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“Vita, si uti scias, longa est” (Seneca)

There are some moments in our individual life during which we ask ourselves to stop, to think about what is happening, to open our eyes and listen to nature that is shouting to be heard by the entire humanity. There are days during which you realize what you have and what you take daily for granted for example your major gift: freedom. The power to be free unites us all. There are things that are felt by every human and that make us feel closer and similar to the other. There are issues that can have consequences over all humanity. According to this, in a democracy people are free and have the power to choose as citizens of a nation or as inhabitants of a planet.

To solve common situations we must understand that we are single cells of the same body. Through a holistic vision of life in which every sphere of a society speaks with the others and through a solid solidarity, we can perfectly embody the proverb: “Unity is strength”.

On February 23rd while I was in Paris, lined up to enter the Louvre Museum, I received the news of the first Italian case of coronavirus in the city of Codogno. Few weeks before in my country news from China about the danger of this virus were arriving. At first we were not clearly aware of the real situation and we were not ready to face the extent of what would soon become a real health emergency. In a very short time cases have risen dramatically, there were so many that my country decided to close schools, shops, restaurants, businesses, cinemas everywhere. Italy has completely stopped in order to try to solve this tragic reality.

The question that in these days of anxiety all people from all over the world have asked themselves at least once is: “What is coronavirus?” Coronaviruses (CoV) are a large family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV). COVID-19 has been discovered last year in 2019, but has not been previously identified in humans yet. Coronaviruses are zoonotic, it means that they are transmitted between animals and people. Detailed investigations found that SARS-CoV was transmitted from civet cats to humans and MERS-CoV from dromedary camels to humans. Several known coronaviruses are circulating in animals that have not infected humans yet. Common symptoms are fever, cough, breathing difficulties, shortness of breath. When the situation gets critical the infection can cause pneumonia, acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure and in some cases death. People who are infected are put in isolation in order to prevent further infections. If on the one hand there are people who have already contracted the virus, on the other hand there are those who try to take the correct precautions to protect themselves. The governments have shared some recommendations to prevent infection. For example, regular hand washing, covering your mouth and nose with a sanitary mask and avoiding close contact with everyone. At the same time COVID-19 can be scary and can affect our mental health. In our lives, made of commitments, deadlines, meetings, deliveries, how many times do we only want some minutes to lie on the sofa, sleep without the sound of the alarm clock and take a little time to relax? Once a day we repeat ourselves that we hate our daily life, our routine. Funnily enough, only in this unrealistic situation staying at home has become difficult and stressful, because we feel in a sort of prison.

The one that we are facing is a new routine, distorted and in some ways dystopian, far from normality. We are isolated from each other. We feel lost in the corridors of our houses. As the kids of “Lord of the Flies” by William Golding who are trying to survive testing their spirit of adaptation to a wild environment, today we are trying to adapt our lives to the “quarantine style”. According to this new threat to human survival, the government has chosen to limit our individual

freedoms. As in “Nineteen-Eighty-Four” by George Orwell, our freedoms are limited and we are obliged to follow strictly what the government will choose for us. Nevertheless, if in the background of 1984 there is a totalitarian system that wants to eradicate individual freedoms in the name of a total control, now that we are in a democracy the government limits us and forces us to follow a certain lifestyle for a health emergency.

This strange reality, completely unexpected, makes us anxious and nervous. It seems that we are living for a second time a sort of “Age of Anxiety”. Similarly during the coronavirus emergency people do not know what will happen the day after, they go looking for news obsessively, they search for information, looking for a hope to hold on. Just like then, nowadays’ people have changed their routine from a day to the other. In both eras we can find some heroes: if yesterday we had men with helmets and heavy weapons that went against a foreign enemy, today we have women and men with a white lab coat and a mask, ready to put themselves to the service of those who need them. Just like yesterday, today we are facing a reality which looks more and more like a dystopia every day.

Only 3 months ago the television news spoke about a third world war between America and Iran, bringing the whole world into a destabilizing state of anxiety and despair. Moreover, Australia has burned for months: 10,7 millions of hectares have been destroyed. To all this we can add the melting of glaciers and the temperature that continues to rise more and more every day. What is certain for everyone is that this new year, 2020, has not opened in a positive way, also because of this new virus that is attacking the entire world. It is absurd to think that these problematic situations can be solved by individual nations, without any form of collaboration between states. People have to wake up and realize that it is not enough to use a fire extinguisher to put out a fire, it is not enough to use a vaccine to stop a pandemic, it is not enough to avoid buying any more plastic bottles to stop the pollution of the seas. Problems are related to each other. Therefore, only through an interconnection between different areas of society and through a form of strong solidarity between states, we can rise up together, stronger than ever.

As problems are interconnected, the action of every human being and every nation is necessary. This what The Holy Father Francis in the Encyclical Letter “Laudato Si” pushed for. The Holy Father is talking about the fundamental theme of the Integral and Social Ecology. In paragraph 137 our Pope is asking us to have a long-range vision, to consider more elements to solve a problem and to finally understand the strong inaction that is present among things. In paragraph 142 the Holy Father tells us: *“Every violation of solidarity and civic friendship harms the environment”*. Francis is trying to convey that solidarity union must not only take place on a human relationship level, but also and above all on an institutional level.

According to this, Italy is facing this dramatic period in line with the beautiful words of our Pope. TV news share with us the fact that the Italian economy will pay the coronavirus crisis dearly. The market is dying, small and medium companies are suffering because of the absence of purchase demand. Despite the economic collapse, Italy is reacting with synergistic measures that concern the entire community. Over the last few decades, after the Second World War, an emergency has forced the country's top institutions to make drastic decisions aimed at containing the default's risks of the national economy. Anyone who has some government responsibilities, who has an economic role or has a political, social or trade union representation is collaborating with holistic proposals to stem the crisis by contributing through their experience to give hope to our countries.

On March 18th an appeal for solidarity came for example from the German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who supported her nation through a speech that conveyed a strong sense of national community. She told her nation the following words: “this situation is serious and open”. She said

that in a democracy individual freedoms should not be limited, such as the freedom of movement as it is guaranteed by the European Union (EU) according to the Schengen agreement but this is an emergency. In the same way the President of the French Republic Emmanuel Macron has also made an appeal to his citizens using harsher words. “We are at war” he said. France has decided to copy the Italian model to try to stem the epidemic of the new coronavirus, in a situation that is rapidly deteriorating. He said that we will learn a lot from this tragic moment and that we will have a new vision of seeing life. Russia is armored, every border have been closed so that the virus does not take root. In Spain the Prime Minister Sanchez declared national emergency. His spirit of national community is very strong because it goes beyond borders and beyond the political belief. In England if the Prime Minister Boris Johnson had expressed himself in favour of a solution involving building up a sort of herd immunity at first, now he seems to have changed his mind and orders the status of semi-quarantine and special measures for the city of London.

Today we are constantly talking about this disease that made us open our eyes and allowed us to face a world in which environmental and ecological problems coexist. China has been the first nation infected. Through a hard work of sanitation, a capillary control of the population and through a deep commitment by the Chinese people what was considered a common threat has been eliminated. If you turn on the television or you open a newspaper the first news are about this problem that every day is having more and more a worldwide impact. Social media are becoming our only source to communicate with other people. We are facing the first epidemic during the social media era and this can only amplify the effect of the news. But it is also the first epidemic of the era of smart working, a way to encourage the continuing of the business by supporting the need to limit personal contacts. Social media are extremely important on one side because they keep us constantly updated, but at the same time they are platforms used to communicate a message of solidarity, peace and hope. Social media seem to be carriers of a sort of universal solidarity. Messages and posts of affection and understanding are arriving from every part of the world to support the countries most affected by the health emergency such as China and Italy.

People are learning to have a holistic approach that means to have a global vision of what is happening because like I said at the beginning we are inhabitants of the same world. Only through this new conception we can face in a good way problems and seek comprehensive solutions. Our behavior is essential because it has an impact on the entire system. These are hard times that seem more like a sort of dystopia rather than reality. We must not return in a new “Age of Anxiety” which would make us paralyzed and alienated, isolated in our houses. Despite this climate of fear, in these days I have assisted to many acts of humanity. For example the many donations from famous people to hospitals in difficulty, or the patriotic songs sung in chorus at a certain time of the day, or the many posters with the drawing of a rainbow and the inscription “Everything will be all right”.

In conclusion, I want to say that I support the idea that we should have a broader vision of the world. Collaborating in our daily life can be essential to change an entire damaged system. Today maybe we are not perfectly aware of what is happening and of the extent of this dramatic situation. Only when all this will be over we will be finally conscious of what we have lived. Through a synergistic work that permits to heal the world from many points of view, through a strong solidarity between humans and between different institutions we will get stronger and more unite.