

COVID Reflection #3

“There is a need for a new Copernican revolution that puts the economy at the service of men and women...”

~ Pope Francis

In the courtyard of our House there is a statue of Nicholas Copernicus. He was a Pole, born in 1473 and died in 1543. He is best known for Heliocentrism, the theory that the sun is the centre of the solar system. Earlier belief was that the earth was the centre. Through his studies in Poland and Italy he discovered something that was a revolutionary idea for its time. For this reason this astronomer and mathematician was criticized and condemned, like another Galileo. We know that today we all believe in Heliocentrism.

In this third meeting we heard the words of Pope Francis in front of the Diplomatic Corps at the Holy See, *"There is a need for a new Copernican revolution that puts the economy at the service of men and women, and not vice versa ... one that brings life not death, one that is inclusive and not exclusive, humane and not inhuman, one that cares for the environment and not ruin"*.

These words of the Pope reflect many of his teachings in two of his works, Laudate Si and Fratelli Tutti, presenting a vision of the world that is integrative and comprehensive, recognizing the relationship between nature, humanity, and the Creator's intention.

If we understand the impact of the Copernican revolution, we can imagine that in the mind of Pope Francis we are in the midst of another revolution, driven by this pandemic crisis. This time it is not about planets, but about our human nature, and what matters to us. During this time we have discovered, out of necessity, what truly matters to us, and what we have always thought we 'need' to live and be happy. The Pope paints a new picture of humanity and the world - *"living ... inclusive ... humane ... and caring for the environment"*.

A general result of many people during this time of crisis is a revision of priorities, attitudes, and real 'needs'. We have experienced at the personal level, at the family level, at the church level, at the national level, and at the international level. Perhaps, in some respects, it has produced a Copernican revolution.

In the political and economic world there has been much discussion about how to deal with the crisis, unhappily sometimes without a view toward the common good, or this vision of the Pope, but rather to stimulate the economy at the price of human life and the common good. Even some politicians have said that the elderly who care about the future of their grandchildren should be willing to put themselves at risk by abandoning the rules established by the state to protect the population, particularly the most vulnerable - the elderly, the sick, and especially the existing conditions that put them at risk of coronavirus. The future of the grandchildren - and the world - has to be much more than economic, but in harmony with Christian values. That is, as the Pope says, *"to put the economy at the service of men and*

women, and not vice versa ... one that brings ... death ... exclusivity ... inhumanity ... and the ruin of the environment". As followers of Christ we need to make this difference in the world, starting with our attitudes and statements.

In Fratelli Tutti Pope Francis offers us several words to reflect on:

"Article 179: Global society suffers from serious deficiencies that cannot be resolved by piecemeal or quick fixes. Much must change, through fundamental reform and major renewal.

Article 180: Recognizing that all are our brothers and sisters, and seeking forms of social friendship that include all, is only a utopia. It demands a decisive commitment to an effective means to this end. Any effort along these lines becomes a noble exercise of charity. When individuals can help others in need, then we join in initiating social processes of fraternity and justice for all, they enter the 'field of charity in a broad, so-called political charity'. This means working for a social and political order whose soul is social charity. Again, I ask for a renewed appreciation of politics as 'a high vocation and one of the highest forms of charity, because it seeks the common good.

Article 182: Social charity makes us love the common good, which makes us effectively seek the good of all people, considering not only individuals or private persons, but also the social dimension that unites them.

Article 183: Social love makes possible the advancement of a civilization of love, to which we can all feel called. Charity, with its impulse to universality, is capable of building a new world.

Article 185: Charity needs the light of truth which we constantly seek. That light is the light of reason and the light of faith' and does not admit any form of relativism. ... When the good of others is at stake, good intentions are not enough. Concrete efforts must be made to bring about what they and their nations need for their development.

Article 105: Individualism does not make us freer, more equal, more fraternal. ... Radical individualism is a virus that is extremely difficult to eliminate, because it is cunning. It makes us believe that everything consists in giving freedom to one's own ambitions, as if seeking greater ambitions and creating a secure network that in one way or another would serve the common good.

These words present us with a challenge to be part of a Copernican revolution inspired by the teachings of Christ. We believe as people of faith that God has the answer, the remedy to the current situation in which we live, and in which we have entered together in the pandemic. But, it is his hope that (as we have seen before) that we will emerge from the crisis better than before, by the choices we make.

I find it significant that the Pope says, "*Social charity makes us love the common good*". I believe that, according to him, this social charity is "*living ... inclusive ... and humane*". It is not a charity to the beggar, or out of obligation, but it is an expression of gratitude and love toward God for all his blessings and graces. This charity goes beyond family, friends and colleagues, and to acquaintances, to the stranger and - as in the case of the Good Samaritan - the last on our list. The idea of the common good has become very evident during this time of crisis, people collaborating and making sacrifices (sometimes annoying and uncomfortable) for the good of all. This is not only the responsibility of government authorities, but of everyone. They can

set the rules and the circumstances, but it depends on the good will and obedience of each one.

In a speech the Pope has identified several biblical characters for reflection during this time. We have already seen the Good Samaritan and Noah. Today I want to mention Lazarus, Jesus' friend in Bethany. He is known not only as the brother of Martha and Mary, but more for being resurrected by Jesus. Here, I want to introduce a distinction made by Canadian Oblate priest Ron Rolheiser, in his book The Holy Longing. The Quest for a Christian Spirituality. (1998). He speaks of a 'resuscitated' life and a 'resurrected' life. Jesus has raised Lazarus from the dead, giving him a life, a new beginning one might say. It was not just 'resuscitating' him, as we see in the movies when they apply electric paddles to someone whose heart has ceased to beat. We do not need 'quick fixes', "piecemeal or quick fixes", but profound changes in attitude, behaviour, and even legislation. This would be a Copernican revolution. It will not be easy to create "*a civilization of love, to which we can all feel called*". But with God's inspiration and grace we will be able to realize this dream that reflects the intention of the giver, God, who has given us life, and a life of sharing and solidarity.

I believe that each of us, as we emerge from this crisis, will have to ask ourselves if we have done our part in a Copernican revolution, creating a family, a Church and a world more "*living... inclusive... humane... and caring for the environment*".

~ Fr. Paul Voisin, CR

(Superior General, Congregation of the Resurrection)