

Our Mission in the time of COVID-19

23rd April 2020

Greetings.

Over the past few weeks I have been humbled by the dedication of our staff, volunteers and communities during this unprecedented moment. Many of our missionaries overseas have added new priorities and responsibilities to their already demanding schedules, all to deliver a service for the needs of others.

The very nature of their work is to ensure that communities are sustainable and empowered for the future. When a crisis like the current one occurs it can unravel years of work in a matter of weeks. Our immediate response is critical and, post-COVID-19, will aid communities in returning to a sense of normality. For the most part we have been able to respond and help communities quickly through innovative and resilient solutions. We do, however, know that there will be more challenging times ahead in the coming months.

At home, Spirasi, the Spiritan asylum-seeker initiative which works with migrants who are victims of torture, has adapted with great agility to the crisis, particularly through the use of technology. For Spirasi clients, the threat presented by COVID-19 has triggered further anxiety and has had an adverse effect on their mental health. The period March-April has seen a rapid rise in the numbers of clients seeking therapeutic support, and Spirasi therapists are increasing their caseload to meet the demand.

Our congregation has not been without its own losses through these difficult times. To our great sadness, seven Spiritans have left us to go to our Father's House. We are grateful that these men generously gave their talents and time to the Spiritan way of life. (Please see below for more details.)

I will be communicating regularly with our broad network via email and phone and we will be updating this website to keep you all up to speed regarding our response and news. You are all in my prayers and I hope that you are safe and well.

Sincerely,



Fr. Martin Kelly C.S.Sp.
Provincial



PERSEVERANCE IN ADVERSITY

The men in our care...

Our congregation has suffered its own casualties recently. Some men have passed away with confirmed diagnoses of COVID-19, while some of the others showed symptoms. Please keep the Spiritans in Laval House (formerly Marian House) in Kimmage, and in Nazareth House in your prayers. We remember the seven Spiritans who have left us this month:

<u>Colum Cunningham</u>	April 1st	Nazareth House
<u>Séamus Galvin</u>	April 8th	Nazareth House
<u>Jim Corry</u>	April 10th	Tallaght Hospital
<u>Brendan Smyth</u>	April 12th	Kimmage
<u>Jim McDonnell</u>	April 12th	Nazareth House
<u>Frank Caffrey</u>	April 14th	Kimmage
<u>Edward Grimes</u>	April 15th	Kimmage



Please [click](#) on an individual's name to leave your condolences on Rip.ie



Our work overseas...

Fr Pat Clarke came back to Dublin briefly just before the travel restrictions and has been unable to return to his mission in São Paulo, Brazil. Presently, in the early hours of the morning (Irish time) he is delegating teams in over 50 shanty towns and favelas in São Paulo, remotely from Kimmage. He has helped establish a food parcel programme to respond to the COVID-19 crisis, through the Spiritan project *Movimento da Defesa da Favelada (MDF)*. In the pictures on the left we can see the delivery of these essential items.



Father Pat notes that it helps alleviate anxiety and halts social unrest, keeping the community together. Last week *MDF* delivered over 450 food parcels and medical supplies. This is just the start and is a fraction of the number of people who they hope to support. We thank them for their work!

PERSEVERANCE IN ADVERSITY

Our work at home...

The situation faced by refugees and asylum-seekers is cause for grave concern during COVID-19. Direct Provision centres are high risk facilities which will struggle with containing an outbreak. There is a heightened level of anxiety for all concerned and it exacerbates existing issues. Spirasi's therapists are adapting the way they engage with their clients. Logistically this has proven extremely difficult and the privacy and safe space Spirasi previously afforded to them is now replaced with phone and video calls.

Group sessions cannot take place, and this had an initial negative impact on clients, as their sense of community has been diminished. Spirasi's therapists have met the challenge head on to fill the void. Now, most clients are having one-to-one therapy through varied channels of communication (phone, computer etc). To ensure engagement there has been a need for technological upgrades, which the therapists have embraced selflessly. They are going above and beyond, thank you.



Your leadership....

I have been amazed at the outreach and generosity of support from our far-reaching network. Thank you to the alumni, teachers, staff, friends, associates, volunteers and peers for your efforts. This is an important moment for the Spiritan Community, and we are turning to those who know the Congregation best, for their leadership.

We have been asked by many how they can help. If you are in a position to support us, we invite you to :

- Pray for all who we work with and those in our care
- Write to or call the Spiritans in Kimmage Manor or Nazareth House, they would be grateful for your time and words
- Contact reception@spiritanplt.ie and we can discuss your support further

