



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

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### Overview

On Easter Sunday, 2020, in the mist of the coronavirus pandemic, Andrea Bocelli, serenaded the global community from the steps of the Duomo Cathedral in Milan, with the words of *Amazing Grace*. Given the context of the global health crisis, how heartrendingly and prophetically did we hear these words anew from the voice of the blind Italian tenor, “*I once was blind but now I see?*” Indeed, every day the newscasts bring us poignant images of unprecedented suffering, as well as unimaginable courage and tenacity. While our eyes are trying to capture the reality before us, we are also growing increasingly aware that the lens of the pandemic is bringing our attention to many other realities that have been chronic problems affecting the health of our societies, our cultures, and our environment. As we strive to find ways to stop the destruction that the virus is inflicting on human health, it is urgent that we concomitantly commit to end the social and environmental ills that continue to ravage our lives.

The purpose of this series of brief essays is to illuminate how the coronavirus pandemic has been helping us see anew the chronic problem of disparity and exploitation that cuts across many sectors of our societies as well as the life systems of our planet. The realities that these essays intend to illuminate include economic inequality, racial inequality, educational inequality, and a reflection on the coronavirus emergency from an ecological perspective. We would like to thank those who have contributed to these essays from the SSND Atlantic-Midwest Province network. It is hoped that they will be useful in animating critical reflection and action in multiple and varied social, cultural and geographic contexts.

We also hope that as you read and reflect on these essays, you will see anew the many experiences of these critical concerns that you have had across your lifetime. We also hope that the way these disparities and exploitative practices have contributed to, or exacerbated, the impact of the coronavirus, will inspire us all to work toward a more comprehensive approach to resolving this complex crisis. As difficult as the coronavirus is to overcome, the economic, social, racial, and environmental crises that are equally as ravaging to life will not be overcome when a vaccine is able to be distributed. These problems will only be resolved when we acknowledge their presence, as well as their death-dealing impact in our lives, and resolve to address them systematically, sustainably, and effectively with every resource at our disposal.