



Renewing Relationship

COVID-19 AND LESSONS FOR PANDEMIC MANAGEMENT



INTRODUCTION

The global nature of the COVID-19 pandemic offers an unprecedented opportunity for those of us involved in global health to look at current philosophy and practice.

We've had a universal experience of isolation, of shortages, fear and new rules. How might those shared realities help us consider new ways to renew our solidarity with our partners in low- and middle-income countries and to assist us as we build something different through our global health strategies?

“The pandemic is a crisis and we do not emerge from a crisis the same as before: either we come out of it better or we come out of it worse. We must come out of it better, to counter social injustice and environmental damage. Today we have an opportunity to build something different,” said Pope Francis.*

In order to come out better, we will need to identify where breakdowns occurred when travel was banned and consider if new paths need to be created. Many public health and access challenges have become more evident, requiring lengthy research and analysis, but, overall, how do we emerge from quarantine with greater meaning and purpose? What are we learning from all that is happening amid this global pandemic?

The following essays are an offering to set the stage for collective consideration of how the complexities and challenges of the pandemic create an opportunity for us to rethink, reset and renew our global health relationships. While COVID-19 and the isolation we have experienced inspires more questions, they provide us with renewed hope and inspiration to do it better in the future. We hope you will take this time “apart” to reflect on our future opportunity to be brother and sister to our global neighbors.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bruce Compton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

BRUCE COMPTON

*Senior Director, Global Health
Catholic Health Association of the United States*

*From Pope Francis' General Audience on Aug. 19, 2020.



COVID-19


AND LESSONS FOR

PANDEMIC

MANAGEMENT

COVID-19 and Lessons for Pandemic Management

BY FR. CHARLES KITIMA, PH.D.

 **B**ecause of the COVID-19 pandemic, the people of all nations began to see that they are truly one with all the world's people, equal in the face of death. The virus attacked without consideration of one's race, religion, social status or economic status.

Nations soon realized that they were not self-sufficient. They recognized that COVID-19 was the world's common enemy, and that its defeat required global cooperation in the form of sharing knowledge and resources. They called on their countries' private and public sectors to join them in the battle to defeat this new coronavirus. The pandemic has caused the world to focus its attention on the interdependency of human life. The sickness of one affects us all. My survival depends on your health. The spread of COVID-19 will not be curbed without cooperation.

As there is no effective vaccine against COVID-19, no one is immune from its ravages, including health care workers, many of whom have become sick or died. For this reason, many nations provide resources to these workers first.

Because it was determined that the main way that the virus was spread was through human-to-human contact, international air travel was curtailed or halted. At the same time, most countries went on lockdown, in order to limit such contact.

The World Health Organization, through research and dissemination of pertinent data and statistics, has kept nations apprised of COVID-19's march. This forewarning has helped to control the virus. The internet allows for the immediate dispersal of information for prevention, treatment and education.

To defeat the pandemic, the world needed national leaders who could look beyond their own borders for help and who would be willing to offer assistance to their neighbors. To save the weak among them, these leaders must manifest not only strength, but also love and compassion.

With the onset of the coronavirus, people clamored for answers. Leaders turned to science for ways to best combat this pandemic. Many people, however, realized that science alone cannot answer all of the complexities of life. They sought comfort in tradition or in religion.

COVID-19 has prompted many to consider their mortality and their place in the world. To counter panic and the feeling of isolation, people turned to their faith for comfort. Spiritual leaders, through prayer and action, offered hope to the healthy and consolation to the dying and their bereaved families. Although people found that their churches were closed, many prayed alone to God, reflecting the words found in John 4:23:

But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him.

People's dialogue with the Lord, the source of life, helped to conquer their fear and panic. In this way, the coronavirus has caused some to rediscover their religion, and more importantly, to re-awaken the relationship between them and God.

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To conclude, one can rightly say that no country was adequately prepared for the COVID-19 pandemic. Each dealt with the pandemic through trial and error. Solidarity and central coordination at all levels of government proved to be the best principle, while transparency and cooperation among nations is the cornerstone for building a strong prevention strategy.



REV. DR. CHARLES H. KITIMA, M.SC., PH.D., is the Secretary General of the Tanzania Episcopal Conference (TEC) and TEMCO Vice Chairman, Research and Education for Democracy in Tanzania at the University of Dar Es Salaam. In his role at TEC, he is working with over 500 health institutions related to the Catholic Church in Tanzania.



The current pandemic has highlighted our interdependence: we are all connected to each other, for better or for worse. Therefore, to emerge from this crisis better than before, we have to do so together; together, not alone. Together. Not alone, because it cannot be done. Either it is done together, or it is not done. We must do it together, all of us, in solidarity.

POPE FRANCIS

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Washington Office

1875 Eye Street NW, Ste. 1000
Washington, DC 20006-5440
(202) 296-3993

St. Louis Office

4455 Woodson Road
St. Louis, MO 63134-3797
(314) 427-2500

