

Living Beyond The Crisis

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An opportunity to put our lives in order.

One of the first observations Pope Francis makes in the encyclical *Laudato sí*, looking at “what is happening in our home”, concerns *rapidación*, “rapidification” — that is, “the continued acceleration of changes affecting humanity and the planet combined with a more intensified pace of life and work”. He notes that this rapidity is at odds with the natural times of biological evolution, and wonders whether the objectives of the changes are oriented to the common good and to an integral and sustainable human development.

Looking back at the short span of our lives, those of us who have reached a certain age can see how many things have changed completely, and how, in an ever shorter space of years, they change once again. Fortunately, many things have changed for the better, such as the living conditions for very many poor people, the possibilities for medical treatments and surgeries, free movement, education, information and communication. But at the same time the obsolescence of many goods has been accelerated well beyond what was necessary, simply to feed economic development and provide profits for certain sectors. Advertising obsessively pushes the desire for unnecessary novelty, creating a real dependency that makes the latest find, the latest product seem necessary... And so in many areas the acceleration of change risks

becoming an end in itself, a form of slavery rather than progress. It seems clear that we are moving at an unsustainable pace, that sooner or later must break down, as we can already see from the very serious threats to the environment.

For their part, many active people, thoroughly integrated into the functioning of the modern world, are engaged in very intense — not to say frantic — rhythms of activity.

At first they often join in with passion and enthusiasm, but they soon realize the heavy price that must be paid in terms of human and family relationships, affections, and overall balance in their personal lives.

Now this increasingly accelerated course has suffered a serious shock. Economic indicators have been upset, our plans have been turned on their head, meetings and trips have been cancelled. For many people, the concept of time has been lost, and they've become disoriented. Already... it's time... how do we experience it? in the end, what's the point? There is a time for activity, but are also times of joyful expectation, times for being together and loving one another, times for contemplating beauty, times of long sleepless nights, times of waiting in suffering... There is also the possibility of wasting a great deal of time needlessly, of becoming embittered by a sense of uselessness and emptiness... There is also a time for being alone with oneself... Is there also time for being with God? When we are bursting with life the idea of being with God pushes us to the margins of existence. We tend to find countless things to do first, things that seem urgent or pleasant, while time spent with the Lord is often postponed.

For many people, this strange time of having to stay at home on account of the pandemic has been a time to rediscover prayer. One might wonder whether the inability to go to church will negatively affect faith and the spiritual life; or if, on the other hand, it might be a time — as Jesus said to the Samaritan woman — to learn to worship the Lord “in spirit and in truth” in every place, even in our homes where we are obliged to remain, and even in a time of forced inactivity. Jesus adds elsewhere that the Spirit blows whithersoever.