



NEWS FROM THE GIRARDS IN AREZZO, ITALY

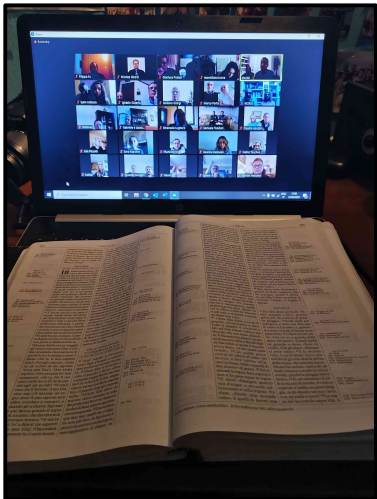


Hello Everyone!

April 2020

So, we've been in a full quarantine for 8 weeks now, but it will be partially lifted on May 4th! Our kids have been around each other without leaving the house even once 24/7. But honestly, MOST days go very well. We've seen our 3 girls get really close actually and have started making up club names, and sharing things together like the type of person they want to marry or the type of future they want and why. In this sense, the Quarantine has been good for us as we've been able to stop the hustle of everyday life and SLOW DOWN!

Our church (as yours probably has too!) is doing all our Bible studies, services via zoom. Nicolas has been asked to preach and teach for several of them, so it's been a good time in the Lord despite the circumstances. We have felt the presence of God in our midst (as we all know, God is not confined to a virtual meeting.)



Nicolas had to use up his paid vacation time in March (contract employers can force that on their employees, and most Italian companies did so). He is on an emergency unemployment fund as of April 1st, which covers 60% of his income, and the payout date is, well, uncertain to say the least. So thank you all very much for all your donations, they have helped us so much this month!

The Prime Minister announced today that the quarantine will be gradually lifted, starting May 4th for most office jobs. Retail stores will reopen May 18th and restaurants June 1st. There was no mention of resuming church services in his address, so it is probably not going to happen until the beginning of June. Social gatherings are still prohibited until further notice, and the newest, ugliest word "social distancing" is still in place (4ft), as well as wearing a mask outside the house. The purpose, Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte explained, is to not overwhelm the health care system and avoid the contagion curve to go back up. We don't have a choice in this, we cannot protest it or write our senators and plead for them to let us out of quarantine. We could be fined as much as 4k€ for leaving our home, unless we can prove that we have essential needs to tend to (pharmacy, grocery, medical care). The police patrol the streets, drones are out watching, and cell phone geo-location is in place. Truth is, we have a large yard so we manage to find our own free space. But for many Italians it's not like this. They live in small apartments in the old city centers, in homes as small as 600ft². We worry about their mental health.

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We also worry about the women who have been trafficked here now confined 24/7 around their pimps, the Nigerians being threatened for money by their madams, and the children forced to stay in the same home as an abusive parent when school at least provided them with a "safe place". We know that women are NOT on the streets prostituting or even running secret brothels, there is now way for men to reach them at this time. Our prayer in this time of forced abstinence from sex slavery is that they would reflect on their choices truly yearn for freedom. ALL ITALIANS are currently homeschooling, and many are finding it can be frustrating.

Now is the time for us to get back to MINISTRY, the HARVEST IS ripe in Italy and we are ready to work for this harvest like never before! People have had a lot of time to question what they believe in, evaluating their relationships, family habits, faith habits. People are afraid of losing their jobs, tax hikes to pay back the stimulus packages, and mostly for their health and their loved ones. With Europe's oldest population, Italy was hit very hard, with more than 26.000 deaths officially attributed to the coronavirus. So, most people fear for their parents and grandparents, and are very thankful to receive prayer (while before the pandemic people were often too proud to admit they need divine protection or intervention of any sort).

So you might be wondering...besides growing the Lord as a family and spending extra time in prayer and building relationship we aren't doing much "ministry". But there is something we would ask you to prayerful consider. Do you remember our grass cutter breeding farm we were in the middle of purchasing in Nigeria? LITERALLY the WEEK BEFORE this virus hit.... Well, NO ONE was expecting the world to turn upside down because of the covid. We believed by faith we could get this property with the help of generous donations. Now many of those donations have halted, as some have been fearful of what the future holds. But would you consider for just a moment the widow's mite? Would you consider giving towards the farm out of your need? We still need \$6,000 as soon as possible to get the land. People living in that part of Nigeria, including Frank and his family, are very poor. They were living off a bag of rice for weeks (for his four kids). Only rice, until we intervened to help them. (We didn't know how bad it had gotten) So please remember the very poor are hit the hardest in this crisis. We still believe by faith that we will purchase this land and build this business in JESUS' NAME. This project will empower the poor and protect the vulnerable girls from traffickers. Thank you for considering this project, please agree in prayer for a miracle to get all we need to buy the land and buy the grass cutters to start as soon as possible!

In this time of crisis, let's focus on Jesus, let's focus on His love, His purpose, and HIS GRACE that is sufficient for our needs.

Thanks again for your support, your prayers, your love and kindness. You pray for you all and thank God for His Church!

Blessings,



Nicolas, Leia, Eva, Elise, Sophie, Isaiah and Olivia