

## **The impact of Covid-19 on the family, socio-cultural life and the transformation of spiritual life**

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When God created everything, He said “this is good” and indeed all that He created was good. (Genesis 1 vs 31) Man was put in charge of all these good creatures to keep them and take care of everything. When we read through the scriptures and come across these verses in the Book of Genesis, someone is tempted to ask, are the challenges we face today a creation of the same God who created wonderful and good things? One may ask, are these pandemics the good creations of God? Some may ask, where is God in all these pandemics? This is a million-dollar question. Life is made up of a mixture of both good and bad things, happy and sad moments, ups and downs, this is the journey of life. God is present in all these situations and He invites us to see Him in the calamities we encounter in our day to day lives. In this paper I am going to put my focus on the Covid 19 pandemic, how it has affected the world, and how the people are going through their lives faced with this pandemic.

When unexpected events visit human beings, we devise means and ways to deal with these events, and at times the path to finding solutions will be a rough path that requires self-sacrifice, selflessness as well as courage. The Covid-19 pandemic has changed the world in many ways and forced misery onto untold millions. It has become a thorn in the flesh to the global population. When it started no one expected it to last this long, people thought it was a fast-passing event, little did we know it was here to stay. It has now become a thing to live with, a new normal. Solutions are to be found, these include solutions to completely put the challenge to an end, or solutions to minimize the impact of the pandemic, it might also be solutions to embrace the challenge and live with it as a new normal.

Due to Covid -19, lives have been lost, families have been broken, social life has been affected and the spiritual life has been transformed. Many things are no longer the same and some permanent damages have happened in the lives of many people such that it will be a thing to remember forever in the lives of many people. Some wounds will take

forever to heal, but life has to go on, the major question is, “How?”

### **Family Life**

Since the start of the Covid -19 pandemic, most of the countries have been imposing lockdowns after lockdowns as a way of reducing the spread of the virus. Some of the restrictions at some point confined people in their homes with very minimal outdoor movement. Families would spend the entirety of their days indoors, and this brought its own share of problems within families, as well as some share of good moments for the same families.

Family union and togetherness was strengthened due to the spending of quite a reasonable amount of time together, spouses got ample time to understand each other better, as well and time to understand their children better. Before the pandemic, individuals had very busy daily schedules that could not allow them room to be together as these lockdowns had. Parents could spend the greater parts of their days at work, and children at school as a result school teacher could spend more time with the children compared to the children’s own parents. During these strict lockdowns, social media was blooming with shared photos of some spouses helping each other do the cooking, baking and other household chores. This was a sign that they were afforded an opportunity to share some quality time and build stronger marital bonds, and this is a very positive thing indeed.

On the other hand, parents had to replace school teachers in helping their children with school work, as a result they got a chance to observe their children’s performance at school, understanding their major strengths and weaknesses and this has a very positive impact in parent and child relationships. So, in other words the pandemic offered families some kind of opportunity to discover new things and unearth some hidden facts that were not visible to them for quite a long time in their families. It helped a lot that it pointed out to the families some of their family problems that needed urgent attention and some got time to solve such problems and build much better and successful families.

However, the confinement of people to their homes as a remedy to curbing Covid -19, has in a way caused a lot of suffering to quite a number

of people. Emotional stress, financial problems, anxieties especially among the young ones, as well as domestic violence and abuse among spouses. Due to spending time together, some partners could not manage to cope with their differences resulting in quarrelling and possibly fighting, leading to emotional abuse, as well as physical abuse. Some families were completely broken, because they could not manage it during the new setups which were caused by the pandemic. This is a very sad thing to note and it is very heart-breaking and some of the damages caused are irreparable.

At some point when I was listening to one radio program, I came across some very heart-breaking confession from one of the youths, who was sharing his lockdown experiences on air. He pointed out that, staying indoors for such long hours caused him and his little sister a lot of emotional stress to the extent that they resorted to watching movies containing explicit content, this led them into getting sexually intimate on a number of occasions and he confessed, they were doing this as a way of dealing with the emotional stress that was caused by staying indoors for too long, sadly the sister became pregnant. These are some of the bad situations that the pandemic brought to the families and it lives an indelible mark in the lives of the family. Some young people become drug abusers due to the pandemic, opting to take some intoxicating stuff as a way of reducing stress, and this has led most of them astray to the extent that finding them back will be a mammoth task.

Lives were lost, and this turned out to be the most unbearable situation resulting from Covid -19, we heard of people losing their dearly loved ones and in some instances many members of the same family lost their lives within a short space of time and this is a very difficult predicament to embrace for anyone. To make matters worse, funeral gatherings and burial processes were done in such a way that family members were not able to come together in the usual way, to mourn their loved ones. At such difficult moments, families need to be together so that they help one another to carry the heavy burden, unfortunately Covid -19 could not allow that to happen, it is so disheartening. This pandemic turned out to be a destroyer for many and the damages it caused are so severe.

### **Spiritual Life**

Since the start of Covid -19, a lot has changed, social gatherings banned or in some instances restricted to a limited number of people, religious gatherings not spared, same rules being applied to all. Congregations are now abnormal, rather is it the new normal? Only God knows. Where is the Church heading to in the face of these events? Will the Church be the same again after this pandemic? Many minds are spinning with such questions and they are probably searching for answers.

So, can we say Covid -19 has given us an opportunity to transform our faith, or it has negatively affected our faith? In my personal opinion this is a chance to work on our faith on an individual level, as far as communal gatherings have been affected, individuals and families have to take this time to build their small parishes in families. Giving themselves time to pray in order to strengthen their faith and that of their families. A family that prays together stays together, during this time where it is difficult to gather in large congregations for prayer, it is rather the time to gather and pray together within our families, thus transforming our families into our localized parishes, this is a chance to reflect and pray that God gives us the strength to keep on moving in the positive direction in as far as our spiritual lives are concerned.

As we sanitize our hands to protect our lives from the pandemic, it's also time to sanitize our hearts against the devil and his companions, who are after the destruction of our faith, we have to always sanitize our hearts to become purer and more contrite. It is time of introspection, gauging our level of faith to see if we are in a better position as far as eternal life is concerned. It is time to regularly wash our souls from sin as much as we wash our hands with soap to protect our lives from Covid -19. Keeping our souls clean from every evil is to be our priority, it is time to take good care of our souls such that when the time comes, we will be ready for eternal life.

It is time to social distance ourselves from every evil, a time to run away from anything that we suspect to be contagious to our faith. Anything that can separate us from the love of God, it is time to keep a distance from all these. This is the time to prepare as many home remedies as we can in order to protect our faith from contamination. A time

to design prayer schedules within our home, so that we keep watch in prayer. The pandemic has transformed everything, it is therefore a call for us to be transformed in our minds and device ways to keep us and our families focused on this journey to eternal life. No one knows how long this pandemic will stay with us; hence we have to find ways to continue with it amongst us. This will result in some permanent changes in the way we live our lives, and the spiritual way of living is not spared.

### **Socio-cultural life**

A human being is a social being, but Covid -19 has turned us into anti-social beings, the call for social distancing now means that people are being forced to stay away from their loved ones. It is a very tough situation to live in, however thanks to the advancement in technology people have resorted to using social media communication channels to keep in touch with their pears and families. Though this is does not have the same impact as people visiting each other sharing some special, as well as some bad moments together. According our cultural norms when one dies, people will visit the bereaved family to pay their condolences as well as grieving together with the family, but due to Covid -19 people had to pay their condolences over the phone or through social media, this being a diversion of our culture in a way, but this is not by choice but by situation. A lot of events like weddings, graduation ceremonies and many other celebratory events were postponed or even cancelled. I know of some couples who had to indefinitely postpone their weddings and went on to live together before solemnizing their marriages, these are all the impacts of Covid 19 on the socio-cultural life of many people.

### **Conclusion**

Challenges are part of people's lives and at some point, people have to embrace them and accept the challenges to be part of them, some challenges will get to the extent of completely changing the way people live, and this is the same thing that transpired because of Covid -19. It has transformed family life, socio-cultural life as well as the spiritual life for many. A lot of things may no longer be the same again, anyway it is part of life.