



IN TIME OF CORONAVIRUS: WHAT DO WE SEE, WHAT DO WE WANT TO DO?

(A REFLECTION FROM CHAMINADE COMMUNITY OF THE
SEMINARY IN ROME)

In his letter of April 22, 2020, the Superior General, Fr. André Fétis, wanted to engage the whole Society of Mary in a concerted dynamic of prayer, reflection and action in the face of the pandemic crisis that has hit the whole world in the recent months. Here is an excerpt:

The situation that has been provoked in recent weeks by the Covid-19 is completely unprecedented. The current crisis will undoubtedly mark an important and lasting evolution of our societies, people and relationships on a global level. We too, Marianist religious, are affected by these changes. We need to think about what is going on and understand what we are called to experience and do in the midst of the crisis and after. For this, we need to exercise our intelligence and our inner gaze, our discernment. It is not an option but a duty and a necessity.

With these words, he invites the heads of Units, all the communities and all the Brothers to pray, and, according to a reflection guide proposed by the General Council, to the analysis of the current situation, in order to prepare what will arise through our attitudes and actions. The General Council proposes, in fact, to reflect on what the current crisis reveals about humanity and the usual situation of our societies; on the great desire for change that the crisis has created; and the role that our religious life should play in this situation. Pope Francis' meditation, given on March 27, 2020, in Place Saint Pierre, was also suggested as a support for reflection.

The Community of the International Seminary of Rome, in its ordinary meeting of May 19, 2020, took time for reflection and discussion, whose outline is given in the following. The COVID-19 pandemic crisis, at first glance, exposed an obvious reality that humans often find difficult to accept and integrate, namely their fragility. Man is not all powerful, as he may be tempted to believe, and he must become more humble in his way of inhabiting the earth, aware that his science alone cannot save the world. Not having the last word, man is called upon to return to God and discover his purpose for the world and

for humanity. We remember that whenever everything collapses in the Old Testament, only the Covenant remains, which, as in the New Testament, is realized in faith and loyalty to God.

For us in particular, this health crisis which surprisingly coincided with the Lenten season has made us enter more concretely into the Paschal mystery. This year we didn't just celebrate Passover as usual; we have experienced it in our own bodies conditioned by confinement, and our faith has been tested somewhat. We were also led to realize many sufferings, social inequalities in access to healthcare, education, access to technology, to employment, problems of justice and peace, so many situations of distress which had not previously captured our attention so tragically.

More than ever, this crisis invites a real change of perspective. Of course, our world needs concrete solutions but it also, and above all, needs witnesses to indicate or to propose to humanity the essentials of life. The great desire for change that the crisis gives rise to is fundamentally found in a decisive relationship to be established with the Other par excellence - God -, others and our environment, "***our common home***". Indeed, many of us have stressed that this crisis has brought people closer together, stimulating life together and the life of prayer with admirable creativity. There was like a new outlook on life, the discovery of the other as a real wealth that had to be preserved or saved at all costs. A surge of solidarity and generosity was clearly seen in the aid given to the most vulnerable, the elderly and the poor. And the sacrifice of medical personnel will be remembered as a heroic act.

The whole of humanity has realized this: "***We are all in the same boat***". The pandemic has made us all equal or better reminded us of our equal humanity. It is precisely this humanity, wanted and loved by God, which is at stake. It is towards its respect and preservation that our projects must resolutely strive.

In communion with the Church, and following the example of our founder, Fr. Chaminade, we want to remain available and open to the Spirit of God, convinced that he will inspire us with attitudes and concrete actions to be implemented. Indeed, Father Chaminade, returning from exile, received from God the grace and the **will to do something new**. Likewise, we too must not take this crisis away from reality; on the contrary, it must stimulate our faith and set in motion our creativity.

As the Superior General expresses at the end of his letter, we want to continue responding to the calls of God and of the **Virgin Mary in whose service we have placed ourselves**. We are committed to remaining more attentive to ourselves, to our loved ones, to all those entrusted to us, praying and acting for those who are suffering the most from this global pandemic.

May 2020, for the seminary community,

Br. Anselme A.



In the face of storm,