



TASH TIMES

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www.tashinc.org



special edition

FROM FATHER SCOTT & TASH, INC

Supporting Oaxaca through COVID-19

■ A Reflection from Father Scott

Dear Friends,

Lent 2020 will go down in history as the Lent when we were all given the same penance: the Covid-19 coronavirus. Holy Week 2020 was for many people more an experience of Good Friday than Easter Sunday. People were deprived of celebrating Lent and Holy Week in church; so they watched the services on their televisions and computers. Catholics did not have a chance to receive Holy Communion for weeks. Pandemic became a household word. The media reported tragic statistics, showed heartbreaking pictures, and revealed that politicians had put their own interests above the needs of the country.

Never in my 50 years of priesthood have I felt so restricted in serving God's people due to State and Church regulations. So I chose during my confinement to spend extra time in prayer; time to pray for the world, the Church, our country, my Capuchin community, the poor and sick of Oaxaca, and the many people who have asked for my prayers. During my time at prayer, I began to reflect on what lessons we all could learn from the pandemic. I would like to share some of them with you.

God is very present during a crisis, and will give His people special blessings to recover if they are willing to ask for them and trust God. The word crisis means "turning point." I believe the pandemic is a turning point in our world. No longer will it be business as usual. Hopefully the pandemic will cause the whole world to pause and discover what needs to change internationally, nationally, and individually so God's people will be kept safe from harm.

Many people have been courageous during this crisis. They have inspired us by their love and service. Our Christian vocation is a call to heroism. During the different plagues that hit Europe in past centuries, 2,000 Capuchin Friars died taking care of the sick. In the future, religious education programs, homilies, and family conversations need to speak about heroism.

As people stayed home, our streets became silent. For some people, the silence was spooky. However, silence can be a blessing. In recent decades many people have lost their ability to be silent. Without silence, people will not be able to get in touch with their hearts and with their God.

Will watching Mass on television for weeks cause people not to go to Mass in church? Time will tell. I hope the saying: “Absence makes the heart grow fonder” will fill our churches with people who yearn for the Eucharist.



We need to care for each other. The government cannot take care of everyone that has been scarred by the virus. There is a great discouragement and even depression among our people right now. To help them, we will need to be good listeners. We need to be careful not to tell people that everything will be okay. We do not know if, in their particular lives, it will be. What we need to tell them is that we will be there for them and will help them. Sometimes it will just mean being a good listener. Other times there might be something concrete we can do for them.

Around the year 1630, a plague struck the town of Eilenburg, Germany. In the first year, 8,000 people died. There were four pastors in the town. One fled, and two died from the plague, leaving Pastor Martin Rinkart to care for the people. Some days he buried fifty people, including his wife. Almost miraculously, Rinkart remained healthy even though he was constantly caring for the sick and dying. In the midst of the plague, Rinkart composed a song and taught it to his children so they could sing it at dinner each night. That song became one of the most beloved Christian songs: “**Now thank we all our God.**” Imagine being able to give thanks with sickness and death all around you. Gratitude is an attitude that Christians need to have no matter what crisis they might be facing. Gratitude keeps our hearts from burning up with sorrow. It helps us put things in perspective. When counting our crosses, we need to also count our blessings.

Though we were not able to celebrate Easter gloriously this year, we need to remember that every Sunday is Easter. That is why Sundays are not counted as days of Lent. The next time we attend Mass on Sunday, we need to celebrate it with gusto. Let us fill our churches with Alleluias, flowers, greetings of peace, and joyful songs. When people can finally celebrate weddings and First Communions that were postponed, may they find reasons to be thankful.

St. Padre Pio encouraged people to: “**Pray, hope, and don't worry.**” This crisis will pass. Whether we become a better nation because of it is up to each one of us. Our country, as well as our Church, has faced many crises in their history. It is important that we have a dynamic memory as we face the future. A memory that reminds us that we have faced other crises and have survived. Not only have we survived but have grown stronger because of them. Remember “**With God all things are possible!**”

God bless you!
Father Scott

SERVANT LEADERSHIP by Pete Noll

Many of us have taken time to contemplate on these uncertain times caused by the COVID-19 disease. At 46 years old, I don't think anything in my lifetime has compared to this, even having been on the ground during earthquakes and hurricanes in Latin America. And in 2001, I was in a rural community in El Salvador when I got the news of 9-11.

I would like to share with you a reflection on courage, which Fr. Scott also shares in his greeting. Courage addresses both fear and hope. For one can have courage without perfect knowledge of the future. Indeed, one often must. I think about all the staff at La Clinica, other TASH projects, and all those people around the world, who are serving others. There are those hospital workers who are attending

the sick and suffering, from this never before seen COVID-19. There are others, who are providing frontline services to the rest of us, so that we may do our best to keep ourselves and loved ones safe and secure.

I believe that the work Fr. Scott and TASH have done and will continue to do can be a catalyst to those leading La Clinica and other partner organizations in Oaxaca, Mexico, who are acting with courage to help the 1,000s upon 1,000s of families and individuals in need.

Sercade's mobile clinic is still operational during the crisis, serving remote rural Oaxacan communities



STRATEGIC INVESTMENT and TRANSPARENCY

Together with local organizations, we are seeking to provide the best support for those urgently affected by the COVID-19 situation. This is a tricky balance as there are those who have medical needs and others who have economic needs. Women selling tortillas, or children performing stunts on the street corner, depend on what they can earn each day putting an enormous stress on the rest of their well-being. While La Clinica is the flagship of TASH's work, we also give targeted support to other service-oriented organizations. TASH has recently sent down grants to support the following nonprofits whose proposals reflect our mission:

Canica, which works with children who are or at risk of becoming homeless; Puente a la Salud Comunitaria which promotes child nutrition through amaranth; and El Espiral which provides youth training in education and human rights.

Soon, mail & checks sent to Allison Park or St. Conrad's Friary will not arrive. Please notify your bank or financial advisors and update your records to TASH's current mailing address:

TASH, Inc.
8878 Covenant Ave #303
Pittsburgh, PA 15237



With community centers & schools closed, our partners are stepping up to support families.

WITNESS to OAXACA (a perspective from Pete Noll)

As of May 2 when this edition was sent to print, there were 163 confirmed cases and 22 deaths in Oaxaca. The peak is predicted for May 8, thus these numbers are expected to multiply significantly.

I have been in regular communication with the Director of La Clinica and our partners organizations to assure them of TASH's support and to offer them the flexibility to channel their limited resources to safeguard their staff while also serving the critical needs of their communities. We are grateful to the TASH community for your enduring solidarity to our brothers and sisters in Oaxaca, Mexico.

Here are brief reports from our partner organizations who continue to stay resilient during these trying times:

At **La Clinica**, they have taken the necessary steps to focus on emergency care, and thus protect the condition of the patients and healthcare workers. They acquired sufficient inventory of masks, gel and other sanitary and hygiene supplies. They continue to see over a hundred patients each week, as the public hospitals are overwhelmed.

Canica has adapted from being a physical space of refuge and education for children who live and work on the street, to providing physical assets including food baskets, sanitary supplies and educational resources. They maintain phone communication with the families, and they hope to reopen the center as soon as possible.

El Espiral is providing their youth promoters with the necessary information on preventative measures to share with their communities in the Sierra Juarez, many miles from Oaxaca City.

Puente has adapted its programming to create delivery routes to connect farmers and small businesses to people who need access to healthy food options. They have also shared COVID-19 safety and health information using community radio in villages where internet and phone service is extremely limited.

In the Mixteca, **Sercade's** mobile clinic continues to provide vital healthcare and information to rural villages far away from the public healthcare system in the capital city. Additionally, they were able to make progress with the building project, up until the first case was reported in the town in mid-April.

Sikanda, who works year-round with families who live and work on the garbage dump, has already delivered over 200 food baskets to those in most need of assistance during the pandemic.

St. Cecilia, led by the Roman Catholic priest, Father Jose Renteria, has started a solidarity network in his parish, that is focused on getting essential supplies to those of the greatest need in Vicente Guerrero, also located near the city dump.

We expect to return to our usual newspaper format in our next edition. Until then, we thank you for your support. You are in our prayers.



**CHANGE of DATE:
Ole5K - October 24th**
In order to comply with COVID-19 health and safety measures for group events, we postponed to North Park's first available date.
more information at:
www.tashinc.org/ole5K