



December 2020

Kristpremalaya Community Shares Reflections on the Experience of Lockdown

No Crown without Thorns (My First Vows Ceremony)

“Happy is the person who remains faithful under trials because when he succeeds in passing such a test, he will receive as his reward the life which God has promised to those who love Him” (James 1:12). So appropriate for me, I felt.

I was supposed to make my first commitment on 25th April 2020. So, I made my one-month retreat in February 2020. It was a wonderful time when I could reflect on my past and present life: how God has worked great things in my life and where I have experienced His love, His presence, His support and His help. It was a great opportunity for me to be with God alone. I enjoyed reflecting on the life of Jesus, how He went about, what he did and what His attitude was towards the needy. I was asking questions and talking to Him.

After coming back from the retreat, I prepared the invitation cards, chose hymns and started practicing them for the Vows. Then suddenly the Covid-19 pandemic popped up and the situation became worse and worse. Sr. Venizia, my novice mistress, said to me “Anita, the situation is becoming worse. We may have to postpone your Vows. Be ready to accept it”. As I heard it, I was upset, because I had already prepared my heart to surrender myself into the Hands of God. However, I tried to understand and said, “I will prepare myself to accept whatever happens”.

As I was preparing, Sr. Anila, the provincial, called exactly on the feast of the Annunciation of the angel Gabriel to Mary, on 25th of March 2020, and she said to me, “Anita, I know that you are ready to commit yourself to God, but the situation is becoming worse. Many people are getting sick and dying. Your family is coming for the vows and I don’t want them to get sick. So, we will postpone your Vows. We all have to be like Mary, to have faith, to reflect and to accept whatever comes in our lives from God”. My eyes were filled with tears. I couldn’t say anything to her. I only responded ‘Yes’.

I think, it was a big test for me from God whether I will pass it or not. Yes, it was very, very difficult for me to pass. I did not know what to do. I was completely lost in my own thoughts and started questioning Jesus, “Why did the pandemic come at this time and this year?” During those four months, I really struggled to let go and to accept the situation. I was disappointed, unhappy, sad and at times I felt isolated and lonely. It was painful, but I still trusted in God that He will do some good for me and tried to overcome my feelings.

Sr. Anila and the council fixed the date for the Vows. I got another opportunity to look at my life and to overcome my feelings by making a 6 day retreat with Sr. Shanti in Pragnyalaya before making my Vows. It was a fruitful retreat. Sr. Shanti brought me back very close to the Heart of Jesus and prepared me to give myself fully to God.

On 8th of August 2020, I received a big reward from God. Fr. Roxy MSFS, the Parish priest of Shanwadi church, Pune, arranged for my first vows ceremony to be viewed online. It was his great generosity that made this possible. The whole province was with me virtually in the precious time or moment of my great day. Many from the province could participate in the Holy Eucharist online. Of course, my whole family could not participate in the ceremony because of lack of network in my village, but my brother could participate.

My heart was filled with joy and gratitude to God. I did not have a word to express my thanks to Him. I will never forget this great reward from my Heavenly Father. I thank God and thank all my sisters, who have really supported and prayed for me and are still praying for me.

Anita Hamsroy rscj

On 8th September 2020, Sr. Ananda came to my office to tell me that Sr. Pratibha was going to be admitted in the hospital because she had Covid. I was shocked. I told Ananda that I would go up to see Pratibha off and come back soon! Ananda then told me to take whatever I needed from the office and come back only after seven days of self-isolation. This was another shocking thing for me. Later, the seven days were extended to fourteen days. Thus we in K.P. community were in solidarity with thousands in quarantine all over the world.

There were times during the lockdown when, looking at our College building, I felt sad. It did not look like a College. It looked like any other building in the city because the students and staff who make it a college were missing. It was then that I thought of a song that I had heard a few months ago: the translation goes like this – “There is no rain that goes on without stopping, there is no wind that goes on without stopping, there is no pain that goes on without stopping and there is no night without a dawn.” Hence everything is passing in this world Nothing is permanent. All is “Maya” (illusion).

What fills me with peace is my faith that makes me believe that God is in command. He is in the midst of all that is going on in this world and He is in control and so there is nothing to worry. This is the advice I have been giving to all those who are suffering from distress, disappointment and a feeling of hopelessness. Let us help such people by pointing out all the positive things that have happened in us and in the world as a result of Covid-19. Let us hold fast to the Lord who loves us unconditionally and is our Rock, our Shield, our Power and our Deliverer, especially during this Advent.

Rosa Makil rscj

When Sr. Barbara Dawson sent her letter to the Society for the Feast of the Sacred Heart in June 2020, she called us to SOLIDARITY in the face of the pandemic. We had no idea then, as we chose this as a very significant part of our goal for the year, what this choice would mean.

Today as I look back at the months gone by, I see that solidarity has been a very important part of my life. The experience of being a Covid patient and spending several days in hospital gave me the opportunity to realize that this virus makes no difference between the rich and the poor. There were patients of different backgrounds in the same hospital ward and there was a feeling of solidarity with others as we were all experiencing the same “distance” from the rest of our families, One comes close to the millions who are suffering and dying all over the world. There is also a feeling of gratitude that God has spared me from so much that others who had the same infection have had to suffer.

There have been innumerable other experiences of solidarity. The online Eucharist that we have had regularly every day has kept us in touch with the Church not only in our neighbourhood, but with the whole world as we could login to the celebration of the Eucharist anywhere. Thanks to technology, we have been transported to the “ends of the earth”.

We as a community had the privilege of reaching out to the people who are suffering due to loss of jobs when we distributed food packets to 20 families. The whole reflection of what we could do in the face of such a huge crisis was in itself purifying as the problem seemed beyond our scope. But knowing that every drop helps to make an ocean, we reached out to as many as we could within our means.

This is the first time in my life that I have experienced a **PANDEMIC**. There is such an overwhelming feeling of being **ONE BODY** as the human family – the suffering of so many people, especially the elderly, the loneliness of those who have to live alone, the hopelessness of people who have lost their jobs, the anxiety of those who have to fend for themselves in the midst of the fear of catching an infection, the agony of women living in single room homes locked in with an abusive husband, the frustration of children not being able to meet their friends and play outdoors, the helplessness of parents who have special children whom they are not able to keep engaged, as well as the nations most affected.... all these are in my heart as I come before the Lord with the faith of the friends of the paralytic, who lowered him into the house to be touched by the Lord – imploring Him to deliver our world from this tragedy.

Pratibha Pinto rscj

My Pandemic Journey

The month of March 2020 arrived with an unexpected and never imagined lockdown. No one knew what was awaiting us.....Covid-19 had already spread its snares around the Globe.

At the beginning of the lockdown it was difficult to experience and see the shift from a busy life to almost a complete standstill. Oh what a life! And what a change! Most of our conversation around the table was only about COVID-19. I was feeling sick with so much focus on Covid, but later as we shared, some of the jokes about COVID-19 that came on WhatsApp they lightened my spirit.

As the days passed I was able to accept the situation, I kept myself busy with things that I needed to do. I was able to spend more time with myself, at the same time to be in touch with the world, praying for the people, very specially the migrant labourers, who were walking miles and miles. I

felt connected with them. I was also grateful to God for those people who sacrificed their own life specially the doctors and the nurses who risked their life, to be at the service of others. I was touched by people's small gestures of reaching out to others. Even some of our hamals joined some NGO to serve the food to the labourers.

In the College also we had reflection from time to time and shared in the group (the college rscj work group). It was a real help to be aware of my inner journey in all that turmoil during the pandemic; I was aware of my faith in God. I always felt God will protect us and take care of us.

I also met our hamals staying on the campus, listened to them, made them understand certain things, because during the lockdown the hamals from outside were not coming, so most of the work had to be done only by the four hamals who live on the campus. It was natural for them to feel, that the others are not coming and they have to manage the work. They were able to understand the situation of the lockdown.

Life in Mumbai city was a challenge, at times it was irritating. I felt the whole world is struggling with COVID-19, and here I was getting upset with stupid things. I learned to let go of certain things. Through these experiences I met Jesus in a totally different way.

Poonam Gaikwad rscj

Lockdown! Lock Down! L O C K D O W N!

Coronavirus, Covid-19, Pandemic, Curfew, Masks, Social Distancing, Sanitiser, Hand Washing, Lakhs Infected, Thousands Dying, New Normal, Etc.

Against this background, I tried to survive? NO...rather I tried to live meaningfully one day at a time. It gave me time for myself, for introspection on life itself. Where am I and what am I doing? The call was to 'Do or die' trusting fully in the mercy of the ALMIGHTY who is all knowing, all seeing and all pervading. So the old dog had to learn new tricks for survival. I had to turn to the online mode in my ministry and relationship with family and friends as I couldn't meet them personally. I had to develop my skills in technology for better administration of Sophia Junior College and for meaningful communication with the staff, parents and students. The online mode gave me plenty of time to learn and do things I longed for: online courses, gardening, cleaning, clearing, cooking, learning new languages, walking, shopping for others as well, extra prayer, etc.

I thank God for these times and the opportunities that helped me develop my capacities for the good of others. I am deeply grateful to God for keeping me and my loved ones safe and sound throughout the pandemic and for helping me build deeper relationship with my family and friends. 'Distance makes the heart grow fonder' Truly this is so.

Annie Peter rscj