



Newsletter – April 2020

CFSM Singapore

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LENT AMIDST COVID-19

Lent is a season in our Church calendar where the faithful are encouraged to undertake acts of self-denial in striving to live a holy life. We look to God who Himself underwent temptation in the desert (for us that being in the desert means going through a period of spiritual exercise and reflection, not an end in itself but to bring us closer to God We are asked to give up food or entertainment or habits that we crave for. Being Singaporeans Lent is indeed a challenging time for us). However, at the present moment, it is not entirely clear that the denial was meant to help us think about God because due to the suspension of masses due to Covid-19, we are unable to partake of the Holy Eucharist.

We are very used to the good life in Singapore as we live in an urban setting where everything is conveniently located within our proximity. We have an easy access to almost everything; from groceries to transportation and to churches. Many of our newer churches are built within the housing estates, enclosed with air-conditioning facilities and are served with at least two priests. In poorer countries like Myanmar, Thailand and Indonesia the churches are few and they do not even have a parish priest and very few masses especially in English Language. It seemed everything can be controlled by us until the scare caused by one of the tiniest microbes on Earth – Covid-19 virus. The very advantage of living in Singapore became the nation's greatest weakness ie the convergence of large crowds being forbidden as that could increase the risk of spreading the infection as not all the sick people know that they have the virus in the early stages.

Lent is more than self-denial; it is about transformation of our selves after going through a period of self-denial. Through our self-denial we prepare to encounter the mystery of Christ's passion, death and resurrection by endeavouring to become more Christ-like ourselves. Transformation is about letting ourselves be filled with God's presence so that we can be shaped by God's grace. Having said that, it is ironical that now the self-denial extends to the situation where we could not even celebrate mass as a body of Christ. Yet even in this situation we are called to be Christ-like.

But have we been transforming into being more Christ-like? Yes and No. We saw how many people hoarded toilet rolls, cooking oil, eggs, etc when the DORSCON Orange was first announced in Singapore. It was "everyman for himself". These

have also happened in other countries. We see Singaporeans not heeding the advisories from the Singapore Authorities. People are not staying at home, visiting shopping centers for non-essential reasons, travelling out of Singapore when it is forbidden, etc. But there are others who are Christ-like – providing shelters for Malaysian workers who are not able to travel due to the temporary ban on entry by the Malaysian Government, volunteering to help the health care industry and helping in contact tracing.

For us Catholics, are we a people of God in the midst of Covid –19? Our placid lives have been disrupted. Are we ready to trust our lives to God and be fully dependent on Him? The season of Lent enables us to reflect on these spiritual matters. Are we ready for a new Easter life in Christ- A life of giving and sharing? We deny ourselves so that we can be reborn as a new creation, to live more fully as the citizens of the Kingdom of God.

Covid–19 is a timely reminder in this world of consumerism and selfishness, a world far from God and, as the Catholic Church tells us, a world filled with the culture of death.

See

1. Do we act in similar ways to what we are so critical of some members of our society – hoarding up food, face-masks, etc to protect our own interest?
2. What are the consequences of “panic buying”?
3. How are we helping others, our neighbours, church members, strangers, during this pandemic?

Judge

1. What will be the reaction of Christ to those who are selfish during this pandemic?
2. What does our Lord wants us to do, beyond prayers, fasting and alms-giving, during this pandemic? What does the Bible say? What do the social teachings of the Catholic Church say? Does the Encyclicals discuss about our roles as Christians in a pandemic situation?

Act

How can we change our behaviour during this critical period?

- As a family member?
- As a CFM member?
- As a CFM Movement? Can we assist collectively as a movement?



Announcement

In the light of pandemic situation DORSCON Orange, CFSM Singapore will be postponing its Annual General Meeting until the situation improves. The Registry of Societies has expressed support if members are agreeable. To facilitate the process, should there be any objection to the postponement from any CFSM member, please inform our secretary Andrew Leong by emailing to hermes41437@yahoo.com by 15/4/2020.

We pray that everyone remains well in this difficult time.