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Sr. Lilly Maria F.C.C., Chairman and President

From the Editors Desk

Editorial

There is no human being living who has ever faced a calamity as we are facing today. Yes ! I am talking about the Covid - 19 pandemic. We were caught unawares, so there was no question of preparedness. We have and are fighting an immense battle and seeing some results too but unfortunately at the cost of the lives of our unfortunate brethren who have succumbed to the deadly virus. We must remember that the whole of humanity is in this together as a global family and there is no room for words like 'You' or 'Me'. The Governments are doing their best but no program can be successful without the co-operation of 'us' - the people. The train to recovery is well on course, let us not do anything that will make it turn turtle. As Palliative Care workers, we lay a lot of stress on End of Life Care and good death. This pandemic has given a mortal blow to the concept we cherish and are propagating. Holding hands and being surrounded by family as a person passes on, appears to be in the distant

past. Lonely and frightening deaths seem to be norm. But as the saying goes 'When the going gets tough, the tough get going'. Therefore, let us be tough, let us be strong and do whatever we can, within the current limitations to help each other, to let it be known to the suffering that they are not alone. Even as we extend a virtual hand to them, there is a bigger, more benevolent and loving hand that is reaching out to us.... All we need is to look up. Let us not lose faith; for as long there is life there is hope and there is no reason to believe that this situation is in anyway different. Nothing is permanent and 'This too shall pass'. Stay strong, stay healthy, both physically and mentally, and abide by rules..... yes, this too shall pass.

I would like to thank my good friend Anita for her very insightful article on the pandemic, enumerating the ramifications, which has penetrated into every walk of our daily life. God bless!

Sr. Lalitha Teresa
Editor



Be Blessed during COVID

Anita Manuel
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I am one of the lucky ones because I am writing this article from the comfort of my home. Similarly, if you have woken up today, had a cup of coffee, greeted your family, sat down for a meal, then you are also one of the lucky ones. You are blessed if you have a job, enough money in the bank to see you through, even if you lose your job. During these uncertain times, this is not the case for thousands of people. When the first wave of Covid hit, we saw migrant workers, starving and desperate, undertake to walk across different states to get back to their villages, many dying on the way. During this second wave, the images of funeral pyres, and images of people desperately seeking hospital beds and oxygen cylinders fill our sight.

In some ways Covid has been an equalizer, laying low the rich and the poor, the old and the young, people of different religions and castes. Most of us have lost someone, if not an immediate family member, then someone in the extended circle of friends and colleagues. Many more have fallen sick and recovered. It has been a grim reminder of our shared humanity. Yet the poor still bear the brunt. Living in crowded settlements and slums, they do not have the luxury of social distance; lockdown has pushed those who were eking out a living into extremes of poverty. Meanwhile social media is full of fake messages and stories. There are stories of how covid is found

to be caused by bacteria after post mortem was carried out in Russia. These messages are forwarded even though a simple google search would show it is fake. There are messages of new covid wards being opened complete with phone numbers. Again fake. And you wonder, who are these people who in the middle of a pandemic, derive pleasure from flooding social media with false information and compounding the reigning confusion.

Disinformation and misinformation is rampant. In the middle of the pandemic, shysters are trying to take advantage of the desperate. Drugs like remdesivir is sold on the blackmarket even as WHO says that the drug has little impact. There is confusion on how the disease spreads, how it


progresses, what treatment should be given and what medicines are effective. My son took his second dose of vaccine on a Monday and fever developed on Wednesday night. Initially we thought it was delayed reaction but after two days it became clear that it was probably Covid. We started the treatment which only meant over and above the paracetamol, a few different vitamins and betadine gargle for the throat. The test showed his viral load was high. For six days the fever raged but luckily, by God's grace, his oxygen saturation remained high, and on the seventh day fever broke. He started an antibiotic to prevent secondary infections. Doctors informed us to be careful during the second week as well. By then it was known that all hospitals were stretched thin, beds with oxygen support next to impossible to get. A friend called to say her brother was admitted in a government hospital, but it was very dirty, and

was it possible to get a bed in a private hospital. It wasn't. If you got a bed, if you got treatment, you were one of the lucky ones. Being lucky began to have different meanings. If you did not get Covid, you were lucky; if you had covid but recovered without having to go to hospital, you were lucky; if you needed to be hospitalized and got a bed, you were lucky; if you survived you were lucky. If you did not have to cope with the death of a loved one, you were lucky.

For six days the fever raged but luckily, by God's grace, his oxygen saturation remained high, and on the seventh day fever broke

The old were considered especially vulnerable and in the first wave, it was the elderly that succumbed to the disease. It has been very tough for elderly folk who are living on their own without live in care and whose children are abroad or at least not close by. As difficult as it is to have to fend for themselves whether it is cooking or cleaning, the fear that if anything happens, help may not arrive can be very debilitating. And yet when I look around me, I find most of the elderly coping well with the situation, especially if they are with a family member. Their movements had already been restricted and they seem to face the small deprivations with great deal of resilience. They enjoy their small pleasures, listen to music, or read, or talk to their friends over the phone.

(Continued...)



As an educator, I wonder what is going to happen to the students. Here again, as classes go online, the digital divide has created more fault lines. It was a major challenge for the faculty across schools and colleges to digitalize their content, learn new techniques and master technology to make online classes interesting and interactive. They rose to the challenge but online learning has many lacuna. Even at the premier engineering college where I teach, thirty percent of students do not have a laptop. Earlier they studied and experimented using the campus computers and the machines in other labs. Now they find, that their phones do not support software. Most students buy an expensive phone as a status symbol but do not invest in a laptop and now the reckoning is on them, at a time when family incomes have nosedived. In spite of all the myriad webinars, virtual labs, ideathons and hackathons, students are not learning experientially as they could have, should have.

There are students who have been proactive, who are focused and determined but the majority are not. They are distracted and stressed, one day blurring into another. Most of all they miss interacting with each other. They are isolated, and they become less and less interactive. Almost every student I talk to, speaks of being bored, unable to focus. They don't pay attention during online classes, and then they feel unproductive. A feeling of blah which a New York Times article described as "languishing". It wasn't burn out, it wasn't depression, but you felt joyless and aimless. It's an absence of wellbeing. Compared to the fear and loss of life that Covid has brought in its wake, this may seem not important. But it is large scale and it needs to be addressed. Maybe by putting a name to what we are feeling, by finding something that brings us joy. Lots of working professionals are doing exactly that. Even as they juggle house work without maids, and work from home, many are finding relief in learning to cook or starting a terrace garden.

For children in schools and colleges, there is a pervasive feeling of loss. Learning does not happen in the classrooms alone; it happens in corridors, on the campus grounds, as you talk, laugh, and play. Learning is not just facts and figures, but skills and values learnt in myriad ways through interaction, observation, through organizing and participating. Online learning has both shrunk

and expanded their world. When students return to the campus, when they seek a job, who knows how many will be found wanting. And worse when children return to schools, how many of them would have been orphaned. A great responsibility rests on the shoulders of teachers to create a nurturing atmosphere when these children enter their classrooms.

And what happens to children whose parents have lost their jobs. Who will pay their fees? Will they get expelled from schools and colleges? In a professional college, the amounts are not small. The government cannot put the burden on the educational institutions and ask them to waive the fees. They need to step in and offer to pay the amount to these institutions so they can in turn pay the teachers. There were stories of teachers selling vegetables, teachers working as labourers. How will this economic burden be met? The children need to attend classes now. They don't have the luxury of waiting for the economy to improve. It is a deluge of problems.

Emotional wellbeing has become a top priority, as everyone is stressed in one way or the other. For the doctors, nurses, and healthworkers, the strain has been enormous. We owe them a huge debt of gratitude but the toll on them is severe. To be working long stressful hours, losing patients whom they have been fighting to save, with the spectre of contracting the disease hanging over them, we wonder who is looking after their mental health. On another front, we read physical and emotional abuse is on the rise as the victim is locked into the same space as the abuser. For those whose home is not a safe space, this lockdown is the worst nightmare.

So, during these times, let us look at what we have. If we are confined with our loved ones at home, let us feel blessed. Many are lying in hospitals with only one thought, when they can go home. I have just read a lovely message, from Pope Francis: Make your house a place of worship – pray, meditate, thank and plead. Make your house a party – listen to music, sing, and dance. Make your home a school – read, write, learn, draw, and paint. What wonderful words to reflect upon.

Let us also reach out to each other, so that this dark period is lit by a new renaissance of all that is humane and heroic. May all of us be blessed, and be a blessing to others.



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WASH YOUR HANDS TO WIPE AWAY CORONA

MEDIMIX
SINCE 1959

Washes away germs,
Not your health

50
Year



Scan this QR code on your Smart Phone to view the Jeevodaya Anthem on YouTube

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