

The powerful force of intercession

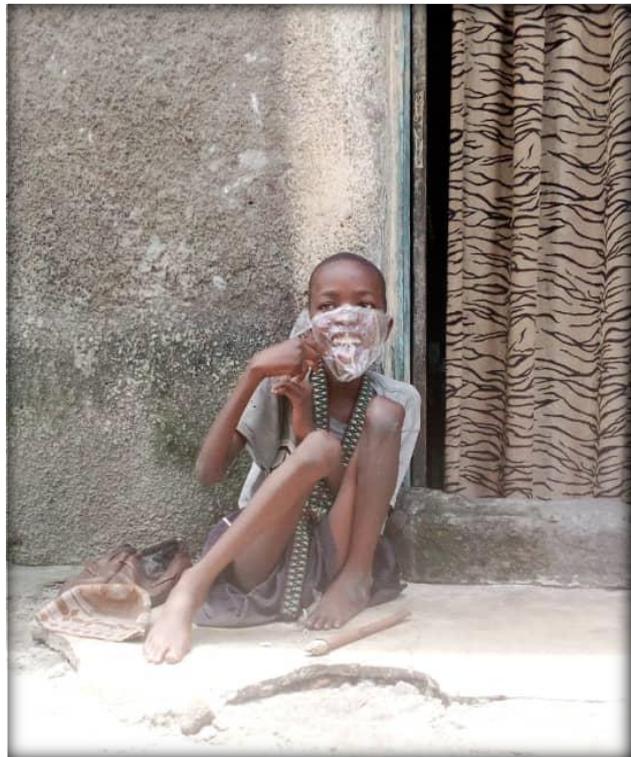
Alberto Toutin ssc
Superior General

INFO SSCC Brothers No 142 – 2 April 2020

The coronavirus pandemic has severely tested local and global health authorities' capacity for responding. It has also imposed restrictions on our freedom of movement, promoting, as a way of caring for ourselves and others, isolation or quarantine in our homes and communities.

We are following the news of the evolution of this epidemic without seeing, for the moment, any signs that would indicate its containment and end.

Teams of scientists are working around the world to find a cure. We have seen doctors and health workers at their limits of strength and means, caring for and accompanying those infected by the coronavirus.



Paralyzed boy with homemade mask
in Kinshasa (R. D. of Congo)

Announcing good news

In the midst of so much alarming news, amplified by the uncertainty of not knowing when this will end, we have all witnessed, through the networks and messages we receive, wonderful human gestures.

I am thinking in particular of the people who have died of the coronavirus and whose relatives have not been able to accompany them even to their funerals. Sometimes one or two people have accompanied the funeral on behalf of a whole family or friends who would have liked to be there. Also, I'm thinking of the initiatives of individuals and volunteers who ensure food for those who live from day to day and who have been left without daily sustenance. Then there is the baker in Santiago, Chile, who offers fresh bread for free to those who find themselves without work. Or the priest from Casingo in Bergamo, Italy who, affected by the coronavirus, gave up his ventilator to help a younger person in need. Each of us will have many stories that we can bring to the heart and to our prayer. All of these examples are expressions of a positive globalization, of what good and love, with its discretion and generosity, can bring to our world. We see how goodness and love make our world more human, make us more closely united to each other because we recognize ourselves as more vulnerable and more dependent on each other.

United to the intercession of Jesus

In many countries, in order to avoid crowding, there were calls to close churches and not to hold liturgical celebrations. In many places, religious communities have organized themselves to celebrate Mass or offer online reflections to continue to accompany Christian communities.

In these extraordinary conditions that we are living, I invite you to live Holy Week with a particular fervour. In particular, let us celebrate the heart of our faith in Jesus who gave of himself, died and rose again. Let us unite ourselves to his prayers and intercession for all humanity. In the smallness of our chapels, in churches or other places of worship without an assembly, let us live the celebrations of Holy Week as a prayer of intercession for our world, for those who have died from this pandemic and for their families, for those who have cared for them to the end and for those who are working to find an antidote. Let us welcome into our intercessory prayers not only those who live in isolation but also those who are lonely, who lack work, whose family ties are precarious, who fear abandonment.

So that our celebrations may be linked to the intercession of Jesus and his prayer for humanity, may I propose you read and pray John 17. Here we find Jesus praying for the disciples and for those who will believe through them. What gives credibility to his message and contagious hope to their lives is the unity and love that exists among them. This unity is based on knowing that they are loved by Jesus and his Father. Let us be moved by this prayer of intercession that Jesus continues to make for us to the Father:

“Father, they are your gift to me. I wish that where I am they also may be with me, that they may see my glory that you gave me, because you loved me before the foundation of the world. Righteous Father, the world also does not know you, but I know you, and they know that you sent me. I made known to them your name and I will make it known, that the love with which you loved me may be in them and I in them.” (Jn. 17: 24-26)

Let us then confidently enter into Holy Week, joining in Jesus' prayer of intercession to the Father. To that prayer we unite our prayers, and join with those who pray from their homes or from their hospital beds, with those who have asked us to pray for them, with the prayers for the deceased who have died far from their families ... In this perspective, personal or community prayer in our chapels or oratories takes on not only a worldwide view, but also a cosmic one because it is united to the prayer of the Lord of History and of all Creation who is our brother.

May our celebrations in our communities, and perhaps in our churches - albeit without the presence of the faithful but connecting with many of them by broadcasting our services through social networks - be our humble yet powerful contribution to the longed-for hope for a healthier world, a world that is more reconciled with its vulnerability.

United in the Sacred Hearts,

Alberto Toutin ssc
Superior General