

Living the Faith During Covid-19 Pandemic

A survey conducted in Africa, Asia & Oceania

From 29 June to 15 August 2020

by

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(Logo designed by Chaitanya Das GANGULA
gangula.chaitanya@gmail.com)

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Elias Frank

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Introduction

After Peter declared that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God, Jesus answered: “[...] I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it” (Mt 16,18).

With the firm belief that no power can shake the Church, which is built on a rock, the editorial board of *Ius Missionale*, the journal of the Faculty of Canon Law, under the Pontifical Urbaniana University, set upon itself the task of finding how the Catholics lived the faith during the Covid-19 lockdown.

A particular reason for the quest is, we, Catholics, being so used to attending Sunday Eucharist, going to Confession and other ritual practices, all of a sudden were deprived of them, without any forewarning. Places of worship were closed by government order. Priests and the faithful could not meet. In some places, even ecclesiastical funerals were not permitted. For some, life was just thrown out of gear. Some even said: “The devil is laughing seeing the churches closed”. In the West, some criticised bishops, even the pope for obeying government orders on closure of places of worship. Yet others felt that the Lord has given an opportunity to turn every home into a church.

Some of the negative reactions to the closure of churches made one think if the Catholic rituals are just a way of life or if there is anything more in them. This survey is not about numbers, as to how many did what, but about understanding the depth of the faith lived. The places of worship and rituals are external signs of manifesting the faith, but the real faith is especially seen when it is challenged. The closure of places of worship due to health reasons is certainly not a challenge to the faith, but it might seem so to someone. However, it offered an opportunity to “bring out the treasures, new and old” (Mt 13,52), stored over time.

For this time, only raw data and close-ended questions statistics are published. A more detailed study based on close-ended and open-ended answers will be published at a later stage.

Overview of the main features of the survey¹

- The survey was conducted in three continents, i.e., Africa, Asia and Oceania, that is, countries that come under the jurisdiction of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of the Peoples – the University also being under this Congregation.
- The survey officially began on 29 June 2020 (feast of Saints Peter and Paul) and ended on 15 August 2020 (feast of the Assumption of Our Lady).
- The survey was conducted among the Catholic faithful only; the purpose being to understand how they lived their faith without the regular rituals.
- The survey was conducted using Google Forms. Both closed-ended and open-ended survey questions were included.
- The survey questions were in six languages: English, French, Korean, Indonesian, Vietnamese and Portuguese; that is to say, six different Google Forms were used.
- Google Forms were circulated privately through personal contacts: by the Canon Law Faculty students, professors, Prof. Giuseppe Iuliano through the Affiliated Institutes, International Jesus Youth Movement and through them to others. Special thanks goes also to the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue in the person of its Secretary, mons. Indunil Janakarathne Kodithuwakku for sharing email contacts. The episcopal conferences of Korea, Togo, Rwanda, Sénégal, Mauritanie, Cap-Vert et Guinée Bissau, Mali, Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, Congo, Cameroun, Burkina Faso, Niger, Benin, North Africa, Viêt Nam were also approached for the divulgation of the Forms. These methods guaranteed that only Catholics participated in the survey.
- Thanks to the names and email IDs of the participants, double and a few triple entries were easily eliminated, before compiling the data.

¹ Cf. F. PIANA, *Come si vive la fede nella pandemia? Un'indagine lo svelerà*, articolo e intervista al Prof. E. Frank dell'11 agosto 2020 [<https://www.vaticannews.va/it/chiesa/news/2020-08/fede-pandemia-coronavirus-urbaniana.html>; <https://archive.is/8wooo>].

- Only those residing in the three continents were counted as useful participants, thus excluding others in the tally.
- The results given below include the total number of participants in each question. In some questions with multiple response option the “number of participants in each question” is not the sum of answers: for example, Part I, n. 4: the sum of 4 answers is 3322; but the total number of those who answered the question is 2063. The difference is because the same person could, and many actually did, select more than one answer.
- The results published here are the total of all the Forms (in English, French, Korean, Indonesian, Vietnamese and Portuguese).
- The complete methodological details of the survey will be given in the final Report.

Survey statistics

The survey consists of three sections: Part I: Introduction and Survey Disclaimer; Part II: General information; Part III: The Response of the Church.

Part I: General information

1. Total surveys: 2276; useful surveys: 2096; excluded surveys (participants living in other continents and double entries):180
2. Number of countries participated: 66; useful entries: 54; excluded entries: 12

2.1 Useful entries:

Africa

Benin
 Botswana
 Burundi
 Burkina Faso
 Cameroun
 Eswatini
 Ethiopia
 Ghana

Guinea-Bissau
Ivory Coast
Kenya
Lesotho
Madagascar
Malawi
Mali
Mozambique
Nigeria
RD Congo
Rwanda
Senegal
Sierra Leone
Tanzania
Togo
Uganda
South Africa

Asia

Bahrain
Bangladesh
China / Hong Kong
India
Indonesia
Japan
Korea
Kuwait
Malaysia
Nepal
Oman
Pakistan
Philippines
Qatar
Russia
Saudi Arabia

Singapore
Sri Lanka
Taiwan
Thailand
Timor Leste

Oceania

Australia
Cook Islands
New Zealand
Papua New Guinea

2.2 Excluded entries:

Argentina
Austria
Brazil
Germany
Italy
Peru
Portugal
Slovakia
Spain
Switzerland
United Kingdom
United States of America

3. Status of the participants*:

Lay persons	Religious women	Religious men	Priests/ Deacons	Bishops
1565 = 75%	117 = 5%	114 = 5%	303 = 14%	8 = 1%

* As it seems to emerge from collected data analysis, it is likely that some *lay persons* have indicated themselves as religious women and religious men, taking the adjective “religious” as synonymous of practicing the faith. Unfortunately, the team realized that the term could be misinterpreted only after the survey was launched.

4. What measures were taken by the government to stop the spread of the virus?

Area lockdown	765
National lockdown	698
Closure of religious places	1597
Other	262
Total participants	2064

5. What was people's response to the government measures?

People cooperated	1557
Forced to comply	359
Poor compliance	318
Closure of religious places was resented	641
Other	88
Total participants	2072

6. How did the lockdown affect people in your area?

Loss of livelihood	817
Scarcity of essentials	363
Despair	582
People stranded	448
Other	393
Total participants	1803

7. What sort of behaviour was most noticed during the pandemic?

Solidarity	1330
Indifference	229
Fear	1118
Ill-treatment of the affected	288
Ill-treatment of health workers	252
Other	56
Total participants	2073

Part II: The Response of the Church

1. Was Holy Mass celebrated with people during the Covid-19 pandemic?

No	1858
With restriction after the lockdown was lifted	968
Other	33
Total participants	2044

2. Which of the following sacraments were administered in your parish?

Baptism	307
Penance	372
Anointing of the sick	395
After the restrictions were lifted*	1054
Total participants	1888

* Due to data complexity resulting from the different chronology of lockdowns in different countries, a more specific explanation will be provided in the final study.

3. Was there any first Holy Communion in your parish? Diocese?

No	1286
Yes	147
Yes, after the restrictions were lifted	452
Other	125
Total participants	2005

4. Was Holy Communion given to the sick? If yes, who took?

No	1007
Yes	413
Priest/ Deacon	311
Extraordinary minister	336
Other	266
Total participants	1941

5. Was there any marriage celebration? If yes, how?

No	1017
Yes	218
Yes, after the restrictions were lifted	449
Other	280
Total participants	1964

6. Were there Church funerals? With or without Mass?

No	788
Yes, without Mass	379
Yes, with Mass	617
Other	186
Total participants	1971

7. How was the Holy Week liturgy celebrated?

Regular celebration (a)	150
No regular celebration	607
Live streaming (b)	1482
People were instructed on what is to be done*	313
People were left to themselves	88
Total participants	2029

*This is where (a) & (b) was not possible

8. Did your diocese celebrate Chrism Mass? If yes, when? Were the priests able to participate?

Yes (with limited numbers after the lockdown was lifted)	719
No	664
Do not know	186
Total participants	1569

9. Was Easter blessing of families done in your parish? If yes, how?

No*	957
Yes (after the restrictions were lifted)	166
Priests prayed in the church, people sprinkled the holy water	84
Other	237
Total participants	1449

* In Indonesia there is no practice of Easter house blessings

10. (For lay persons only) If public worship and administration of the sacraments were not possible how did you practice your faith?

TV/ Internet	1403
Personal prayer	59
Other	126
Total participants	1643

11. Apart from the liturgical celebrations, in what other way bishop, priests and religious persons showed their closeness to the faithful?

Priests kept in touch with the people	849
Essentials were provided for people in need	821
Stranded people were helped to reach home	74
Nothing was done	244
Other	74
Total participants	1809

12. How did you respond to the needs of the people in your area?

Provided material help	802
Made phone calls to the lonely	413
Prayed for the needy	1337
Could not do anything	204
Total participants	1916

13. (For lay persons only) Before Covid-19 pandemic, were you regularly attending Sunday Mass?

Yes	1500
No	30
Not regular	90
Other	11
Total participants	1625

14. (For lay persons only) If you were not a regular church goer, did the pandemic make you dedicate a little more time for God?

Yes	711
No	387
Other	186
Total participants	1274

15. (For lay persons only) Once the churches open for public worship, will you prefer going to church or prefer Mass on TV / Internet?

Prefer going to church	1310
Prefer TV / Internet	165
Other	100
Total participants	1595

16. (For parish priests and those equivalent only) How did the lockdown affect you?

Felt lonely	118
Financial loss	150
Difficulty in paying bills	76
No money to buy essentials	57
Other	68
Total participants*	321

* Total number of priests / deacons participants in the survey is 303 (cf. Part I, n. 2); however Part II, n. 16 has 321 entries. It is not a surprise, because among religious men (Part I, n. 2), there are also priests who work in parishes.

17. (Only for priests in parishes) How did you spend your time?

Spent more time in prayer	183
Reading	179
In touch with parishioners/ those in need	128
Entertainment (TV/ Internet)	77
Found difficult to spend time	25
Other	73
Total participants	294

18. (Only for Religious men and women) How did you cope with the pandemic lockdown?

Spent time in prayer	198
Reading/ studying	170
Community bod became stronger	107
Found difficult to spend time in the community	32
Helping others	89
Other	42
Total participants	334

19. In the absence of Sunday Mass in the church, what did you miss MOST?

Holy Mass in the church with people	433
Holy Communion	603
Intimate relationship with Jesus	463
Contact with people	96
Various activities in the church	196
Total participants	1872

20. You are welcome to upload “most striking” photos or videos of events/ works/ happenings in your area during of Covid-19 pandemic.

The total number of photos / videos received from useful participants: 259

Pending the completion of the more comprehensive and in-depth data analysis, the editorial board of *Ius Missionale* sincerely thanks all the participants who – in spirit of communion, solidarity, resilience and hope – have dedicated their time and energy to this research: we will do everything we can to enhance your contribution. See you then!

Elias Frank
Pontificia Università urbaniana
 (e.frank@urbaniana.edu)

