

From crisis to conversion

An invitation to a more humane world

The International Specialised Catholic Action Movements (Miacs) represent more than 500 movements around the world with a great diversity of countries, cultures and backgrounds. Since the beginning of the Covid pandemic we have been reflecting together on this crisis and wish to share some thoughts and actions.

The crisis aggravates situations and destabilises.

The pandemic has brutally aggravated pre-existing problems: unemployment, inequalities between gender, between rich and poor, within and between countries, and domestic violence. Various needs including access to healthcare, social security, working conditions, health, food, education, reception of migrants are growing as is the visibility of these problems and the national debt.

The pandemic has made these situations unbearable, as illustrated by the reports of IYCW on the impact of Covid on young workers, FIMARC on farmers and fisherfolk, and MIDADE on the living conditions of children. A system that fails to solve these problems or to prevent them from worsening, needs to change.

The pandemic has caused personal destabilisation, complicated the relationships and blocked projects owing to uncertainty about the future. Destabilisation at a collective level has also occurred. In these circumstances, can GDP growth remain the reference? Can we still believe in ongoing progress after the pandemic? It has changed the way people look at things, e.g. the kinds of employment that sustain society.

The springs seem to be broken. More than just a crisis, the pandemic has created a new situation, the effects of which are still unknown. We are experiencing a key moment that calls for change. But what change? And what will the fundamental basis of it be?

Conversions are necessary

This situation seriously threatens the respect that each person is owed. In order to overcome this, a conversion is needed, both personal and structural, an inner change. But what kind of change?

There is also another virus that continues to undermine our collective capacity for decision making, namely the rejection of the other because of nationalism, racism or indifference, withdrawal into self-interest or an unlimited desire for wealth or power, fake news, or reducing the human person to simply a producer and a consumer.

In order to combat these viruses we need to move away from a materialistic paradigm where the human is perceived simply as a means, towards a global (holistic) paradigm that integrates all aspects of life and where the human being is the priority. Legislation and technical progress are necessary but not sufficient. It is necessary to invest in human development for all. This means developing the capacity to dialogue and cooperate with the other, the weak and even the enemy, and, rather than relying on personal self-interest, supporting the things that give meaning to life and fostering commitment to what is beyond us.

All decisions therefore need to be evaluated in light of their impact on human development. An electronic network is a form of technical progress but it also becomes a human regression if it is used to disseminate messages of hatred. Climate change requires an ecological conversion. A conversion of all human activity is also required, especially in the relationship to the other, and to the universal.

At the service of the human development.

How do these transformations take place? Change is always difficult, but there are certain situations that are powerful enough to overcome resistance and lead to change in the hierarchy of values. For example, collective crises such as Covid, call for a reconsideration of both personal behaviour and societal priorities.

But this is not enough because crises can bring out either the best or the worst. To make this human development possible, this human journey needs to be accompanied by a transformation of structures. Conversion must be both personal and structural.



MIAMSI





Personal conversions that initiate change

The current crisis is a call for change to all. The contribution of our movements is to promote human development in the spirit of the Gospel, through everything that catalyses awareness and conversions, at the international and local levels. Here are a few examples:

Creating solidarity

- Food distribution in India to vulnerable people (MIJARC India)
- Solidarity campaign for young workers in the Amazon region (IYCW Peru)
- Partnership and payment of children's school fees (MIAMSI Lebanon).
- Transfer of knowledge between generations (FIMARC Kenya, Bolivia, Sri Lanka)

Support

- Community life to accompany people in times of crisis. (MIAMSI)
- Accompanying changes in international institutions. (MIACS)
- Drawing, singing, reading, playing, praying to break isolation. (MIDADE Peru)
- Platforms for exchanges between young students on educational conditions (IYCS-UNICEF)

A change of perspective

- Proposing experiences, changing the way to look at things and opening up to global solidarity.
- Valuing family farming even in the contexts of conflicts over access to land (FIMARC Paraguay).
- Campaigns, e.g. "Beyond the masks," against stereotypes and discrimination (CIJOC France)

And lasting structural conversions.

The necessary conversions are not only personal. They are also about relations between people and with the environment, modes of organisation, the laws that govern living together, the collective values of the different environments: companies, financial organisations, etc.

Everything must be at the service of the common good, solidarity and justice in order to achieve a dignified life for all. The expected fruits of these conversions include the following:

- Food, housing, dignified work for all.
- Access to land and other productive resources for sustainable agricultural production and to the sea for fishing in a way that respects the planet.
- Effective social protection and solidarity for all throughout the world.
- Infrastructure for education, public transportation, access to electricity and the Internet for equal opportunities and participation of all in social life.
- A recognition of "care" activities (health, support, education, etc.), in particular by wages, statutes and working conditions.
- Activities (consumption, transport, production...) that do not exhaust non sustainable resources and do not pollute the planet.
- The responsibility of all to finance the common good according to their financial capacities, in particular the digital giants, and to put an end to tax evasion and corruption.

Final call

This crisis is a call for conversions and changes to make the world more humane. It will be a herald of good news if we manage to achieve the necessary transformations together. 08/12/2020

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