

## Letter from a French Village

August 4, 2017



Dear Parishioners,

In the tiny, forgotten village of *La Garde-Freinet* in Provence, where I am presently residing, there is a parish called *St.-Clément de Rome*. It happens to contain an astounding relic (an arm bone) from this 1<sup>st</sup> Century martyred Pope.

This parish is also the center of a movement called “The Invisible Monastery.” Referencing language used by Pope Saint John Paul II, it refers to the great and mysterious solidarity that obtains amongst those who suffer - a theme I have sought to present repeatedly in our own parish.

The idea of this “Invisible Monastery” is not new of course. St. Paul wrote that by our own sufferings, “*we make up what is lacking in the suffering of Christ*” (Col. 1:24). Thus when a Christian suffers, he or she can “offer up” or unite that suffering to that of Our Blessed Lord. In this way, one becomes a powerful co-redeemer with Christ and a veritable channel of His grace.

And so we have here in Provence a core group of devoted Catholics of about 100 souls, lead by a deacon, who have banded together to unite their sufferings in a focused way for the support of their fellow Christians who suffer. The work of the “Invisible Monastery” involves constant visits to the sick and distressed to build up their spiritual vision of suffering and to place themselves in solidarity with them. Thus is suffering transformed from the pagan’s senseless despair to a fountainhead of grace for the salvation of souls.

And so I extend to you from these few intensely faithful Catholics of the tiny French village their gesture of solidarity in suffering. Perhaps each of us can renew our own membership in the “Invisible Monastery,” as we journey through this Valley of Tears.

Peace to you,  
--Father de Rosa