



# Window on Social Justice

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## A virus speaks to us

A tiny virus has come to remind the whole world how fragile life is. To survive and live in harmony with all living things on earth we must change the way we look at nature and rethink the place of humanity on the planet. We have known for a long time that the majority of illnesses are caused by the pressure humans place on ecosystems. It is therefore crucial to understand that the present health crisis is the direct result of the current environmental crisis. According to the UN, nature is in crisis because of the loss of biodiversity and habitat, global warming and toxic pollution. It seems that atmospheric pollution, due to human activity, has claimed more lives each year than those claimed by viruses.

Since planes have been grounded, highways practically deserted and economies slowed down, there has been a spectacular improvement in air quality. The inhabitants of certain large cities are rediscovering that stars exist in the night sky.

While reduced global activity necessarily decreases pollution, problems such as the climate crisis remain a serious cause for concern. When the pandemic crisis ends, the same polluting cars will head back on the roads, the same industries will take up again their rate of production and the same climate challenges will remain. In the present situation, we are thinking of all the measures that can be put in place to protect ourselves from the new coronavirus. But we easily forget the fight against climate change and the other great ecological disasters of our time that are not foreign to the crisis that we are going through. We could ask ourselves the following question: Slowing down our activities, could it possibly save more lives than those claimed by COVID-19?

Learning to respect biodiversity and living in cohabitation in a more respectful way with the rest of life on the planet is the human challenge in the fight against the plagues of our time. According to Boucar Diouf, biologist and oceanographer, “it is somewhat pretentious to say that a vaccine is the solution for the present crisis. Viruses are here to stay and for us it is a lesson in humility that we as predators, receive these minute beings that are the foundation of the Earth.”

What has being in lockdown and living in slow motion taught me these past few months about myself, my relationship with others and with the environment?

Is it possible that I have discovered certain values during lockdown that had been somewhat forgotten?

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe

and in the smallest of your creatures.

You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.

Pour out upon us the power of your love,

that we may protect life and beauty. (*Laudato Si'*)

### Did you know that:

- **Pollution** is responsible for **9 million deaths per year in the world (2019)**.
- According to a global review, **COVID-19** has caused more than **331,000 deaths** (La Presse, May 21 2020).

### References:

- World Health Organisation
- Quebec Science Magazine
- François Grenier – Earth Day
- Encyclical *Laudato Si'*

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