

Pater Yves LaFontaine CMM aus Mariannahill, Südafrika

01 April 2018

Dear friends,

No, it's not an April fool's trick.

This said, I wish to give absolute priority to our greatest Christian feast, Easter. First and foremost then, the Risen Christ! I wish you an excellent Easter time, rich in peace and joy. May this season grant you the gift of an outlook always positive on life and your personal experience! Life always has the last word.

This year the Holy Week was no burden for me. Somebody replaced me for Palm Sunday, Holy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil. Yes, I took on myself only the days of Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. And I went back to my CPS Sisters only yesterday, Easter Sunday in the morning. What a priestly laziness, you will tell me!

In all honesty I must declare that this was not the case. Maybe it's even wisdom! It is said that it comes with age. But in what would it be wisdom? Here it is.

Since some months, I am not well health wise. There we are, my Lent confession is made. I didn't talk about this yet because I didn't want to alarm you for nothing, or almost, and to spoil your legitimate joys. After all, I am still alive and that is already a great thing, a great grace. Why then complain and burden you with my affliction? But the moment has now come to inform you of my present state of health.

You probably knew already that I was not able to stand well hot weather. That was confirmed once more this year. But this time it was worse than usual. So, after a certain time I decided to go and see my doctor. I did it after visits to my dentist, who after a while told me that there was an infection somewhere. Antibiotics therefore! I must say that I am rather susceptible to develop infections. So, at that point, since I was literally dragging my feet, tired from a great weakness, which did not leave no other choice than to move from my bed to doing small activities like updating my e-mail messages – a matter of mental health – my doctor decided, on the basis of new blood tests, to refer me to a urologist and a specialist in general practice – yes, that exists!

But sometime before, I had decided to see once again a dermatologist for my skin problems – feet, hands and back. I had not seen one for ages. Who knows, maybe that science had made some progress since then! When I saw her – a lady -, she prescribed me a “rugged” treatment, so to say. So, I decided to retire to our CPS sisters of Ixopo, where the climate is better for me – it's much higher than here – and where I could concentrate on my treatments.

She had made me understand clearly that I had to be very faithful to the treatments if I truly wanted to obtain results. To me, she seemed very confident. And so I opted for that solution, all the more because I had little energy. Priority therefore to 7 to 8 care sessions by day! No, I don't lie: 7 to 8 sessions according to the day of the week! This to say that my visits to the specialists had to be delayed by a bit more than three weeks. Ixopo is at a two hour distance from Durban by car.

Now, I came back from there in a worse state than when I left, i.e., weaker. Why? I did not know. Maybe it was the cocktail of pills she had given me! Or something else! Who knows? I couldn't say really. But the fact is that I came back from that "dermatological marathon" not at all satisfied. My skin had not improved at all. What a disappointment for me and for my doctor! Therefore desperate times, desperate measures. She gave me some cortisone and a new treatment – a new cream. The effect was certain: a great improvement. So much so that I believed that the follow-up would be milder. It was; yet I had to continue with two treatments a day since my skin was not yet a "normal" skin, she told me.

I come back to my specialists. I first saw a urologist once back in Mariannahill. He just told me that there was a bit too much liquid in the area of the prostate and evoked the possibility of giving me eventually some antibiotics, and he asked me to see him again after three months. It will be on June 7. Nothing else! I came back therefore a bit disappointed.

Then I went to see the specialist in general practice. Needless to say that he asked me a lot of questions. Afterwards he asked me to do a treadmill walking. As I was weak and my legs were tired like anemic dishrag, I asked him if he would pick me up when I would fall flat on my face. "Of course!" he answered. Then I replied: "Let's do it." Obviously he increased the speed more slowly than usual. Well, he is the one who in the end told me: «Ok, it's enough.» He was very satisfied. I wasn't really surprised since hardly two years ago I had passed the test with flying colors in Quebec. Next, he asked me to go for a new blood test and an ultrasound of the liver. Once the results known, he called me to share with me his assessment.

He ended up telling me that all things considered he couldn't find anything of special concern. What good news, no? Especially if the age is taken into account! This said, the greater weakness that afflicted me this year could be explained in the following way, he added. There is no doubt that I have a special problem with heat. But to this was added a combination of factors worsening my condition. They are as follows: age of course, the fact that my white cell count is on the border line – anemia -, that my physical exercise is not quite what it should be, and some external factor or other – a pill or other substance -, an element on which he questioned me. Unfortunately, I was unable, straight away, to enlighten him. In the end, he reassured me: I should not worry because there was no problem with my main organs.

The following day I return to my dermatologist who asks me to continue one of the former treatments twice a day and gives me a pill to take once a day for a month. The next morning I take the pill. Only just a few hours afterwards, my great general weakness comes back. I am flat, have no guts and feel miserable. The same weakness I had experienced at Ixopo and which I could not explain then! I call my pharmacist and ask him if she had prescribed me the same pill the first time. His answer is affirmative. Then everything becomes clear. That was what I could not identify when the specialist asked me about "some external factor or other". So, I stop taking that famous pill right away. In any case, I can't reach my dermatologist. The next day, Good Friday, I am already feeling better. As soon as possible after Easter I shall see my dermatologist. I am now 100% sure now that that pill finishes me. She will have to change it and give me something else, if possible of course.

To complete the picture regarding my skin problem and to put an end to this chapter about my health, my dermatologist asked me to try to identify in time what I get in touch with and causes my eczema to develop. Not an easy thing to do! It's like looking for a needle in a hay stack. One touches so many things in a day! We'll see.

In short, all should get back to normal again with time and the end of summer, which is stretching out unfortunately. This week I might go to our house of Merrivale which is situated much higher than we are here. This, to give a chance to my poor body to recover its strength more quickly. At last, I have finished with the little scratches of my poor little person.

Normally, I would have begun my teaching to the novices. But because of what I just shared with you, I must wait around for better times. The master of novices will reorganize the program accordingly. Our new group is composed of 11 young men coming from our various African provinces and regions.

Something else now. Once more, I am deprived of my land line phone since at least one month and a half now. Fortunately, most of the time I can reach from my room the Provincial's router, which makes it possible for me to use the internet. I do not complain.

This year again, we have had the honor of offering something unique for the whole region in our cloister: the passion play of *The Durban Players Guild*. I talked about it last year already. It was a clear success.

Finally, one word about our very dear ex-President Zuma, who was forced to resign by his own party. Yes, finally! Nobody sings any longer "Zuma must go" since he is gone. With his hundreds of court cases and his renowned lawyers it's clear that the newspapers will make good deals. His party had no longer the choice if it didn't want to lose still more supporters in the population. Corruption, maladministration and incompetence had unfortunately become the lot of the ANC. Mr. Zuma and his gang were focused on trying to protect themselves, and their financial interests as well. This has been widely acknowledged by now.

The social aspect now. And finally! The situation did not improve unfortunately since my last circular. Violence, criminal offences and fatal speed on the roads continue. Around Mariannhill too. But I wouldn't like to let you believe that all goes very bad here. No, no, South Africa is such a beautiful country, full of very good people. My friends of the Rotary Club and the beautiful youth I happen to meet remind me of that constantly. Yet, very unfortunately there are still many too many poor people. And this is, at least partly, what explains the violence I mentioned.

At last let's put a full stop to this circular. I stop here because otherwise you will begin to doze or even complain about my dragging on.

I continue to pray for you every day, in a special way for some of you who are in greater need. I have a rather long list of the latter. I always do this just before going to sleep and I am very faithful in enumerating all the names on my list.

To each and every one of you my best cordial greetings and a very beautiful Easter time.

Till next time.