



COVID-19

**Recovering
together**

Faith-based Reflection

For the Renewal and Healing of Our Common Home

The world is hurting. The Earth is suffering, and we are suffering with her. In March 2020, nearly the entire planet went into confinement. A time out. The Earth went on forced sick leave and drew our collective attention to a profound crisis that we were all living through without wanting to admit it. We have wept. We have lost loved ones to this disease; we have been terribly afraid; and we have, at times, been enraged by irresponsible decisions and behaviours.

However, this isolation, these bereavements, these fears that we—the privileged of this Earth—have suffered are but a part of the suffering that has been ravaging the Earth. This health crisis—this pandemic—is in fact intimately linked to other crises: the ecological crisis; the human crisis; the political crisis; poverty; inequality; and our abusive relationship with the Earth, with its resources and especially with our sisters and brothers in less wealthy countries. For it is these countries, their people and their resources that feed us, that keep the comfortable system in which we live, i.e., our economy, running.

And then, all of a sudden, we experienced the extreme fragility and absurdity of our way of life. We saw how these chains and paths of trade and exploitation enabled the virus to spread across the globe at lightning speed. Then, we noticed something else: the well-disguised injustice within our own societies. The inequality of opportunities, the unequal access to health care, the financial precarity of some, the diseases more prevalent among the poorest that made them more vulnerable.... The injustices in our economy that make us depend on poor people in unacceptable conditions—even here and not just halfway around the world—to maintain our false impression of being developed countries.... We have seen how we treat our elderly and our children. We have seen how we treat immigrants and homeless people. Our culture of waste. We have seen all this. It is not the pandemic that has caused this suffering. The pandemic merely exposed it. And after the sadness, perhaps we were filled with shame and questioning... and disgust and anguish.

Everything is interconnected. That is what we have just experienced in our homes, in our daily lives of confinement. We are all interdependent on one another. Any action taken in one corner of the world has rapid and sometimes catastrophic repercussions on the other side of the world. What we are doing to the Earth, how we live, how we consume, how we travel, our human relations, our political relations, our economic relations... everything is interconnected.

We have just understood, in real time, everything written in Pope Francis's encyclical, *Laudato Si'*. This revolutionary document did not invent



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anything. But it enlightens us and maps out a path for a more just future on this Earth. Like *Laudato Si'*, the pandemic offers us an opportunity to learn, to rethink our world and to undergo conversion.

It is a chance to settle in, to take a break. To slow down, to listen and to rethink. To regain awareness about what is essential. To not limit or deprive ourselves (that endless Lent without Easter to which Pope Francis refers in *Evangelii Gaudium*), but to flourish together. To understand at last that in the common home, it's no use if only some can live in dignity, if it is at the expense of others who suffer. The suffering includes not just people, but animal and plant species as well. We do not have the right to deplete resources as if we were living on a planet without limits. Who thought we had the right to behave that way? We need a profound awakening of consciousness and a transformation—a radical transformation—of our systems and institutions.

It's time to act. When the institutions and norms we have created do not serve human dignity and ecological integrity, they must be changed. That is where we are now. We have a responsibility to make that change. We are a community and we need to start thinking and acting like one with dignity, justice, well-being for all, solidarity and sufficiency as our guiding principles. This is huge, yet also clear. We need a profound transformation of our hearts and minds. A conversion.

The current economic and political model, based on a relationship of exploitation of resources and other peoples, is unjust and abusive. This model is a failure. It cannot simply be “fixed.” It must be deconstructed and rebuilt; we must work together to imagine something else entirely. After our conversion, to emerge from this crisis that has been exposed and accentuated by COVID-19, we must repent and build a different world together.

Repairing, rebuilding and healing will take the commitment of every one of us, and we have a special role to play. We, the Church. We, Christian women and men. We, civil society. Each of us can and must take part.

We need each other.

Let us act by rooting each of our choices—political, economic and social—in this dream for the common good. **Let us act** in gratitude, joy, hope, celebration and LOVE for humanity and for our common home.



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This reflection has been adapted from a presentation made by Josianne Gauthier, Secretary General of CIDSE, on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of Laudato Si'. After working at Development and Peace — Caritas Canada for over 16 years, Josianne joined CIDSE, a network of Catholic social justice and international solidarity organizations of which Development and Peace is a member, in 2017.