**Reflections on Covid- 19**

Taking Stock or Stockpiling?

**We should use this time of national and personal ‘hibernation’ to take stock, say *Professor Declan Marmion* and *Ann Guinee* of the Theology Faculty at St. Patrick’s College, Maynooth. They believe that the Government’s “Save Lives – Stay at Home” instruction, is also an inner call: to be at home in our own hearts, to seek peace with ourselves, with God with others, and with our world.**

Covid 19 has disrupted our lifestyles, our work, and our way of communicating with each other. The initial impulse to stockpile whether it was toilet rolls or hand sanitizer was a balm of sorts. Happily, that has now subsided.

We’ve all adjusted our routines. And a striking benefit of having to slow down and spend more time in our homes, is that it gives us a chance to reflect. What or who is ultimately important for me? Where is my life going? What are my values? An Italian priest put it well: ‘the chasm of this empty and slowly-moving time invites us, incurable workaholics that we are, to tranquillity and silence, to previously neglected family conversations, to the nourishment of reading, and, above all, to a period of introspection.’

This time of national and personal ‘hibernation’ provides us with an opportunity to take stock. This is especially true when we see a loved one who is suffering or who has died.

It makes us reach out – if not physically – to connect with our loved ones. The cruel irony of the pandemic is not lost on us: never have we so needed and depended on each other, yet never have we been so obliged to stay apart. Staying at home is the new way of loving our neighbour.

From a faith perspective, the Christian response can range from Jesus’s cry of abandonment on the cross: ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’ to his act of entrustment: ‘Father, into your hands I commend my spirit’. The resurrection of Jesus grounds our hope that we too will triumph over suffering and death. ‘*In the risen Jesus*, Pope Francis says, *life conquered death… It is a hope that does not disappoint*.’ God never gives up on his creation.

Will some good come from this crisis? Right now we see a huge outpouring of solidarity with those who are working on the front lines – our health professionals and those providing essential services. All this has brought us closer together in a common cause. Let us hope the atmosphere of solidarity and sacrifice will continue when normality is restored.

For his part, Pope Francis, in his recent *Urbi et orbi* meditation, delivered to the world from an eerily empty St. Peter’s Square, spoke of how the pandemic exposes *‘our vulnerability and uncovers those false and superfluous certainties around which we have constructed our daily schedules’* and lays bare *‘all those attempts to anesthetize ourselves’.*

Francis believes *‘this time of trial’* is *‘a time of choosing… what matters and what passes away, a time to separate what is necessary from what is not. It is a time to get our lives back on track with regard to you, Lord, and to others.’*

This crisis has also been interpreted in an ecological and evolutionary perspective as an effort by nature to sustain the planet which human beings have been over-using and under nourishing. Perhaps now, without our busy schedules, work deadlines and travel plans, we can rediscover the innocence that once motivated our child-like joy, appreciation and trust in this world on which we depend.

In these unusual times there has been a greater opportunity for a return to that simpler life. We have the time to explore the world again, whether by simply watching the birds from a chair in the garden or exploring paths and fields within the 2 kms radius of our homes that, unbelievably, we have never ventured along before.

In an urge to climb over a locked gate to see what path less travelled lies behind it, or a joyful desire to pick cowslips and skim stones in the river, we are drawing again on our creativity and on what God has gracefully made us a partner to – that creativity in nature and in the world around us.

And what is a child but utterly dependent, a taker of what is graciously offered, a maker of joy out of small things, one who trusts. In becoming again children in this world, we renew our status as children of God, hopefully maturing under His guidance in proper understanding of our duties to this shared world.

By God’s grace in these extraordinary times, we may retrieve our deepest faith.