



# Vatican COVID-19 Commission

## Week 5 Philosophical Reflection

### A message of hope and lucidity

Emerging from the crisis – from fear of the unknown to the courage to innovate

1. **The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the inefficacy of contemporary political governance structures to anticipate global crises.** Discourses calling for prevention and the protection of people have been 'relativised' by a certain conformism, which stems from a misplaced confidence in 'linear' development models and the pursuit of short-term profit.
2. **Conformism is related to the provocation of certain fears** regarding the future and regarding realities different from our own. These fears originate in our need to secure our future and access a dignified life.
3. **Fear – like confidence – conditions economic and social life;** the way people interact and work. We know that social revolts are frequently motivated by symbolic rises in the price of bread or subway tickets. The progressive withdrawal of the welfare state abandons individuals in the struggle to fulfil basic needs.
4. **Fear is the silent element of the pandemic,** which takes on an extreme dimension in impoverished countries, in the context of armed conflict, and/or ecological instability.
5. **Is it possible to move from fear to innovation?**
  - The challenge is to define an emergency plan that links climate considerations, employment and solidarity. Innovative projects are needed in the fields of energy and transportation, health, the protection of biodiversity, food production and consumption. This could be encouraged by the creation of an international index of integral human development.
  - It is a question of re-defining our interpretations of time and of the relationship between knowledge and human activity. We must be wary to measure the impact of investments and production and consider, in a pluralist and contradictory way, the social effects and externalities of production processes.
  - Humanity has unlimited potential in terms of knowledge, technology and talent. It is important to identify our strengths and assess how they can serve humanity. For instance, digital technologies and artificial intelligence both bring hope, but also imply great risks. An 'ethics of responsibility' is therefore needed in these areas.
6. **The tool remains at the service of the project.** We need to revisit our development models and socioeconomic paradigms; the technocratic model which has dominated our recent past and 'the other model, carried by a universal conscience' (*Laudato Si'*, 107, 108). The aim is indeed to maintain an open dialogue and encourage the 'charisms' and talents 'in waiting'. We are called to reaffirm where we want to go and our most important convictions.



Pope Francis has asked the Vatican COVID-19 Commission to consider the key issues arising from the pandemic and reflect on the new socio-economic-cultural approaches needed to build a better future. This is Week 5's philosophical reflection.

