

## **14<sup>TH</sup> MAY: DAY FOR FASTING, WORKS OF MERCY AND PRAYER**

The Higher Committee of Human Fraternity is calling for women and men to pray to God for an end to the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic. The Committee which includes the Holy Father and leaders of different faith groups suggests Thursday, 14 May, as a day *“for fasting, works of mercy, prayers, and supplications for the good of all humanity”*.

While recognizing the role of science in fighting the disease, the Committee says, “we should not forget to seek refuge in God, the All-Creator, as we face such a severe crisis”.

Their call also emphasizes the importance of asking God “to inspire scientists to find a cure that can turn back this disease, and to save the whole world from the health, economic, and human repercussions of this serious pandemic”.

Our fasting is meaningless if it does not lead us to caring for one another. In other words, fasting should lead us to building bridges with the ‘have-nots.’ While social distancing, as it ought to be, is the news of the day, however, if we end up distanced from one another, we will be worse off, not better. The point is simple. Social distancing is necessary so long as it does not degenerate into relational distancing. Let’s seize the opportunity to check on our neighbours. Let’s build a relational bridge when the virus wants to create a social gap. During the coronavirus epidemic, we will be separated alright, but we are meant to respond to that call to stick together. That is what Christians were known for from the very beginning. The message of caring for others is the very fabric of the Christian faith. In the Bible, we find commandments like “bearing one another’s burdens” (Galatians 6:2). For the Christian, how well we endure in sacrificially serving the vulnerable is one of the greatest indicators of how deeply we have understood what Christ has done for us. Who do we care for? In one of his most famous parables, Jesus uses a Samaritan to unpack how we are to love even those we might otherwise see as our cultural enemies. In essence, how well we are able to love others is a direct indication of how well we know Christ and what he has done for us-- at its most basic level it means caring for others at their times of hurting.

Fr Naz, 14/5/20