

## **Editorial**

The previous issue of Dare, ‘**Faith Seeking Understanding**’, provided a collection of theological reflections which served the purpose of deepening faith, via a clear comprehension of the Christian faith. Nevertheless, while deliberating and reflecting the direction this edition should take, the Editorial Board of Dare would not be indifferent to the impact and effects of the novel COVID-19 pandemic and natural disasters in our midst. In his encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti* – a letter on Fraternity and Social Friendship, the Holy Father, Pope Francis begins by stating that Saint Francis of Assisi “felt himself a brother to the sun, the sea and the wind, yet he knew that he was even closer to those of his own flesh” (2). The worldwide tragedy, COVID-19 pandemic has by showing no exclusivity momentarily revived the fundamental value that we are really a global community (32). Likewise, other disasters like Cyclones Idai and Kenneth, floods, landslides, among other calamities awakened us from slumber to realise our need and concern for the other and the environment. Thus, the pandemic and calamities broke all racial, tribal, cultural, economic, social, and religious barriers and demarcations. They revealed once more the ineluctable and critical awareness to live in harmony with each other and our environment. As such, inspired by the awareness that we are a global community, this year’s edition, **Continuity and Novelty Amidst Challenges: COVID-19 and Natural Disasters** seeks to reflect deeper on the impact and effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and natural disasters on human lives, faith and evangelisation as Christians. Hence, different contributors to this present edition confirm that the presence of the pandemic in our midst has indubitably taught and still call humanity to adopt new styles of life and new means of evangelisation.

The articles in this issue take various theological dimensions and so they are divided into five parts: Sacred Scriptures, Ecclesiology and Missiology, Fundamental Moral Theology, Christian Anthropology and Environmental issues. The first section of the journal offers topics on Sacred Scriptures. From this section we encounter how Sacred Scriptures would chiefly assist us in understanding humanity in the midst of COVID-19. Essentially, from a scriptural viewpoint, one would wonder if parallels can be drawn between Covid-19 pandemic and epidemics found

in the Hebrew Bible. **Pat Mullins** explores **what the Bible might have to Say about Covid-19**. As such, he begins by asserting that Covid-19 is a recently identified virus and there was no exact equivalent in Biblical times. He highlights that epidemics of different kinds were known in those times, however, and parallels can be drawn between some of the symptoms, effects and short-term or long-term consequences of those epidemics and the current situation resulting from Covid-19. Accordingly, he shows such parallels.

From another scriptural perspective, the Book of Job deals with various questions such as theodicy, the justice of the Lord, suffering of just persons and retribution. As a result, this book is very relevant in today's world as it touches on contemporary problems. It is in this light that **Underson Musina** discusses the possible contribution of the Book of Job to the pastoral care of the sick, particularly the Covid-19 patients. Ultimately, the author highlights that the most important suggestion from the book is that sickness (Covid-19 included) comes not as a punishment from God and that God heals and restores his people at his appointed time in his own way. In the article, **COVID-19 and the Mark of the Beast in the Book of Revelation**, **Tadios Mandava** tries to find out whether or not there is a link between the 'mark of the beast' mentioned in the Book of Revelation 13:16-18 and the Coronavirus vaccine. He argues that recently, some people would want to believe that there is a fulfilment of the vision of John at Patmos. Arguing further, he states that there are several interpretations given so far to the meaning of the beast represented by the number '666'. Some of the interpretations pursue their own agendas which are far from the context from which this biblical text was written. Against this backdrop, he aims at providing a detailed exegesis as to the meaning of the "mark of the beast". In this piece of work, he proves how the number '666' came to be. **Lefani Francis Mwanza** explores the various meanings of **wound in The Spiritual Canticle of St. John of the Cross**, noting that John uses a number of images as symbols to communicate the realities of the Spiritual Journey. Wound as a symbol in The Spiritual Canticle has a plurality of meanings and this project only concentrated on four of these meanings. The author shows how John transforms complicated and complex concepts of the Spiritual Life into

beautiful, comprehensible and applicable themes through poetry rich in symbolism.

The second section deals with issues to do with Ecclesiology and Missiology. The articles reflect on the responsibility of the Church in the midst of the current challenges and offer some recommendations with regard to how humanity can continue practicing their faith in moments of different challenges. As it is the Church's mandate to read the signs of the times, there is a need for adopting new ways of evangelising. Subsequently, one of the roles of the Church in this current Covid-19 pandemic is being the **physician of the soul**. The medical practitioners are glorified during this period but spiritual physicians are rarely recognised. Using the writing of St Gregory De Fuga, **Dr. Sigurd Lefsrud** points out that there is a need to strike a balance between the safety of the body and spiritual matters. He states that during this Covid-19 era caring of the body is vital; however, the caring of the soul should not be overlooked. He acknowledges the physical harm that has been brought by Covid-19 pandemic and goes further to question the spiritual harm it has caused also. He then asserts that the Church has a role of being a witness of hope, courage, trust in God and it should continue being the physician of the souls through her ministers.

Discussing on the effects of Covid-19 pandemic the authors, **Shumba Sibiziwe (Dr)**, **Mswazie Jonathan ((Dr)**, and **Mpofu Moly (Dr)**, note that on the one hand, negatively Covid-19 has affected religious belief and practices institutionally together with their ritual aspects such as worship, sacramental life, birth and marriage rites in Matabeleland South Province of Zimbabwe. They argue further that Covid-19 has also affected religious beliefs and practices in a doctrinal, spiritual, emotional and psychological way. On the other hand, positively, the pandemic has led some religions to draw closer to the Supreme Being as their members are praying and fasting for the end of the catastrophe. The authors concluded by giving some recommendations and encouraging Christians and African Traditional Religion members to continue trusting in God as he is omnipotence. **Lovemore Gutu** explores the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Church's vocation to evangelize. He recognises the importance of social media in carrying out the pastoral care of the people of God, and

also points out some of the difficulties some local Churches are facing in that regard. The author, therefore, suggests that **Small Christian Communities** should become more operational now than ever before. In her article, **Dr. Annah Shamiso Mandeya** points out the trauma the Covid-19 has brought into the lives of people, both socially and spiritually. She also highlights the problem of stigmatization the victims of the pandemic are facing in their families. She, therefore, suggests that humanity should learn from the remarkable resilience of HIV, by way of living with the Covid-19, and embracing the various challenges that come along with it. In order to mitigate such challenges, the Church has to find a way to be close to her members. History has it that the Church as an institute has been viewed as a hub of love, unity and harmony, among other aspects. **Dr. Doreen Mashava** holds this same idea as she discusses **the relevance of the Church as an institution in the modern world**. She asserts that the Church is a family which is an important cell of society since it is there to promote harmony. The Church as mother is there to nurture her children, give them counsel and strength on how to deal with various contemporary challenges such as the Covid-19 pandemic.

Over the years, several Popes expounded the Catholic Social Teaching through various encyclicals. One such encyclical is the *Mater et Magistra* by Pope John XXIII (1961). As such, **Annah Kembo** in her article **the role of the Church's Magisterium in the development of social thought** discusses the role of the Magisterium in the development of the social thought, in light of *Mater et Magistra*. She reflects mainly about social justice and the Church's role, as Mother and Teacher, in safeguarding human dignity in the society. Also, many families in Zimbabwe have been affected by a number of challenges, and these include, unity, love and respect, to mention but a few. According to **Gift B Chinyadza**, these challenges impacted immensely on some foundational values of family life. Hence, understanding the doctrine of the Most Holy Trinity according to Augustine would help one to know how God relates to humanity and how in turn humanity relates to God and to others who were created by the same Triune God. As such, the author explores Augustine's theological understanding of the Holy Trinity focusing on the unity and distinction of the Three Persons of the Trinity and applies it to family life

in Zimbabwe. Furthermore, the perfect unity understood as modelled on the unity that exists in the Blessed Trinity, according to **Tichafa Enias Shara**, is critical in the **understanding of pluralism, ecumenism and religious dialogue**. The author states that the Blessed Trinity is not only united, but promotes the same unity, communion, communication, collaboration, coexistence, diversity and functional differences. In fact, the unity of the Godhead is demonstrated in every aspect of life.

**Precious Nihorowa** discusses how synodality can be regarded as a model of the Church today. He affirms that the Synod of bishops plays an important role in ecclesiastical life as it is there to deliberate on vital issues of either faith, morals or discipline in the Church. He argues that **Synodality** allows members of the Church to participate fully in her life and allows the Church to listen and continue learning. He then states that there are, however, also challenges to Synodality as it is regarded as a 'threat' to the magisterium. Peace and harmony are critical aspects for humanity. **Shelton Sylvester Zimondi** in the article, **Principles of Interreligious Dialogue: Bridging a Relations Gap Between the Roman Catholic Church and the Zimbabwean State** discusses how the principles of interreligious dialogue (IRD) can actually help bridge a relations gap that exists between the Catholic Church and the Zimbabwean state. He argues that all that the parties have to do is to ensure that they enter into dialogue ready to learn, committed, without preconceptions and prejudices. Trust, self-critical, honesty and sincerity are also critical elements in authentic dialogue. Unequivocally, through the educative, informative and personal aspects of the principles of IRD the relations gap between the Catholic Church and the state would be resolved or narrowed down. Moreover, **Sheasby Gondo** argues that African Traditional Religion (ATR) has not been studied *sui generis* considering the deliberate and systematic efforts of missionaries to wipe it out as they consider it incompatible with Christianity. He argues that missionaries judged ATR based on Christianity's standards of interpretation, focusing on rudimentary aspects of ATR. As such, he proposes that IRD can assist in forming an informed and better understanding of ATR and change the perception and attitude towards it. Nevertheless, **Simbarashe Shepherd Marundu** in his paper, **Mandela a Modern Christian Father** deciphered that with

the development of the Church, Martyrdom was redefined to go beyond the shedding of blood as the single criterion of identifying martyrs in the Church. Henceforth, he identifies the late former President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela as a modern Christian martyr because of being an icon of forgiveness and reconciliation, his love for the poor and the ability to engage the international community for peace's sake. For the author, these qualities merit Mandela a fitting modern Christian father.

The third section of the articles in this issue, tackles in various ways issues relating to Fundamental Moral Theology. **Swithern Chinhema** argues that **Ethical Medical Research is an Imperative for African Countries** such that Africa must wake up and make it a priority. He argues that there are serious health needs in Africa which need effective health solutions but without compromising the morality and human dignity. He suggests that operations and considerations in health systems are, however, to be informed by the UBUNTU ethics. In conclusion, he asserts that if African countries invest in medical research, Africa will be better prepared to tackle national, regional, and global disasters and pandemics such as the COVID-19 and reduce their human cost. Another, is the aspect of online abuse. Due to COVID-19, physical learning in schools has ceased forcing almost all the education systems to carry out their learning on the internet. This has since been introduced to online exposure even to children as young as four years old. It is in this light that **Theresa P. Sanyatwe** argues that online learning has become a new revolution in the teaching and learning field with increased chances of children to be abused online. Hence, she discusses possible online abuses and recommends that in order to safeguard children from online predators and to know the course of action to take when an abuse has happened, parents, caregivers and educators need to be educated in digital literacy.

**Adam Mukabva** in his paper, **Evaluates the morality of Sex Education in School Curriculum**. He discusses the merits and dangers of sex education in school. In his discussion he states that given that sex education is offered to the right group at the right time it can reduce all problems that have to do with immoral issues. Nonetheless, there have always been critiques to sex education that it arouses the desire in students to experiment what they learn and thus, promoting sexual

immorality which it seeks to end. He, therefore, concludes that there are both positives and negatives to this issue. Still on sexual moral issues, **Jean Benjamin Yavo Doffou** commented on **Pope John Paul II's statement that "contraception and abortion are fruits of the same tree, and are hallmarks of a culture of death"**. He comments that science and medicine established the use of contraceptives as well as promoting abortion, with some even going to an extreme that the use of contraceptives reduces the occurrences of abortion. To substantiate his view, he cites Pope Paul VI in his *Humanae Vitae*. In conclusion, he affirms both contraceptives and abortion to be evil for they are against the propagation of life. **Guidance Mungazi** takes a comprehensive look at how social Christian morality is the most effective way to realize **social progress**. He puts much emphasis on the importance of Christian morality, its values, objectives and how they shape social progress. He notes, however, that there is global evidence to show that when there are no Christian values, worse moral decadence prevails. For instance, the Nazi, USSR and the Venezuela who ended up slaughtering millions of innocent souls. Ultimately, he looks at how Christian social morality have been beneficial to the world in many ways including reducing slavery, human trafficking, ethnic and national strife, among other aspects. **Mark Tawengwa Chandavengerwa** in his article shows that business is inextricably tied to environmental issues. Citing pollution as one dilemma. He further reveals that environmental ethics presents us with a variety of views with regard to our moral responsibility. As such, he analyses some moral dilemmas in environmental responsibility by forwarding three distinct moral theories concerning the environment. He shows, however, that these theories have their strengths and weaknesses. Hence, he proposes a fourth "theory," **Shona ecology**, and highlights that this "theory" may provide a viable alternative if it is modified to suit the current environment. He argues that it is mostly valuable for its notion that "nature is sacred."

The fourth section of the articles herein reflect on Christian Anthropological issues. **Jean Gaëtan Nyurahayo** in his article, **God, Science, and Covid-19: A Threesome at Work from a Nietzschean Perspective** argues that in the face of global pandemics such as Covid-19 and other calamities people often question the existence of God. Where

is God in the face of these difficult times? Is not Nietzsche right in Thus Spoke Zarathustra when he argues that God is dead? The writer asserts that death of God proposed by Nietzsche is not synonymous to death of a human person but it symbolises science taking over as a solution to human problems. The writer argues that the advancement of science does neither prove death nor silence of God during challenges because science is arguably a language of God. In fact, science has its origins in God the creator of the universe. Next, COVID-19 like most pandemics cannot be divorced from human action. It is from this understanding that **Blazio Mahaso Manobo** cautions readers that his article, **Theodicy and Anthropogenic: A Theology of Disasters in the wake of COVID-19 Pandemic** does not suggest that all-natural evils are man-made. However, it only acknowledges the God-given role of co-creation bestowed on human beings which in most cases has been abused. Accordingly, he states that as free agents, human beings have the capacity to build a better world where justice, reconciliation and respect for the environment can flourish. He also argues that all disasters have an anthropogenic character and that man as God's co-creator has a responsibility to maintain creation in order. Furthermore, he argues that the view that disasters are punishments for sins committed, portrays God as a tyrant rather than a loving Father. Finally, based on this observation, the author leaves room for further theological research in the theology of disasters from an anthropocentric position.

Who causes human suffering? What can humanity do in suffering? **Alex Tatenda Dakamire** tries to respond to these questions. He discovered that the human inflicted pain on others is causing suffering in the world. In this regard, he presents a case study of Zimbabwe where some unjust structures are noted. Eventually, the author gives possible solutions that can be incorporated to alleviate human suffering through a wide range of scholars. Nonetheless, modernity in the lenses of a culture by way of confrontation of a plethora of other indigenous cultures has led to adoption of its ideology and its ethical imperatives which are somehow at loggerheads with what was upheld in some societies. It is with this in mind that **Marvellous T Murungu** argues that homosexuality though it can be traced from time immemorial, it has also crept in hiding



behind modernity culture to the extent that some societies are legalizing the once held taboos of society. As such, he reflects on this arisen problem of homosexuality vis-a-vis the theological understanding of the relational facet of the human person as created in the image and likeness of God.

It is plausible to assert that the Covid-19 has caused a plethora of challenges to humanity, specifically to family, spiritual and social life. **Paul T Tivenga** reflects on how the Covid-19 Pandemic has affected human structures. He shows how its impacts have both positive and negative effects on family life, spiritual and social dimensions. Importantly, more often than not, when Covid 19 related issues are discussed, issues to do with the adults and the elderly seem to gain more attention vis-a-vis that to do with the children between 0 and 5 years of age. Hence, **Ednella Muchingamwa** discusses the current pandemic of Covid-19 in relation to children who are under the age of five. She argues that these children are at risk in various ways as they move with their mothers in various places. She queries whether there is anything that can be done in order to minimize the effects of Covid-19 that probably affect children. Furthermore, she explores how children might be falling behind in their psychological and social development and questions what kind of generation will come out of this pandemic period. Ultimately, how can we go forward amidst the agony perpetrated by the Covid-19 pandemic? **Lloyd H. Champiruka** believes that even in the midst of our affliction there is always something that motivates us to keep going. Again, he appreciates suffering and death as realities that one has to meet and embrace in order to move forward.

The fifth grouping of the articles focuses on the environmental issues. Notably, climate change has immensely impacted on ecology, and some of its effects include, global warming, floods, rising sea levels, cyclones and acid rain. **Ashley Salima** traces the development of the anthropocentric view of the environment. He asserts that philosophy and religion contributed to the development and wide acceptance and dominance of anthropocentrism. Basing his argument on *Laudato Si*, he then explores the need for a paradigm shift from anthropocentric narratives, ideologies and worldviews to a new cosmological ethos of integral ecology, fraternity, humility and global governance. Penultimate, **Michael Kyalo**, in his article argues that the influx of migrants within the Horn

of Africa or crossing international boundaries in search of stability and asylum seeking is largely propelled by climate change. For him, climate change is responsible for migration of people, conflict and palpable lack of economic stability, among other things. As such, millions of people in the Horn of Africa are faced with severe food shortage. Therefore, he views climate change and human life as being the same in extent; coextensive in range or scope. Finally, according to **Charles Tochukwu Ugwuonah**, environmental education is important to both urban and rural settlers. For that reason, it is critical to focus on bringing about a responsive awareness of climate change to rural settlers in many African countries, through the engagement of an educational process. He affirms that there is an increased risk of famine if a responsive awareness to climate change is not championed as soon as possible through the education of the people.

I hope and trust that this present edition will help readers to continue reflecting on the fundamental value that we are a global community in which we share challenges and support each other. At this point, it is my pleasure to express my profound gratitude to all those who worked tirelessly to make this work reach this level. First the various contributors, all the Editorial Board members of Dare Journal, the Holy Trinity College community, and the Carmelite Friars both in Zimbabwe and Ireland for contributing in various ways, direct and indirect. I also owe a debt of gratitude to Gabriel Detigame, ofm, the former editor of Dare for his continued and unwavering support. Finally, I acknowledge the support I enjoyed from the college administration, and the staff advisor and Dean, Fr. Mark Chikuni for providing the Dare with a Google Classroom account with a **Turnitin**/plagiarism check facility.

Thank you all. Enjoy the reading.

*Shelton Sylvester Zimondi, O. Carm.*

*Editor-in-Chief*