A Time of Paradox.

A little virus. A global pandemic. It’s just here and in the blink of an eye lockdown is declared. A riot of bird song; smiling flowers; trees lush with foliage. People dying. Apart and yet together more than ever. The how’s, whys, what’s, where’s; So many questions. But for now, a deafening silence. Surrendering to what is— Not denying the painful realities of life.

We wait and hope. We wait in love. We hope for a cure for this virus. We hope that all our loved ones will be protected. We hope that the suffering will arouse compassion. We hope that this quiet unrushed time Will propel us to reach out. Trust in the flow of life. Trust in the goodness of God.

We’ll get the best. Not our best, but His best.

Sr. Laura Looby OP

Some of the Veritas House ‘Cocooners!’ Enjoying the sun and a visit from Liz

Socially distancing, yet together!
CREATIVE REFLECTIONS FROM OUR COVID19 EXPERIENCE

The oldest virus in America: Racism.

Nancy Wilcox Lee, whose three sons and a daughter attended St. Leo the Great Elementary School, sent me this message on Facebook when George Floyd, an African American, was killed by a policeman and people protested in their thousands in Minneapolis and other American cities.

_Sister, I know without a doubt, if anyone on earth understands this, it’s you and the other Sisters at St. Leo and Marian Central. You poured so much love and time into our children, with emphasis on our boys. You understood what was ahead for them. I think you read the emotional post by Jonathan Cordier which gives an example of what happens on a daily basis. I love you for your support and understanding._

Nancy is referring to Jonathan’s Facebook description of being harassed regularly by the police even though he is a respected coach and teacher, a married man with an attractive wife and beautiful daughter. He believes, like most African American men, that the colour of his skin causes police to target him.

A precious memory is when he would visit me in my office, as a Kindergartener, before leaving school for home.

_A gentle knock and the office door opens._
_A handsome, black boy, broad smile_  
_and dark eyes framed in long, curly eye-lashes_  
rushes towards my desk to say,  
_“Bye” before going home._
_His innocent charm sprinkles_  
_love-dust on my heart,_  
_reminding me that I’m here_  
to educate, love and protect him._
_I give him a big hug._  
_His name: Jonathan Cordier._

_Sr. Maeve Mc Mahon O.P._
Virtual Cosmic Walk during the Covid 19 Pandemic  
CENTRO DE MEDITACIÓN VICTORIA, ARGENTINA

Having concluded the pathway, signs and murals of our Cosmic Walk in Victoria, Argentina in late February, we are now embarking on developing activities there and online.

We will take any one of the twenty points on the route as a basis for a reflection for a live transmission and the first one will be on [took place on] Saturday 30 May at 15 hours Argentine time, 19 hours Irish time. [With guests via social media platforms from Ireland, and other countries] For now the language is mainly Spanish but I [Sr. Ronnie Rafferty] will arrange for an all English transmission soon.

We have plans to get zoom connected to YouTube so we can include talks from people far away from Victoria. Last Wednesday we have started to have guided meditation on the walk for a small group, masks on and socially distanced! As the province has eased up on lockdown we will continue to have these hopefully.

Sr. Ronnie Rafferty OP

The launch and other activities can be seen:  
via our Congregation web page https://www.dominicansisters.com/

via the Centre’s social media platforms
FACEBOOOK CENTRO DE MEDITACIÓN VICTORIA  
https://www.facebook.com/centromeditacionvictoria/videos/371024080523647/

YOUTUBE CENTRO DE MEDITACIÓN VICTORIA  
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXIXWEIizkgJzUGl6axfrvA?view_as=subscriber
Fr Kevin O’Higgins SJ, Director of Jesuit University Support & Training (JUST) in Ballymun, Dublin, reports on moving support services online for students undergoing academic and personal challenges during the Covid-19 crisis. He tells a success story about an asylum seeker who has been awarded a lecturer position in Dublin.

The members of the J.U.S.T. team are Kevin O’Higgins S.J. Director, Sean Meehan, Colm Brophy, Paddy Greene S.J. SrS. Teresa Brogan, Aideen Kinlen R.S.C.J. and Maeve Mc Mahon O.P.

Over the past two months of ‘lockdown’, the J.U.S.T. team and our students have adapted to the new reality. When we had our monthly team meeting in early March, Ireland was still in a ‘delay phase’, with relatively few confirmed cases of Covid-19 infection. Just days after that meeting, the first tragic death was reported. After that, the situation quickly deteriorated. By the time the ‘stay at home’ phase was initiated by the health authorities towards the end of the month, we had already begun the process of moving our student support services online. Shortly before we closed our premises and suspended direct physical contact with students, it was very encouraging to hear that one of our PhD candidates had successfully defended his dissertation. Even better news followed. Almost immediately after completing his doctorate, he was awarded a teaching and research position at a Dublin university. What makes his achievement all the more satisfying is the fact that he came to Ireland from Africa with his wife and two young children, hoping...
to make a better life for his family. Hopefully, his dream has now taken a major step towards becoming reality.

That same dream is shared by all of our J.U.S.T. students. Whether taking their first steps with an undergraduate diploma or degree course or moving into a postgraduate programme, all of them see education as the key to a brighter future. They are the main protagonists of the J.U.S.T. project. Our task is to encourage and support them in fulfilling their aspirations.

The closure of colleges and universities meant that students suddenly found themselves without even the most basic academic supports. They lost direct access to lecturers and libraries. They also lost the encouragement and friendship offered by day to day contact with their classmates. For some of them, these difficulties were exacerbated by having to cope with complicated personal or family situations. Since every J.U.S.T. student is assigned an individual tutor, it was relatively easy to ensure that help was no more than a phone call or email away. While remote support can never completely compensate for the loss of direct face to face contact, it is a lot better than nothing at all. In most cases, phone contact and the exchange of emails between tutors and students have been sufficient. For discussions about essays or course projects, tools like Skype and Zoom have been useful also. When one student needed more direct contact, meetings took place in the parking area in front of our premises, with the tutor in her car and the student safely seated several feet away, as mandated by government guidelines.

In a time of great uncertainty, adaptability, flexibility and creativity are the order of the day. Obviously, we are hoping that the worst of the crisis is now behind us, but we are aware that what happens over the coming months is largely beyond our control. A second wave of Covid-19 infection or failure to produce an effective vaccine would complicate an already difficult situation for our students. However, based on our experience of the past few months, we are confident that J.U.S.T. will be able to address each and every contingency. Where there’s a will, there’s a way!

Forwarded by Sr. Maeve Mc Mahon O.P.