

*The lessons learned from the **Pandemic***

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Among the most shared hopes for the new year just begun, there is, without doubt, the wish to be freed from the worst effects and limitations brought on by the pandemic, over these last thirty-four months, on our freedom. A freedom, however, that does not mean a forgetting of what happened, but, rather, a treasuring of the terrible experience and turning it into an occasion of inner richness. This was the wish and hope of his holiness Pope Francis expressed in his Message for the 56th World Day of Peace that we celebrated on 1 January 2023.

"The greatest lesson we learned from Covid-19," Pope Francis wrote, "was the realization that we all need one another. That our greatest and yet most fragile treasure is our shared humanity as brothers and sisters, children of God. And that none of us can be saved alone."

Thanks to this trial, to which all humanity has been and still is subjected, although now to a much lesser extent, "we also learned that the trust we put in progress, technology and the effects of globalization was not only excessive, but turned into an individualistic and idolatrous in-

toxication, compromising the very promise of justice, harmony and peace that we so ardently sought."

We rediscovered, in ourselves and our neighbour, sentiments that we believed by now forgotten from the horizon of our consciences such as a chastened humility and solidarity that "made us more sensitive to the suffering of others and more responsive to their needs," an altruism that "in some cases proved truly heroic..., by all those people who worked tirelessly to help everyone emerge from the crisis and its turmoil as best they could."

So we cannot and must not now waste this re-acquisition of this human value that we obtained at a very dear price of suffering, fear, mourning and death. The "lessons" of the pandemic must begin to bear fruit right now, as we prepare to return to a normality, which we should rebuild differently from the one we left behind. "The time has come for all of us to endeavour to heal our society and our planet, to lay the foundations for a more just and peaceful world, and to commit ourselves seriously to pursuing a good that is truly common,"

Pope Francis exhorts us, and

does not fail to make more explicit the guidelines to be followed to achieve this goal: "We must revisit the issue of ensuring public health for all. We must promote actions that enhance peace and put an end to the conflicts and wars that continue to spawn poverty and death. We urgently need to join in caring for our common home and in implementing clear and effective measures to combat climate change. We need to battle the virus of inequality and to ensure food and dignified labour for all, supporting those who lack even a minimum wage and find themselves in great difficulty. The scandal of entire peoples starving remains an open wound. We also need to develop suitable policies for welcoming and integrating migrants and those whom our societies discard." What we are experiencing is not only an opportunity, but it is the only possibility to "build a new world and contribute to the extension of His kingdom, which is a kingdom of love, justice and peace." This is my wish for 2023 and for the years that will follow it. ❤️

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