

**We have made a start...**  
**Pedro Pierre, 2020/05/06**

The days and weeks go by and the quarantine continues. They tell us it's going to end, but no one is sure of the date. We have been putting up with this for two months and now we're preoccupied about how it's going to end. We are also worried about what will happen next, because we realize things will not be the same as before.

We haven't spent two months in vain, shut up in our homes. For many, the reality is tragic: how can we eat when we earn every day the bread that the family needs? Many families have lost loved ones, gone forever without a proper send-off. Many people have lost their jobs because shops, factories and small businesses have all had to close. The country is on its knees as oil prices have fallen to such low levels; \$330 million was paid in interest on a loan from the IMF when the national death toll was at its height; the wealthy have transferred their money to tax havens, to the tune of \$800 million, and corruption is still rampant in the upper echelons of government. Now they want to control us through our mobile phones, to know where we live, where we are going, who we communicate with – all to protect our health. They haven't protected us today; why would they do so tomorrow?

This is going badly, very badly. How will a country that has been plundered by its own authorities and their powerful friends get back on its feet? How will an economy which has been completely destroyed, with thousands of failed businesses, ever recover? When the vice president saw that he could not control the pandemic from the centre, he let local authorities decide when to come out of quarantine. And the president himself said: "My situation prevents me from going out into the country. I am an elderly person, physically disabled, with all the associated medical problems. The doctors have told me I could easily contract the virus and that I would be unlikely to survive it." We are a country adrift; we have no food, no work, no money, no-one to lead us out of this situation. We have only ourselves to rely on... This is the challenge we must take up, consciously and in an organized way.

These two months of confinement have also served as a time of reflection, realising the failure of the system that governs us. For a moment we were paralyzed by fear and despair, but a new hope has been born in us, that together we can rise up, stand shoulder to shoulder, and accept that it will be a long, hard struggle for our country to recover and return to living and coexisting as God commands. It will be possible if we have already begun to live differently. In a time of famine we have proved that we can have a healthier diet by eating more fruits and vegetables. Since there are no effective medicines against coronavirus, people have tried lemons, ginger, medicinal herbs, magnets and many traditional or alternative medicines. There have been instances of sharing and solidarity among us; small gestures perhaps, but real, bringing back a smile, nourishing friendship and keeping hope alive. We have discovered that we can live without buying unnecessary or superfluous things. We have also prayed, performed forgotten devotions, read the Bible, rediscovered that Jesus is closer to us, and that God is the great mystery of life and love. We have asked ourselves what is most important at this moment, what is the priority we must not lose sight of, the essential we must not let go...

We are beginning to grasp the certainty that tomorrow we will not be able to live as we did yesterday; it will be possible if we hold on to the important things in our lives that we did not even realise we had... otherwise, we will find ourselves even worse off, experiencing life without life, relationships without love. And our individualistic, consumerist, disorganized existence will become a worse pandemic than coronavirus itself. Tomorrow has to be a new dawn, a new day, a new birth, a new humanity. We have begun; we must continue, improve and strengthen the new ways of life we have found and rediscovered. We cannot go backwards because backwards is to sickness, death and the cemetery... if there is any space left there! God has created us for something else: a full life based on sharing, a simple fraternity based on solidarity, a faith whose essence is happiness, a more egalitarian country where we will all have a place. Will we know how to offer up this pleasure to God? Because, as we say, "if God leaves his chair empty, the devil will come and sit on it"!

*Traduction Jonathan Ticher*