



# Sign of the Times: Through the Lens of the Pandemic

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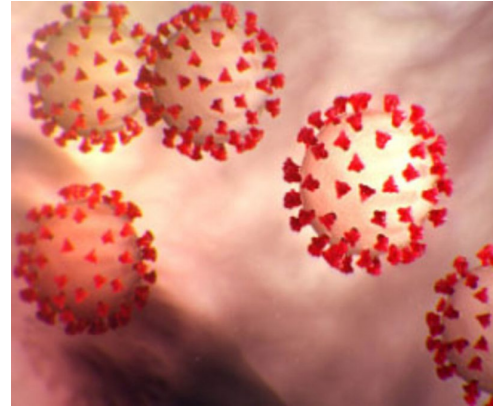
## Seven Reflections on the Coronavirus Emergency from an ECOLOGICAL Perspective\*

1. The coronavirus emergency reveals that people and governments respond when human health is directly impacted. Atmospheric pollution kills nearly 9 million people annually. In our attempts to control the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been a reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> and nitrogen oxide emissions. Depending on what we do now, the coronavirus can give humanity a little more time to meet the climate emergency.



2. We need to make sure that the post coronavirus economy is different; it should follow a path of sustainability, equity, and democratic participation. It can be the occasion to launch a green, sustainable, circular and communitarian economy. We cannot afford to return to business as usual precisely for the ecological and socio-economic impacts of the current economic system on our planet and people, especially on our most vulnerable communities.

**3.** It is clear that the origin of the present coronavirus – as with SARS, MERS and Ebola – has to do with human interference in the intricate balance of natural ecosystems through wildlife trading, deforestation linked to mining, logging, animal husbandry, etc. and the consequent destruction of local biodiversity. With the rapid destruction of Earth’s life-sustaining ecosystems, we increase the danger of the evolution of ever-newer, and possibly deadlier, human adapted viruses in future. Covid-19, and other deadly viruses are a clarion call to humanity to realize that we humans cannot exist and flourish, if we destroy the very ecosystems that sustain us and the rest of the fabric of life.



**4.** The coronavirus emergency has forced us to alter our lifestyles drastically. In the post-corona world, hopefully we will preserve some elements of the simple living we have been forced to adopt. Our planet is dying due to the pressure of our reckless consumption patterns. We need to take a hard look at the luxuries to which we are addicted with their detrimental impacts on our planet and its ecosystems.

**5.** The coronavirus explosion has required us to reflect on the fundamental ecological truth that we are all interrelated and interdependent. We flourish or we perish together in our “common home” (*Laudato si*). The coronavirus emergency, however, pales before the much bigger challenges like the climate crisis, unprecedented levels of biodiversity loss, the increasing scarcity of natural resources - water, in particular, and the suicidal course of stockpiling nuclear arms. These are long-term challenges that cannot be overcome with the discovery of a vaccine or an economic stimulus package. If a deadly virus can bring the world to its knees, imagine the aggregate impacts of the climate and related crises, which are destined to last decades, if not centuries.

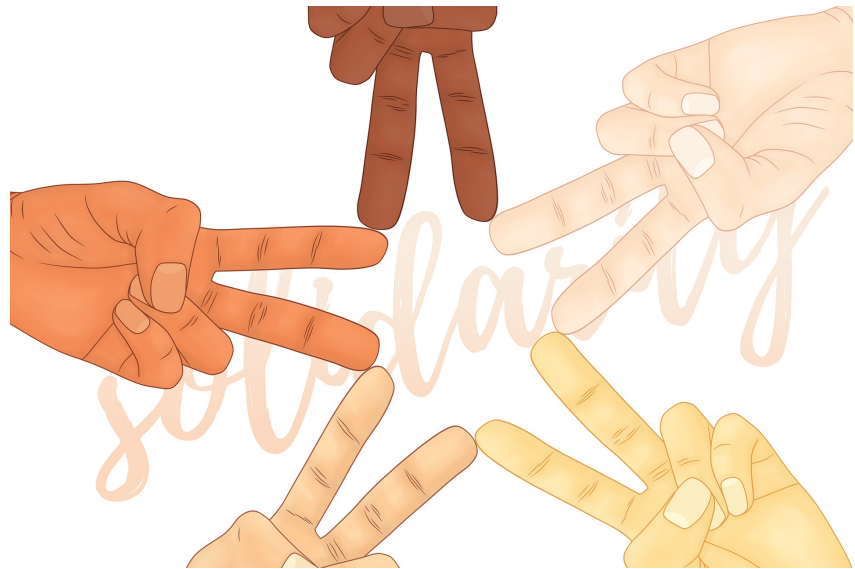




6. The Covid-19 pandemic has shaken humanity (even the stock markets) while much bigger challenges like climate crisis and biodiversity loss have failed to do so. The pandemic shows that communities and governments act when the “health” of people is threatened. Ecological impacts are going to be even more pronounced than the current Covid-19 pandemic if we fail to change. Climate crisis unattended will have even more harmful impacts on human health and survival: heat waves causing thousands

of deaths; massive food insecurity; droughts, wildfires, floods, and sea level risings wiping out entire communities causing lack of shelter and global migration. The moral of this story is clear: we need to see the human face of the contemporary ecological challenges and the real threats they pose to human and societal well being.

7. The nearly total absence of seeing the Covid-19 crisis from the vantage point of the weakest members of our society - refugees, migrant labourers, daily wage earners, the homeless, subsistence farmers, indigenous communities - is greatly worrying. There is talk of bailouts, stimulus packages, state-of-the-art research and lab facilities, with hardly any attention to how the most vulnerable members of our world face a pandemic when



they do not even have a place to self-isolate during a shutdown. Unless we learn to see ourselves as one human family, living in a common planetary home with a common destiny, and grow in compassion towards one another, we will not overcome the global challenges facing humanity now, and in the years to come. The poor and vulnerable are a voiceless group. Can we become their voice, consistent with the preferential option for the poor, which lies at the heart of our faith and social teachings?

*\* Adapted from Seven Reflections on the Coronavirus Emergency from an ECOLOGICAL Perspective by Joshtrom Isaac Kureethadam, SDB Coordinator of the Sector on Ecology, Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development.*