

## **God's grace during the pandemic.**

***"Without me you can do nothing." Joh. 15.5***

Monastic life is dedicated to solitude and silence in a monastic enclosure. It is also a life oriented towards continuous prayer and manual work that is simple, communal or in solitude. The health regulations, the quarantine periods that paralyzed social life were perhaps not as difficult for us as for people in society. Our separation from the world has been further accentuated by the absence of guests, visitors, customers, and volunteers. For medical reasons or to buy food one of us had to go out. In this general context, our daily life experienced a calmer pace.

Our liturgical life was able to continue every day from vigils to compline with the daily mass thanks to our Chaplain Anthony who lives on site. A special prayer for the sick victims of covid, for their families and for the medical staff was recited in common every evening before compline. Our church was open during the day. Visitors could stop there to pray while respecting the distances and rules of hygiene. Every evening two sisters washed the pews. Even now we receive the Eucharist without the chalice, and we share the peace of Christ with a greeting without touching.

The construction of the new wing took place during the pandemic. Four sisters currently have their cell there permanently. The living room serves as a pleasant place for informal and festive meetings for the entire community.

It was a hard renunciation for Rafael and Renata not to be able to welcome their family and acquaintances from Poland, Canada, England to celebrate with us their Solemn Profession. But they had the pleasure of being surrounded by their Norwegian friends and neighbours! Every renunciation, every deferred event was experienced in communion with those outside who suffered beyond compare.

We realize that through these difficult times God's grace has helped us grow in realism. We have experienced the richness of working together in small and large groups for reflection.

Fragile health, the departure of 2 sisters in formation plus the absence of Sheryl for a sabbatical year has taught us to face reality, not to despair but to hope. We are more aware of our limits as well as our wealth and through this

we learn to grow according to God's heart because without Him we can do nothing.

## Challengings.

***"This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel - with Tautra - in days to come, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it in their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people." Jer. 31,33***

To experience the aging process as a natural process and to live it with gratitude, flexibility, and seriousness can be a challenge. How do we open up every day to this life which leads us together to eternal life without being in stress, overly active, individualistic, superficial or feeling guilty?

The personal relationship with God is important as well as giving the other unconditional forgiveness. Accepting that we are beginners on the monastic path humbles us and invites us to ask ourselves: "Brigitte, Brigitte, what have you come to the monastery for?" If we can answer this question we can welcome and form those whom God calls.

Since October, Maria Grazia has started the postulancy. Two other young women from Norway and Sweden are interested in monastic life on Tautra. It is our responsibility to help them discern. Instead of imagining them as postulants, I prefer to ask God: "What is your desire for them?"

As a multicultural, multilingual community, we must be very careful to make an effort to speak more and more Norwegian among ourselves, to have the right communication tools and to discern our conscious or unconscious cultural prejudices.

A community always works to find a good balance between prayer and work for each one as well as for the whole. Adjustments can be planned, but sometimes some have to be taken as emergencies! I want to thank my sisters here for their ability to be flexible. Without this flexibility, we would age even faster, and we would lose the "la joie de vivre" (the joy of life).

We have adapted soap work and hospitality based on the strengths of the community. We depend on the nurses at Frosta for the care of one of us at certain times of the day and certain days of the week.

Since the General Chapter of 2022, our Prioress has been called to provide services for the Order in Irish monasteries.

## **A special calling within the framework of our Diocese's common mission.**

***“Seven times a day I praise you, for your righteous ordinances.” Ps 119,164***

The Cistercian monastic life dedicated to contemplation invites us to pray 7 times a day. But not only that. This contemplative life is characterized by a strong common life and by a simple and laborious life.

Monastic hospitality is an important value of our withdrawal from the world. We do not have an apostolic activity in direct contact with society. But our modest guesthouse offers the possibility to taste the solitude and silence for everyone who wants to retire for a while in a deserted place to search for God, with the opportunity to participate in the Liturgy of the Hours.

We do see there are occasions for some of us to write articles or to give lectures-meditations, testimonies on monastic life or simply to participate in religious celebrations such as funerals, ecumenical services in Catholic or Lutheran churches. It is our duty to find the right balance between respecting our enclosure and responding to the Church's desire.

Our mission is a true, simple, humble testimony of God's grace that still calls men and women today to witness to Jesus Christ who tells us every day:

***“Love one another as I have loved you.”***

If we pray for others, we also need their prayers because entering a monastery involves a long journey of conversion and spiritual support is needed on both sides. We are grateful for the support of Biskop Erik, the brothers of Munkeby, the parishes of the Diocese, the priests who are so generous with their friendship, their time, their miles...

Living invisibly as well as visibly is part of the mystery and beauty of the monastic vocation.