

Pope Francis

BBC Radio 4 Thought for the Day

29 October 2021

Climate change and the Covid-19 pandemic have exposed our deep vulnerability and raised numerous doubts and concerns about our economic systems and the way we organize our societies.

We have lost our sense of security, and are experiencing a sense of powerlessness and loss of control over our lives.

We find ourselves increasingly frail and even fearful, caught up in a succession of “crises” in the areas of health care, the environment, food supplies and the economy, to say nothing of social, humanitarian and ethical crises. All these crises are profoundly interconnected. They also forecast a “perfect storm” that could rupture the bonds holding our society together within the greater gift of God’s creation.

Every crisis calls for vision, the ability to formulate plans and put them rapidly into action, to rethink the future of the world, our common home, and to reassess our common purpose.

These crises present us with the need to take *decisions*, radical decisions that are not always easy. At the same time, moments of difficulty like these also present *opportunities*, opportunities that we must not waste.

We can confront these crises by retreating into isolationism, protectionism and exploitation. Or we can see in them a real chance for change, a genuine moment of conversion, and not simply in a spiritual sense.

This last approach alone can guide us towards a brighter horizon. Yet it can only be pursued through a renewed sense of shared responsibility for our world, and an effective solidarity based on justice, a sense of our common destiny and a recognition of the unity of our human family in God’s plan for the world.

All this represents an *immense cultural challenge*. It means giving priority to the common good, and it calls for a change in perspective, a new outlook, in which the dignity of every human being, now and in the future, will guide our ways of thinking and acting.

The most important lesson we can take from these crises is our need to *build together*, so that there will no longer be any borders, barriers or political walls for us to hide behind. As we all know, we never emerge from a crisis alone, without others.

Some days ago, on 4 October, I met with religious leaders and scientists to sign a Joint Appeal in which we called upon ourselves and our political leaders to act in a more responsible and consistent manner. I was impressed by something said by one of the scientists present at that meeting. He told us: “If things continue as they are, in fifty years’ time my baby granddaughter will have to live in an unliveable world”.

We cannot allow this to happen!

It is essential that each of us be committed to this urgent change of direction, sustained by our own faith and spirituality. In the Joint Appeal, we spoke of the need to work responsibly towards a “culture of care” for our common home, but also for ourselves, and the need to work tirelessly to eliminate “the seeds of conflicts: greed, indifference, ignorance, fear, injustice, insecurity and violence”.

Humanity has never before had at its disposal so many means for achieving this goal. The political decision makers who will meet at COP26 in Glasgow are urgently summoned to provide effective responses to the present ecological crisis and in this way to offer concrete hope to future generations. And it is worth repeating that each of us – whoever and wherever we may be – can play our own part in changing our collective response to the unprecedented threat of climate change and the degradation of our common home.