

The rest of our Assumptionist Family may wonder what is happening at the Assumptionist General House amidst the alarming news that reaches us from Italy. The first thing we must say is that everyone in Italy is touched and in solidarity with the suffering experienced by many families infected by COVID-19. The daily life of the community is undoubtedly affected and for the moment the government has suspended all classes in colleges and universities, forcing our students to concentrate on their studies without leaving home. A decree issued yesterday by the Italian Bishops' Conference shows us how complex the current situation is:

The position of the Italian Bishops' Conference which, through the dioceses and parishes, is close to every person, shares the common concern in the face of the health emergency affecting the country. Faced with this situation, the Bishops' Conference - in a spirit of openness and collaboration - has adopted in recent weeks the measures by which the government has committed itself to fight against the spread of the coronavirus. The decree of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, which entered into force today, suspends "civil and religious ceremonies, including funeral ceremonies" throughout the country until April 3rd. The government's interpretation includes masses and funerals in its definition of "religious ceremonies." This is a very restrictive passage, the acceptance of which causes suffering and difficulties for pastors, priests and the faithful. Acceptance of the decree is conditional only on

the willingness to do one's part, even at this stage, to contribute to the protection of public health.

All these measures, as the decree says, cause suffering and difficulties of acceptance, but we know that the Christian is invited to overcome his fear and to act according to conscience by placing himself at the service of his neighbour at all times. This impresses us; when many seek only to barricade themselves in their homes with every possible food supply, others feel called to serve the most fragile. For example, in the north of Italy, young Scouts bring groceries to those over 65 who cannot leave their homes. **We would like such initiatives to have a greater echo in our societies paralysed by an individualism that sees the other simply as someone to be taken advantage of or as a threat to our personal security.**

For the time being, two international sessions that were to be held in Rome in March, the International Commission of the Lay-Religious Alliance and the International Commission on Education, have been cancelled.

We do not know how long this crisis will last, but we are intensifying all the efforts necessary to avoid an even greater contamination; no one can feel safe from this epidemic, so everyone must do their part for the common good.

But there is another aspect that we must not neglect, and that is our responsibility to speak the truth. There are people who try to minimize the extent of the spread and others who are too alarmist, provoking only fear and uncertainty in those who listen to them. We have the duty to be bearers of hope and, even in the midst of a crisis that affects us directly, we cannot forget our brothers who are suffering deeply from other epidemics such as Ebola in the DRC or the humanitarian crisis caused by wars and forced immigration.

Let us work for the truth in the defence of each man so that peace of heart, the first step toward healing, may come upon us.

"*Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers of their sickness, cast out demons. What you have received freely, give freely* ". Mt 10:8

Original French article from General House Website

Photo source