

EPIDEMIC OF COVID – 19,
URGENCY OF CARE AND SOLIDARITY :
THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH
AS JESUS CHRIST GAVE IT TO HIS DISCIPLES

1. ONE WORLD, ONE HUMANITY, ONE COMMON VULNERABILITY

The terrible experience of the Corona virus (COVID – 19) shows us we all belong to the same world and to the same human community. The virus does not know any border, any cultural difference or sensibility. We measure that the globalization and the interdependence between countries, continents and communities, concern also our fragilities and make them greater. The virus reminds us our mortal condition and our vulnerability. It calls us for experiment fraternity, greater than our anxiousness. It calls for sharing all the means we have: knowledges, financial means, sanitarian appliances, medical cares, moral and spiritual supports. It calls us to offer attention for all, in particular for poor and frail people: old people, children, sick or homeless persons.

We have to receive and to understand the message of this crisis : what does this epidemic mean ? Biodiversity which is harmony seems really in conflict with life itself. How can we interpret that elements of life, which belong to the Creation which is good, could develop themselves against life ?

It is not time for guiltiness but to assume our mission to take care of our brothers and sisters and to take care of each life which is precious for our God. This mission of care, in the best conditions is our responsibility as managers and actors of Creation we receive from God and which is in our hands, as a fine but vulnerable common good.

We did not think to have to suffer this tragedy. We thought that our human community was so strong to fight any disease or epidemic. Perhaps we felt powerful, especially in “developed” countries. This dramatic experience makes us closer one another and asks our consciousness – believers and seekers of sense - : how can we take care of life and how can we support one another to be servant of suffering people. We know that doctors, medical teams, scientists, social workers, political deciders, are on the front line and give their life for the others. They act the “Gospel of Life. The Church wants to offer them, locally, moral, spiritual and material support, asking that nobody keeps alone, suffers alone, die alone. We have means to care and to offer humanity to everybody. We realize that the conditions of this mission, for and with the human community, for and with everybody, is to share and to support, to take care and to console. And finally to

thank all who give their life for the others. For *“it is not greatest love than to give his life for them we love”* (Jn 15,13)

2. CROSSING THE DESERT : WHEN WE THINK TO BE LOST

This “desert crossing” of this epidemic touches the intimate level of our consciousness.

Doctors and medical teams, scientists, political leaders, actors of solidarity and actors of economy understand, today more than never, that only dialogue and complementarity of talents, competences and capacities, knowledges and cares, can save life and keep opened the horizon of the human history. Sharing our intellectual, practical, moral and spiritual richness, we discover that we are rich together. Everybody discovers that he can protect life – life of the others and his own life – with attention and responsibility. This experience which makes us close to death calls us for a new human solidarity.

At the same time, it is clear that this conversion to a new human solidarity, looking at the other *“as our equal and our support”* (Cf. St Jean-Paul II, *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, 1987, § 39) is going to lead us to think what we really do with elements, nature, natural resources, live beings, the greatest and the smallest ones... and to consider dignity of everyone.

As the Hebrews in the desert, we can ask God, call and perhaps judge Him. But we know that each suffering human experience calls us to revisit what God put in our heart and in our community: his love, his trust, his mercy and his strength.

We shall cross the desert together: each one can take the hand of one brother or sister. Each one can support another and, supporting him or her, we can support the community. We believe that God will show us the rock where the fresh water will spring and care our sick humanity (Cf. Ex. 17,6).

3. EMERGENCY AND NEW ECONOMY : TOWARDS A UNIVERSAL SOLIDARITY

Many people in the world ask about the meaning of this sanitarian crises. Our international economy is going to crash if we do not change the present technocratic paradigm. Going on our reflection about “care”, we have already to assume the great responsibility to think and to act a new economy, in order to promote and to act a new inclusive economic model for a new social link.

Contemporaneous crises are connected and we know that the poor people are the first victims of the crises. How many persons are going to lose their job? How many are going to look for the minimum to eat and survive? The challenge of a new

economy is front of us: to rediscover the unique character of each person and the necessary rhythms to open to everybody the possibility to participate. What can we do? To invest in the human person and to support, as a priority, activities and jobs which take care of Creation and which can lead us to a limited development, respecting elements, human dignity, human rights, essential needs and common good. Here we understand that the reference to integral ecology is essential. (Cf. Laudato si § 137)

“As the different parts which make our planet – physical, chemical, biologic elements – are linked between them; as well the living species constitute a net which we did not finish to identify and to understand. An important part of our genetic information is common with many living beings. It is the reason why our fragmented and isolated knowledges can become a kind of ignorance if we refuse to integrate them in a more global vision of reality.” (Laudato si § 138)

What does it mean, in the context of the sanitarian crisis which is also a humanitarian and economical crisis?

- a. **Our priority is to work together with the perspective to take care of the life.** There is no other priority than developing jobs, in a vision of peace, care of environment and ecosystems.
“Care” of life, “care” of communities and care of our planet will be the central idea of this new economy. We have a lot of projects to realize in this view, in order to found and act “a culture of encounter” and a “mutual hospitality”.
- b. **We cannot waste the possibilities we received from the Creator and from past generations.** We cannot go on producing waste and a “waste culture”, in a time of hunger and disease. We must produce, protect and share, promoting an education for health, human dignity and fraternity. The present crisis, connected with ecological and social crisis, calls to think and to act the two main purposes : health and moderation.
- c. **The financial world is called to participate to the health and security development for all.** We are called for an economy which could consider priorities : **protecting life and developing talents.** We know the weight of the financial dependence in many countries. How it could be possible to reconsider the debt of countries and to create, with the benefits of great companies, an international fund for health, education and support of caring people? In another way, we cannot waste the energy which we receive from the natural elements: sun, wind, oceans, from the traditional knowledges (particularly to take care of persons and nature), from recent inventions (technologies of information, artificial intelligence). We realize the importance of the link

between nature, beauty and fragility of the human life and the human vocation. We understand that we need urgently to think of future with the reference to the integral development: “*the whole person, all the dimensions of the person and all persons, to the entire human community*” (Paul VI, *Populorum progressio*, 1967, § 14).

4. OUR FAITH IS HOPE AND LOVE FOR ALL. GOD LOVES HUMANITY AND JESUS SAVES US

We received in our Christian Tradition hope and trust to open, with our God, “a way in the desert”.

Our God is looking for us and calls everybody for happiness. He wants to take care of his sons and daughters, with tenderness and mercy. He sent Jesus who was “our doctor”, offering attention to each suffering person. If we have to pass the death, with him, we know that He receive us on the other side of our life. His Love is stronger than Death. The essential is to offer dignity and love in the name of the Father and of the Son... and to give what we have received ourselves, with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Each initiative of care and solidarity, each investment for the future of life and human community is a contribution to the Kingdom of Love which our Father is preparing, day after day. And nothing can destroy this Kingdom of God. We are called, each of us, with a special manner – “that God knows” - to offer this hope, “crossing the desert”.

Many people ask: “how can we offer hope in a dark time of suffering and sadness?”. We could answer: “keeping human”, rediscovering in ourselves our humanity: the language of compassion and positive consideration for everybody. The mission of the Church, our mission, in the name of Jesus, is first to be human and fraternal : to listen and to offer the simple word of proximity and to stay in a hoping community. Already many persons adopted a new manner to speak to the others: offering peace to the frail people, in front of the sickness and in front of anxiousness about future. We ask to the local churches to support the medical teams and hospital chaplains – in a same respectful approach of sick people – to offer a spiritual assistance.

The mission of the Church will be first to support concretely the charity and solidarity organizations. Caritas Internationalis and the local Caritas delegations are actors, on the first line, with the agreement and engagement of the bishops Conferences, for this cooperation, in a good intelligence with all others actors of solidarity and human rights, in the spirit of the ‘*Charisma of being together*’ that the Holy Father put in light (General Assembly of Caritas Internationalis, June 2019).

The mission of the Church will be to testify what the Gospel from God inspires to the believers and seekers of peace and solidarity in our time, *listening “the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor”* (Cf. François, *Laudato si*, § 49). In this way, the Diocese will consider how it could be possible to develop a material and moral cooperation.

The mission of the Church will be presence and fidelity to the human community, as Moses did in the desert, as Jesus did, taking care of sick people. We receive, each of us, talents and grace to propose a time for reconciliation with the others, with nature and with oneself (Cf. François, *Message for the Day of Peace*, 1st January 2019 and 1st January 2020) .

The mission of the Church is to call our humanity to keep memory of all we are discovering in this epidemic. To keep memory of all who gave their life for the others, taking care, offering assistance, supporting suffering brothers and sisters, as Jesus himself.

The mission of the Church takes finally its inspiration in the Passion and compassion of Christ. We know that a human and fraternal message can change a life. Already many communities adopted new ways of communication to offer fraternity to suffering, old and sad people. Our mission is first to be human: to listen, to pronounce the simple word, to be near the other and to stay in hope.

“I cannot forget you”, says our Lord by the Prophet Esaia, “if a mother forgets his child, I shall never forget you” (Es. 49,15)

“I shall be with you, every day, to the end of the time” (Mt. 28,20)