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## The R. C. Mission of Afghanistan Newsletter

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### FIAT

“*Ecce ancilla Domini; fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum.* Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” (Lk 1:38) These are the words uttered by Mary in reply to the Angel who had just announced to her the conception in her womb and the birth of the Son of God.

Although troubled at the saying of the Angel, Mary accepted his announcement with faith; she entrusted herself to God completely and gave her consent: *fiat*. “This *fiat* of Mary—John Paul II wrote in the encyclical *Redemptoris Mater*—was decisive, on the human level, for the accomplishment of the divine mystery.” The Holy Pontiff then pointed out that there is a complete harmony with the words said to the Father by the Son coming into the world: “Behold, I have come to do your will, O God.” (Heb 10:7)

The Letter to the Hebrews spells out: “And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” (10:10) The self-offering of Jesus was accomplished on the cross. At the foot of the cross was Mary, who renewed at that moment her *fiat*. Once again, she gave her consent and abandoned herself to God with the same faith with which she had received the announcement of the Angel.

And just as the *fiat* of the Son of God made of him the Redeemer of the world, so the *fiat* of Mary, repeated twice, made of her the Co-Redemptrix of the humankind.

If we make that *fiat* our own, we also will contribute, in our own small way, to the redemption of the world.



March 25

Annunciation of the Lord



# LETTER TO THE PARISHIONERS

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Dear Parishioners,

One month ago (February 25, 2020), I wrote you a letter to inform you about some precautionary measures to prevent the spreading of the COVID-19 disease. On the previous day, the news had been given of the first case of Coronavirus in Afghanistan. To those first measures (removal of the holy water from the stoup; sign of peace to be offered through a simple bow; reception of Holy Communion in the hand; distribution of ashes upon the head on Ash Wednesday) others had been subsequently added (disinfection of hands at the entrance of the church; distanced positioning in the pews). The Embassy, on its part, had also taken some measures for all the visitors (temperature control; use of face mask and vinyl gloves). Unfortunately, the virus has continued to spread. Even though, thank God, we have not yet reached the levels of China or Italy, precisely the experience of those countries suggests not to underestimate the dangerousness of the contagion. The appearance of the first positive cases in the diplomatic environment, here in Kabul, has induced the authorities of the Embassy to decide the shutdown of the compound. Last Monday, March 23, I celebrated the last Mass with the Sisters. The attendance at Sunday Mass had already fallen these last weeks, a sign that many of you either have gone back to their own countries or are confined in their respective compounds.

What will now happen? God knows! We have just to wait for an improvement of the situation. I will continue to celebrate Holy Mass everyday, at the usual time (5:30 p.m.). So, if someone wants to unite themselves, they can do it. Unfortunately, I am not equipped with the facilities for streaming the celebrations online. But, if you want to follow the celebration of Holy Mass on TV or through social networks, you are spoilt for choice. I can suggest you the Mass of the Holy Father, streamed every day at 7 a.m. (10:30 a.m. in Afghanistan; from next Sunday, 9:30) on Vatican News website ([vaticannews.va](http://vaticannews.va)) and, above all, the liturgical programs of EWTN ([ewtn.com](http://ewtn.com)).

As for the rites of Holy Week, I do not know if it will be possible to celebrate them, since they require the participation of the faithful or, at least, of some ministers. Anyway, whenever there is the possibility of celebrating the simple Mass, I will celebrate it. Even in this case, I encourage you to avail yourselves of the media.

Please be informed that “the Plenary Indulgence is granted to the faithful suffering from Coronavirus, who are subject to quarantine by order of the health authority in hospitals or in their own homes if, with a spirit detached from any sin, they unite spiritually through the media to the celebration of Holy Mass, the recitation of the Holy Rosary, to the pious practice of the Way of the Cross or other forms of devotion, or if at least they will recite the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer and a pious invocation to the Blessed Virgin Mary, offering this trial in a spirit of faith in God and charity towards their brothers and sisters, with the will to fulfil the usual conditions (sacramental confession, Eucharistic communion and prayer according to the Holy Father’s intentions), as soon as possible.” (Decree of the Apostolic Penitentiary, 19 March 2020)

As for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the same Apostolic Penitentiary reminds us that “where the individual faithful find themselves in the painful impossibility of receiving sacramental absolution, it should be remembered that perfect contrition, coming from the love of God, beloved above all things, expressed by a sincere request for forgiveness (that which the penitent is at present able to express) and accompanied by votum confessionis, that is, by the firm resolution to have recourse, as soon as possible, to sacramental confession, obtains forgiveness of sins, even mortal ones (cf. CCC, no. 1452).”

As for Holy Communion, I urge you to practice on these days, the so-called “Spiritual Communion.” You can use the following Act: “My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament. I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You. Amen.” (St. Alphonsus Liguori)

I urge you to live this trial time in a spirit of penance and reparation. Once again, I invite you to pray every day the Chaplet of Divine Mercy and the Holy Rosary for ourselves, for our loved ones, for the victims—both deceased and suffering—of Coronavirus, for health workers and civil authorities. I remember you every day in my prayers and celebrate Mass for you on Sundays. A Blessed Easter to all!

Your Pastor,

Father John

# LATEST NEWS

## FEBRUARY 2

This year the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord (Candlemas) fell on a Sunday. According to the liturgical norms, the feasts of the Lord precede the Sundays in Ordinary Time. So, this year we were able to celebrate Candlemas with other churchgoers. February 2 is also the Day of Consecrated Life. That is why, for the first time, all the religious of the Mission, starting with its Superior, along the Sisters of both Communities—Missionaries of Charity and PBK—renewed, during the Mass, their profession of vows: “Holy Father, we beg you for the light and strength of the Holy Spirit, that he may sustain us in the fidelity to the baptismal promises and to the new and special consecration received on the day of our profession of the evangelical counsels. We renew to you, in the presence of the whole Church, the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience, according to our Constitutions and Regulations, to live the fulness of love, in communion with our brothers and sisters and with the whole world. May God’s love poured into our hearts make us more and more conformed to the image of your Son, to radiate his light to everyone we meet along the way in our life. May the Blessed Virgin Mary help us and intercede for us, in order to carry out the loving plan of God on each of us.”

## SISTERS’ TURNOVER

On February 15, Sr. FORTUNATA MC left for Rome, where she is attending a formation course, which



will last until the end of May.

To replace her, on January 22, Sr. JOSE AIMEE MC arrived. She had already been in Kabul for some months between 2017 and 2018. Unfortunately, on March 12, she left for Tashkent, Uzbekistan, to attend her annual retreat, and now she cannot come back because of the suspension of flights.

On March 15, even Sr. SHAHNAZ SDC was forced to leave the PBK Community and go back to Pakistan for health reasons. To her our best wishes for a full and quick recovery!

## SPECIAL SUPPLICATIONS IN TIME OF CORONAVIRUS

On February 28, we started the devotion of the Way of the Cross, which during Lent replaces the Eucharistic Adoration on Fridays.

The Coronavirus outbreak has made us rediscover some ancient traditions of the Catholic Church. On Wednesday, Friday and Saturday of the First Week of Lent (March 4, 6 and 7), we celebrated the so-called Ember Days, connected with the beginning of seasons. On these days we chanted the Litany of the Saints, with some special petitions for health and peace.

On March 10, we began a Novena to Saint Joseph, during which we recited every day the prayer to him composed in 1889 by Pope Leo XIII *To You, O Blessed Joseph*.

On last Sundays, at the Prayer of the Faithful, was always added an intention for the victims of Coronavirus.

## PEACE PROCESS

On February 29, the long-awaited agreement between the United States and the Taliban was signed in Doha. For the occasion Father John issued the following statement to *SIR Agency*: “We cannot but be happy. Whatever are the reasons that have led the two parties to sign this agreement, it is a first step towards peace. But it is not yet peace. No undertaking has been given for a ceasefire. This will be a matter for negotiation between the Taliban and the Afghan Govern-



ment. These talks will definitely not be easy. Today, President Ghani made it clear that the release of prisoners cannot be considered previous to the talks but a matter for them. Anyway, it is a journey that, however difficult it may be, sooner or later must be undertaken, if we want to achieve a true and durable peace. The feeling we have just now is of high hope, but in full awareness of the difficulties that come between a declaration of intent and actual results. The main fear is that, once the US and NATO forces have left, the situation may come to a head and Afghanistan may be forced to relive the tragic experience of civil war. So, we cannot indulge in naive enthusiasms, but neither should we let ourselves be overwhelmed by pessimism. We have been praying so much these years for peace; we cannot give up just now that it is possible to see a glimmer of light. We must keep praying that the Afghan people, treasuring the experience of these dramatic years, may find the courage to say a definitive no to violence and may begin a process of reconciliation, founded on justice and forgiveness.”

Unfortunately, on March 9, we witnessed the simultaneous swearing-in ceremony of two Presidents. And then... the Coronavirus outbreak arrived. How can a divided country face so a difficult situation? These last days the US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo came to Kabul to meet the nation’s leaders. After the talks, he issued a very tough statement, in which he announces, besides the withdrawal of forces already decided in the US-Taliban agreement, also a progressive reduction of financial assistance and cooperation projects. Let us hope that threats may succeed where politics failed.



## PRAYER IN TIME OF CORONAVIRUS



O Lord Jesus Christ, in Your loving care, You traveled through towns and villages “curing every disease and illness.” At your command, the sick were made well. Come to our aid now, in the midst of the global spread of the coronavirus, that we may experience your healing love.

Be with the families of those who are sick or have died. May they regain their strength and health through quality medical care. As they worry and grieve, defend them from illness and despair.

Heal us from our fear, which prevents nations from working together and neighbors from helping one another.

Be with the doctors, nurses, researchers and all medical professionals who seek to heal and help those affected and who put themselves at risk in the process.

Heal us from our pride, which can make us claim invulnerability to a disease that knows no borders. Be with the leaders of all nations. Give them the foresight to act with charity and true concern for the well-being of the people they are meant to serve. Give them the wisdom to invest in long-term solutions that will help prepare for or prevent future outbreaks.

O Master and Lord, our Savior, Healer of all, stay by our side in this time of uncertainty and sorrow.

Whether we are home or abroad, surrounded by many people suffering from this illness or only a few, stay with us as we endure and mourn, persist and prepare.

For You are a Merciful and Loving God, and to you we give glory, to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

## REMINDER

On Wednesday, March 25,  
at 12:00 CET (11:00 UTC; 15:30 AFT)

All Christians around the world will pray  
together the Lord’s prayer *Our Father*

On Friday, March 27,  
at 18:00 CET (17:00 UTC; 21:30 AFT)

The Holy Father will preside  
in St. Peter’s Square  
a Eucharistic Adoration  
and will impart  
a special *Urbi et Orbi* blessing

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The Roman Catholic  
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Rt. Rev. GIOVANNI SCALESE, CRSP



The INDEPENDENT MISSION OF AFGHANISTAN (*Missio sui juris Afghanistansis*) is a jurisdiction of the Roman Catholic Church, immediately subject to the Holy See, covering the whole territory of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. It is a “particular church”—that is to say, a portion of the people of God—likened to a Diocese (Can. 368). By the law itself, it possesses juridical personality (Can. 373). It was established by the Holy See on the 16<sup>th</sup> of May, 2002 and entrusted to the care of the ORDER OF CLERICS REGULAR OF SAINT PAUL—BARNABITES (CRSP). It is presided by an Ecclesiastical Superior (*Superior ecclesiasticus*), who acts as the Local Ordinary (Can. 134 §2).