trying to stop the progress of the illness, from parents to the greatest scientific brains. There is an extra concern for sick people especially the elderly.

This is not the first time there has been a world-wide fear of an epidemic. Probably the most famous illness was the Black Death, also known as the Bubonic Plague. This was the most devastating pandemic in human history. It travelled through Europe, carried by fleas. It is estimated to have killed about 45 per cent of world population in the 14th century.

This brings me to St Rita; she suffered the consequences of the Black Death in her life. Rita had two young teenage boys and both of them contracted the disease. You can imagine the anguish she went through as she nursed her two children. As a young woman she had lost her husband, who was murdered and now her two children. As she coped with her grief, she saw a way forward, to enter the Augustinian convent.

More recently we have suffered other outbreaks of severe illnesses. One of the most terrible was just after the First World War. It was called the Spanish Flu. The same amount of those who died in the trenches died from this flu. More recently still we have had, Hong Kong Flu, Mad Cow Disease, Sars, and Bird flu each of these were overcome.

The whole country seems to be heading towards a precipice, but St Rita is the patron of the impossible and with our devotion to her we can be sure all will be well.

Our novena to St. Rita begins on 14th May and finishes with her 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 fear of the Corona Virus and those who are suffering from the illness. 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 O.A.R.

A LETTER BY DR. TONY FROM THE AMAZON

The world has changed in these last months. The situation as concerning the corona virus is getting worse. Population growth, and, rapid urbanization, and the misuse of antibiotics have altered the balance of the world of micro-organisms and led to the increased ability to spread of illnesses.

We understand the situation very well because we have lived in the Amazon Region of Brazil, on the River Purus, for a long time. Our work is the eradication and prevention of Hansen's disease, (Leprosy) and other prevalent diseases like malaria, hepatitis, tuberculosis, etc. We are dedicated to looking after the people of the area. We have a hospital boat, in which we travel to visit 199 communities, to offer both the prevention and the cure of tropical diseases.



The people living in these communities are very isolated, and they have no money, so our services are free. The people have no doctors or nurses, so, many years ago, we decided to train healthcare assistants for every village. For a month they receive training in the hospital boat, then for a further month they go to Manaus, the provincial capital, to train in a hospital there. After that, they go back to their villages.



Hansen's disease is an illness which most people think doesn't exist. Decades ago its former name, "leprosy", was changed to "Hansen's disease" in order to distance it from the historical stigmatisation of an incurable illness, and to make those who suffer from it realise that it is a curable disease if it is diagnosed in time.



Although it is hidden many thousands of miles away from us, we should still be able to empathise with those who suffer from it as they are part of our human family, and it should raise our awareness to the necessity of fighting it, thus breaking down walls which prevent us from accepting new challenges.

Jesus cured many lepers, not only in body but in spirit too. Jesus reached out a loving and healing hand towards the abandoned, and he challenges us, his followers, to reach out towards those whom society rejects today, immigrants, drug addicts, refugees, prisoners, all those who think differently from us. It is amazing what people can do for others.

Our action in this life must show our community spirit.
Dr. Tony López González. Purus River. Amazonas. Brazil.

