

A Search for God Amidst the Covid-19 Pandemic

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The reality of a pandemic signals a global crisis. Nonetheless, “to encounter crisis is to encounter the possibility of truly being the church.” (Bosch, 1991). People nowadays ask questions such as: Why is this pandemic happening? When will this come to an end? The history of salvation reveals of a God who can turn slavery to freedom, of suffering to eternal glory, and of darkness into light. This is evidently seen in the agony, crucifixion and death of Christ being a prelude to His glorious resurrection.

Relying deeply on God’s benevolence people ask: Is there anything good in the face of a pandemic? Recalling the words of Nathanael to Philip about Jesus of Nazareth being the messiah: “Can anything good come from Nazareth?” (John 1:46). In this time of crisis, can we still find God? Where is God in this situation? How can we find strength to continue our life in times of distress, doubts, and fears? Indeed, God is a God of mystery. In the Book of Isaiah is written: “Your thoughts are not my thoughts, neither are your ways my ways says the Lord” (Isaiah 55:8). Christians pray and ask God for healing and deliverance with assured confidence in faith, hope, and love that God will grant our petitions. Nonetheless, God’s will, is free from any human control and manipulation.

Opportunity for quality time among family members has entered each household. Modern families easily communicate with the use of modern gadgets, but are personally distant. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, houses are turned into schools, churches, theaters, and playgrounds paving a way for a more communication opportunity. On the dialogue within the family *Amoris Laetitia* states that: “Dialogue is essential for experiencing, expressing and fostering love in marriage and family life. Yet it can only be the fruit of a long and demanding apprenticeship” (Francis, 2016). Dialogue, which according to Edgar Javier is “our mission today” (Javier, 2006) is also now seen as an essential aspect of turning into the “postmodern hallmark of the contemporary times which is a turn to relationships” (Grenz, 2003). Even, different religions, nations, and cultures are connecting with each other, albeit the shutting down of doors as countries observe lockdowns.

Globalization has passed through these walls and barriers, bringing forth positive and negative effects. Although there are still barriers that exist between and among people. Divides are

present between cultures and religions, between literates and illiterates, and between the rich and the poor, to mention a few of these divides. In the presence of barriers, in the words of Pio Estepa, we have to build “ecclesial bridges between the divides” (Estepa, 2011). In the occurrence of a pandemic such as the Covid-19, how do poor people fair? How can they lock themselves in their houses when they have no house in the first place? Worth mentioning are those who are forced to live in the borders such as the forced migrants who are not allowed to cross borders of metal barriers. Locking up themselves, poor people think of their basic needs which they only meet on a daily basis. They have no means to properly disinfect themselves as they would think first of food, rather than disinfectants.

Nature is now healing herself being momentarily freed from humanity’s ceaseless exploitation and greed. Both the earth and the poor have things in common, one of which is that they are both being endlessly exploited. The pandemic has worked to the advantage of the earth’s healing and preservation. The question now is, how about the poor people? How can we live the words of Pope Francis that we have to be “a church bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security” (Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 2013). In this destitute situation the Pope appeals to the church not to forget the poor during the global outbreak of Covid-19. Are the poor to be liberated from being considered left-overs, disposable and of being pushed even beyond the margins? Beyond the margins means obvious death as they are pushed to fall in the cliff.

Where is God at this moment of a pandemic? Is He not listening to the groaning of creation and of His people? God says: “I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” (Jeremiah 29:11) Truly, God is a God of mystery. The Holy Spirit can move us beyond the walls. Challenges bring about opportunities, we just need to let the wind blow where it wills (John 3:8). Salvation is for all, inclusive of both the rich and the poor. “God wants all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of truth” (1 Tim 2:4). Salvation is not only inclusive but also integral. Integral evangelization is an integral liberation which should foster integral human development and flourishing. Evangelization for the Church means “bringing the Good News to all strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity and making it new: *Now I am making the whole of creation new*” (Paul VI, 1975). This will be achieved if we will let the Holy Spirit move us and work in us. The Holy Spirit who is the primary agent of mission (John Paul II, 1990) and principal agent of evangelization (Paul VI,

1975), is the Spirit of God's transforming love. God is not only a God of mystery, but is also a God of love and unity. May we be one as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one. May this oneness be a fruit of Jesus' prayer "that all of them may be one, as You, Father are in Me and I in You." (John 17:21). In times of global crisis, may we all be one in love. May we love one another as He has loved us.

References

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