

Thoughts on Coronavirus

In no other period of human history has the world been so united. This is not because of the plans or efforts or power of any human effort, but simply because a hitherto unknown virus has invaded human space and is more or less colonizing humanity. No matter how powerful any leader believes himself or herself to be, in the face of this unknown, silent, invisible but truly treacherous reality, we cannot win. Coronavirus has made us into one, vulnerable global community. The poorest in India, the homeless still on our streets, the wealthiest or most well-known people in the world have been affected: Prince Charles and Prime Minister Johnson in London, Chancellor Merkel in Germany. Coronavirus has no boundaries, and walls will not keep it out or in.

In the face of the global climate emergency we cannot win either. Even if every person and institution in existence lived in an ecologically sustainable manner from this moment on, we still will be living with the consequences of our behaviour for decades to come. So, what has been happening?

We are beginning to acknowledge our interdependence. It used to be said that if a butterfly fluttered its wings somewhere on an island in the Pacific Ocean, a cyclone would occur off the coast of the Philippine Islands. (or other widely separated places). We in the West have had increasing difficulty in accepting this. Autonomy, independence have been tending to dominate. Liberal capitalism. Belonging to a global or even a local community hasn't been the fashion.

But now, we are beginning to understand that we need one another. We need the health and social services, we need our neighbours, we need those who clean our streets, maintain our electricity, work in our supermarkets, and so on. We also need family

and friends with whom we can maintain relationships; This is human ecology

Some are discovering for the first time the beauty of bird song. We do that by slowing down and appreciating silent spaces. Perhaps a first step in respecting the natural world.

We may be on the cusp of re-learning something really precious about ourselves; relationship is at the heart of creation. God created both Adam and Eve; placed them in a beautiful Eden where they would learn about interconnectedness. Life is a web. If one thread is unravelled then the entire structure is compromised.

Because we are not travelling as much the air is cleaner. Citizens of the mega cities can breathe more naturally.

We are sure of one thing: God is journeying with us. Perhaps we are wandering in a desert land with few recognisable signposts. Even in this season, so sacred for Christians, we won't have the familiar liturgies. But Resurrection always happens in unexpected places.

We are led to ask ourselves: what do I consider essential for my life? What can I let go of? Only "essential services" are allowed to continue in business. How do I react to this? Some do it by "hoarding". Others live from day to day and haven't that luxury, if that is what it can be called. During the desert Exodus the people were asked to gather only as much manna as they needed for the day. If anyone gathered a surplus "just in case", it would go bad quickly. So they discovered that God could be trusted.

Here, the government has told us what is essential: food and urgent household replacement items; medicines; newspapers; essential health services... And we must let go of the desire to "look good" – I can't get my hair attended to, or buy a gift for someone. I

can't go more than 2 kilometres from my house. But for those over 70 even that is not allowed!

So, what is essential: patience, understanding, thoughtfulness and kindness. How I live now will affect others. (It always has!)

What is striking is the good will and thoughtfulness emerging from people. How many times have you been asked by someone if you need any help?

God comes to us in so many ways: God is a caring God, not wanting us to be lost or in want.

And yet, vast numbers of people are now out of work, and a number of – mostly – small businesses will not recover. Compassion and solidarity are also essential. Strangely, this is happening in little ways but global solidarity is still lacking. President Trump tries to intervene to grab essential medical supplies for the US. But then, Germany is offering acute hospital care to seriously ill Italians. We all need to share what we have, not only locally, but nationally and globally. This is as essential for the prevention of disastrous climatic events, as well as for curtailing the spread of infection. 5 loaves and 2 fish were more than enough when shared.

What is your hope as you journey through this? Mine is that we would learn that we are greater than we think: we can live more simply, less dependent on “things”- possessions; we can live more respectfully and appreciatively on earth, courageously discerning the difference between what we *need* and what we *want*, always mindful that we share our world with all other living creatures, who are equally precious to God. Perhaps we are journeying towards a renewed more relational creation!

Carol Dorgan

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