

What Will You and I Do So That the Day After the Pandemic Is a Day Full of Hope?

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I send you warm greetings from Guatemala. I thank UPF and its founder, the Honorable Mother Moon for her kind invitation to participate in this International Summit Council for Peace and Rally of Hope. I want to tell you a true story. A deadly disease hit; experts say it started in the East and then spread throughout the world. There was panic in the streets and governments did not know what to do, so they began to cancel events, suspend activities and close cities. The economy collapsed and people realized the fragility of humanity.

How familiar does this story sound to you? This happened one thousand, eight hundred years ago. We call it the Antonine Plague or Smallpox, which hit the Roman Empire in the second century of the common era. This means that this is not the first time that humanity has faced diseases like COVID-19.

If I asked you, what do you want the dawn of the day after the pandemic to be like? How would you answer me? While you think about that, let's review history. In the second century, smallpox hit humanity. At that time, the Roman Empire had two Emperors, Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus. The latter died from the plague, so Marcus Aurelius had to rule alone from that moment on. Rome had just won a major battle against the Parthians, but that victory turned into a terrible tragedy as the legionaries brought smallpox home with them, killing one third of the empire's population.

What did the rulers and the citizens of those times do to overcome these terrible evils? First, they stayed healthy by isolating themselves in their houses and cities, which worked. They realized, though, that it was a temporary solution, because economic activity had to continue, so they arranged for people to travel to other cities with the condition of waiting forty days in isolation days before entering a city to carry out activities. "Forty days" is precisely where the term "quarantine" comes from. The second thing they did was to summon the best professionals. Emperor Marco Aurelio called Galen, the best doctor of the time, to lead the fight against smallpox.

The third thing Marcus Aurelius did was redirect the Empire's budget. History shows that at that time Rome did not undertake any civil construction projects and that the budget was allocated to help the most vulnerable. Marcus Aurelius did not increase the government debt, on the contrary, he decided to auction assets of the empire, including personal assets to assist and help those most in need.

We might ask today, How long will the quarantine last? And after the quarantine, will the virus have disappeared? Obviously not. Then we better appeal to people's intelligence, so that they practice peaceful coexistence and thus preserve their life and health, because as dangerous as a disease is, running away from it will not make it disappear. Emperor Lucius Verus fled from Aquileia during the Smallpox Plague but died anyway because the disease reached him.

Couples reach a point when two simple questions come to mind: How long will you stay with me? Should I simply prepare coffee, or should I prepare for life? The eradication of smallpox, which plagued humanity in the second century did not happen until the twentieth century. We may have the coronavirus for a long time. Yes, we must attack it, but we also must learn to live with it. In order to reach a conclusion, I will quote Marcus Aurelius: "Adapt yourselves to the things among which your lot has been cast and love sincerely the fellow creatures with whom destiny has ordained that you shall live."

Let us reflect and progress

I have come to some conclusions. First, this "lucky" generation faced Covid-19 with scientific and technological advances that humanity has never had before. Let us adapt to living with "social distancing" and improving our hygiene. Let us take advantage of technology to inform people about and encourage intelligent coexistence. Let us demonstrate true love toward others, with solidarity, fairness, equality and justice for all.

Second, we cannot ask everyone to stay locked in their houses because governments will not be able to subsidize food and sustenance for the entire population, much less continuously, if no one is producing goods or paying taxes. People will not be able to subsist.

They will have to go out to work and produce, maintaining the protective measures. Third, encouraging news has come of a vaccine, which is why all governments and leaders globally must advocate that it be free for all people, that in the case of pandemics, vaccine manufacturers practice solidarity toward humanity before profit, and that the government bears the cost of medicines for their citizens, aiming at the preservation of life.

With family and God

Now, I will tell you what I would like at the dawn of the "day after" this pandemic: I would like a blue sky with a radiant sun that illuminates the whole of humanity, giving hope in life to children, young people and the elderly, and that together, hand-in-hand we follow a path toward health, prosperity and love. What will you and I do so that the day after is a day full of hope?

To conclude, I want us to acknowledge the effort of Mother Moon, who along with her leadership promotes peace, family and integration of the world, with a message of a united family, based on love and fidelity. It is meritorious to recognize that in this grim time of a pandemic, when everything has stopped, Mother Moon is leading this International Summit and Rally for Peace for development, prosperity and interdependence under the flag of the family, under blessings from God.

I also wish that within this year, 2020, during which we commemorate the seventieth anniversary of the beginning of the Korean War, this summit and rally will inspire the Korean people to raise the flag of reunification and allow the reunion of ten million separated families. The reunification of Korea would undoubtedly be the beginning of the restoration of peace in North Asia and a good model for the reestablishment of peace throughout the world. Thank you all very much for your attention. To UPF and the Honorable Mother Moon, thank you very much for your invitation to participate in this International Summit for Peace. God bless you.