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CASA GENERALIZIA

NEWSFLASH

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Dear Confreres and Lay Spiritan Associates,

In a short few weeks our lives have been changed in ways that we could never have imagined. What began as an isolated viral outbreak in a distant part of the world has spread with frightening speed across our globe and continues to gain momentum as the number of countries affected and the overall death toll rises daily. Many of us are living in situations of so-called 'lockdown', confined to our residences with permission to leave only for urgent necessities; gatherings are prohibited, Churches are empty and public liturgies suspended. We are fearful, in particular, for the elderly and vulnerable in our own families and communities and among the people we serve in our various ministries.

Separated from each other by 'social distancing' and 'self-isolation', we have been brought together as a global community in an unprecedented way as we seek to protect ourselves, our loved ones and our societies. For us as Christians, Religious and priests, it is a call to return to the fundamentals of our personal faith, our conviction that Christ walks the road of life with us and that nothing, in life or in death, can separate us from his love (cf. Rom. 8: 35-38); it is a time for prayer, both individual and in community, for deliverance, for mercy, for healing, for peace. We are called to live our Spiritan mission in new and creative ways, through solidarity with each other and with the people we serve, through compassionate outreach to the fearful, the vulnerable and the sick, through personal witness to courage and hope in situations where so many people look to us for guidance and leadership.

Contemporary technology and social media offer us ways for living this mission and reaching out to others in ways that were hitherto impossible. Unfortunately, it is also true that such means of communication are sometimes exploited for the dissemination of misinformation that promotes unnecessary fear and anxiety. In such times it is essential for us to rely only on trustworthy information and to follow the directives of the civil authorities and Church leaders in our own countries. For all of us, the regular updates and orientations from the website of the World Health Organisation (www.who.int) serve as an authoritative and reliable source of information.

Within the Congregation, a number of Chapters and Enlarged Council meetings have been cancelled, as have planned visitations of the General Council during the period March-April. Many of you have understandably already enquired as to whether or not the General Chapter will go ahead at the scheduled dates. At a General Council meeting this morning we agreed to maintain the dates for the moment and to review the situation in mid-April in the light of developments over the coming weeks. In the meantime, Bro Marc Tyrant will travel to France tomorrow to offer his services as a medical doctor with Médecins du Monde in response to the growing need for medical professionals due to the present pandemic in his own country. Our thoughts and prayers go with him.

We assure each one of you, especially those of you who feel particularly vulnerable, of our solidarity, our support and our prayers in the current crisis.

John Fogarty, C.S.Sp.
On behalf of the General Council