

ST ANTHONY'S BREAD

THE FRANCISCANS' NEWSLETTER KEEPING OUR
FRIENDS, BENEFACTORS AND FAMILIES UP TO DATE



IN THIS ISSUE



Tweeting The Good
News? /p4



As Unemployment Grows,
Sao Paulo Friars Serve Up
To 4,000 Meals Daily /p5



A Sermon On Hospitality:
Using Hospitality One
Towards Another /p6



Locked Up At Home: What Is It Doing To Me?

In the blink of an eye, the months have flown by for those experiencing the lockdown in both Singapore and Malaysia! Speaking for myself, what initially started as a novel experience has settled into a “new normal” – uncomfortable as it may still be.

No doubt, many are severely impacted: some have lost jobs or business ventures and inherited the anxiety of not being able to make ends meet. Others at the frontline: doctors, nurses, reporters, the police etc., have been asked to place themselves at risk for the common good. Still others find themselves socially isolated and at the verge of despair, especially the elderly who live alone. Needless to say, this

pandemic has far-reaching effects.

However, not everyone's life has gone topsy-turvy in these turbulent times.

And I guess this article speaks more to those who find themselves suddenly trapped in an invisible capsule of sorts – impacted yet protected. Yes, many of us may miss the weekly sacraments, the breakfasts at our favorite coffee shops, the social meet-ups with friends. Yet, life must go on; we have to cope. Technology and the online culture, it seems, have come to the rescue. If not for it, we would have no means to relate to each other from a distance, let alone to participate remotely at Holy Mass.

See page 3 for more...

Walking With Christ Through Tumultuous Change

Dear family and friends,

May the Lord give you peace!

Like Charles Dicken's book, *A Tale of Two Cities*, much of our time on earth can be captured in the first line of the story: "It was the best of times; it was the worst of times." Recent years have seen much progress in medicine, opportunity for education, and technology. That said, we have also seen increased issues of anxiety, loneliness, failing schools, climate change, and most recently, the novel coronavirus.

A crisis often reveals the gaps in any system. More than just reveal, it can also shake a system to its very foundation. During these troubled times, change isn't something we opt for; it is something that is forced upon us.

When calm returns, perhaps we would have lost some good in our lives, some beauty, some dreams. Nonetheless, being resilient and ever creative, humanity would have also grown in new and surprising ways: new understanding of what is important, new ways of being in the world, and new ways of relating with each other. I have been gratified to see music blooming everywhere, neighbours strolling, and a world where we can better hear nature at our door.

We can take a wait-and-see approach and observe what remains; or we can take this time as an opportunity to ensure that our choices and actions are centred in love and goodwill toward each other. We can choose to lead from relationship and to let go of what no longer serves.

Francis did not change the world because he built a church. He changed it because of the intention with which he built. Living in full relationship to that which he loved most in the world—God, the Good—he picked up a stone. How do we make change in our time?

In this issue, Friar David Au, OFM reflects on the subtle ways that the pandemic lockdown may affect our spiritual perspective and invites us to a keener sense of self-awareness. In the Formation section, we read how the brothers are making use of different ways to bring prayer and worship to homes during the COVID-19 pandemic.

I pray that as you leaf through the pages of this issue, the voice within your heart may be that of the Holy Spirit promised by Jesus, "*who will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you*" (John 14:26).

May you walk in Peace and Good,



Friar Aiden Peter Jr, OFM





But as the weeks flew by, have you sensed a change in yourself? I certainly have. The handphone seems to have become a dearer friend more than ever before. These days, being glued to it isn't as frowned upon anymore – after all, the pandemic has ushered it into my life and I am called to maintain social distancing for the sake of others. It's certainly understandable, almost justifiable that I spend more time keeping to myself and tending to my own concerns.

It is within this context that I was invited by the Lord to examine the movement of my heart at prayer one day. I realized that as the lockdown dragged on, more and more of my time and energy was being spent on myself in a somewhat concerning way. I had taken up a new hobby – fitness (for once in my life) which dictates that I cook healthier meals and sleep early. I had also started a regimen of strict workouts and fasting cycles. While none of these are wrong in and of themselves, I realized that I had allowed them to serve “me”, period. The whole atmosphere of being isolated and secluded seems to have bred and encouraged this natural sense of prioritizing self to such a degree that it had become rather unsettling. Does this ring a bell?

Online, I see many people with new hobbies too, with friends posting new recipes, new discoveries, new accomplishments daily, twice a day, some even every few hours! The other day, a friend of mine hosted a LIVE Facebook session where he managed 25 minutes of high-intensity-interval-training with apparent ease! Respect!

All these stories, I eat and eat on a daily basis. Scrolling away at my handphone, I was entertained and distracted with utter glee. The sense of isolation had created a subconscious hunger for connection which I was busily satiating to no end. But once again, who was being satisfied and being served, but me?

Nonetheless, the incident that really woke me up was the news of the latest wave of COVID-19 cases in Singapore in April 2020. Thousands of foreign workers living in cramped dormitories were severely impacted. Shocked and concerned at first, my attention was quickly replaced by one of helplessness. After all,

what could I do, locked away in a bubble at home? I thought to myself. It was for the powers-that-be to hopefully improve the working conditions of these desperate workers. And so, I headed back to my own muted existence, hiding in a bubble of self-concern.

If any of these musings resonate with you, it is only because this way of thinking and feeling is how we have been trained since birth. The natural inclination of the fallen human race, wounded by sin, IS to care LESS, to love LESS about others compared to self. To only be concerned when there's something in it for ourselves. The selfish gene, the original sin. It does not take a lockdown to state the obvious, but the degree of our selfish behaviors can manifest itself in new and shocking ways these days. How could I have been so indifferent to the suffering of others?

What should we do about this dark truth within ourselves? Shall we lament? Shall we curse? The Good News is that even as the journey into the depths of our souls is needed to uncover these shadows, this movement does not need to end there! It was never meant to. Yes, some of us may have been lulled into a new experience of relaxed existence, one that breeds our self-serving nature, but thankfully, God allows us to sense this in moments of graced honesty. The irony of living within the vortex of self-importance is only broken when we direct our gaze outwards again – to be caught up in the embrace of God's outpouring love.

What makes this embrace so liberating? To me, I am brought to the realization that there IS a greater picture at play, and that my petty concerns (while remaining part of this picture) often miss the mark on so many levels. The sway and direction of life isn't random or fickle – it is purposeful, it moves towards Christ ultimately.

And so, am I allowed to be healthy through my latest interest in fitness? Certainly, but only if my resulting health serves a greater purpose: to serve God and minister to others in love. How about social media? Am I allowed to scroll through one post after another? No harm, as long as it isn't all-consuming and solely for entertainment's sake, but becomes a genuine and loving way of reaching out to others, of wanting to be connected to them. It never fails to amaze me how creative some have been in evangelizing the Good News online.

With the Lord, we are never lost or useless. The Good News is that we are able to live in true freedom, beyond our narrow and suffocating existence, if we but change the direction of our gaze and the movement of our hearts.

And so, how has your lockdown experience been like? Has it been imprisoning and frustrating, or has it been life-giving and liberating? Our choice can always begin anew today.

Tweeting the Good News?



With dioceses around the nation suspending masses, sacraments, and other in-person worship services—as well as all public gatherings—for the foreseeable future as a result of the extraordinary measures government and health officials are implementing to reduce the spread of COVID-19, our brothers have resorted to an expanded and comprehensive digital outreach effort to stay connected in prayer and worship with families and friends.

Utilizing social media platforms – along with some creativity – the friars are now bringing prayer and worship, meditations and reflections, and faith-sharing directly into the homes of thousands of Catholics.



My Gift in Honour of St Anthony

I enclose a gift of \$ _____ :

- For the Formation and Education Fund
- To be used as you see fit

Kindly make cheques payable to
The Order of Friars Minor (S) Ltd

Malaysian Cheques may be made out to
Franciscan Friars

Return this tear-out in an envelope to:
Franciscan Development Office
5 Bukit Batok East Ave 2, Singapore 659918

Please send a receipt to:

Name: _____

Address: _____

My Petition

Dear Franciscan Friars,

Please pray with me for the following intentions:

As Unemployment Grows, Sao Paulo Friars Serve Up To 4,000 Meals Daily



Catholic News Service interviewed our friars in Sao Paulo, Brazil about their new food distribution center, dubbed “The Franciscan Tent”, that was born out of a response to the growing number of hungry people seeking food due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Hunger came before the fever (a main COVID-19 symptom),” Franciscan Brother Jose Francisco de Cassia dos Santos told Catholic News Service.

Santos, who heads the Franciscan Solidarity Service, has been distributing meals to the homeless in the center of Sao Paulo for the past 13 odd years. The traditional solidarity service, traditionally known as “The Priest’s Tea”, usually drew a few hundred homeless people, who congregated at the St. Francis rectory. Now, the majority of people in line waiting for The Priest’s Tea are those who have lost their jobs to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ever since March 24, when the city installed stay-at-home measures to combat the new coronavirus, the number of people seeking food has more than quadrupled. Facing such rapidly increasing numbers, there was no other choice but to set up a second distribution center – The Franciscan Tent.

my petition to st anthony

“Holy Saint Anthony, you are the consolation of so many people. We come to invoke your help, confident of experiencing your goodness and power. Pray for us to the Father of Mercies, that we may obtain the graces we need for ourselves and for our loved ones. Amen.”



ST ANTHONY'S BREAAD

THE FRANCISCANS' NEWSLETTER KEEPING OUR
FRIENDS, BENEFACTORS AND FAMILIES UP TO DATE

Join us for our weekly devotion
sessions online on Tuesdays at
www.franciscans.sg/stanthy

A Sermon On Hospitality: Using Hospitality One Towards Another

Using hospitality one towards another, without murmuring, as every man hath received grace, ministering the same one to another; as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speaks, let him speak as the words of God. If any man minister, let him do it as of the power which God administereth. (1Pt 4:9 – 11)

In Latin, the same word is used for one giving and one receiving hospitality, the one who stands at the door and the one who opens it. Preachers offer hospitality by opening the door of preaching to sinners, and without murmuring (that is, without scandal). Preachers are certainly 'hospitable', because like good stewards they should minister the manifold grace of preaching which they have received.

Just as there are many kinds of sin, so there should be many kinds of preaching. The form of the preaching should re-form the soul that is de-formed by sin. So Peter says to prelates and preachers: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking care of it, not by constraint, but willingly, according to God; not for filthy lucre's sake, but voluntarily; neither as lording it over the clergy, but being made a pattern to the flock. (1Pt 5:2 – 3) And he adds: If any man speaks, let him speak as the words of God. He 'speaks the words of God' when he attributes any skill in preaching which he has, not to himself but to God.

Whoever 'speaks the words of God' is afraid of teaching anything beyond God's will, beyond the authority of Holy Scripture, or not useful to his brethren; and he fears to be silent about the things he should teach. If any man minister (in word or in any other duty of charity), let him do it as of the power (not his own but) which God administereth, that in all (our actions) God may be honoured through Jesus Christ our Lord (1Pt 4:11).

Let us humbly implore him, then, beloved brothers, to pour into us the Paraclete, the Spirit of truth; and to give us patience, that we be not scandalized in tribulation. To him be glory and empire for ever and ever. Amen.

PRAYER – PENTECOST IN THE PANDEMIC: A CONTEMPORARY SEQUENCE

*Come, Holy Spirit,
come, Spirit of God,
come with your peace, your power, your light.
Come with forgiveness, courage and hope.*

*Come, Spirit of God,
unite us with the risen Jesus,
turn us again to the Father of Jesus.
Together they pour You daily into our hearts.*

*Come now to our suffering world,
sick with a killing virus
and everywhere threatened with silent death,
but most cruelly among your poorest children.*

*Come to our first responders, our doctors
and nurses and hospital staff,
the men and women who preserve the civic order
and protect us from fire and bring us our food.*

*Come now to the hearts and minds
of scientists seeking a vaccine for the pandemic,
to all who support their work, bringing to it
in equal measure patience and commitment.*

*Comforter, we call you, Counsellor, Consoler,
Advocate and Paraclete. Come now also to the borders
of our world—between Greece and Turkey, central
Africa and Kenya, Myanmar and Bangladesh,*

*Where millions on millions of men and women,
and children, helpless before the virus—
have fled violence, are homeless now, without sure shelter—
your sons and daughters, in such pain, our refugees.*

*Come to the hearts and minds of all
who seek to walk with them, and care
and advocate and pledge a future that,
if found, will equally enrich ours as well.*

*With your gift, the community of believers
who came to be called church was born.
Strengthen us to be working signs for all
humanity to be one, a community of mutual care,*

*And a sacrament of salvation through your loving power,
united eternally with the Holy Mystery
who gives us Jesus, the Risen One among us, to bring
our suffering yet beautiful world home forever.*

Amen.