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If the coronavirus teaches us anything, it is not only that we live in a wholly interdependent cosmos, but that this historic moment offers an opportunity to question and, more importantly, change the rules of the game — the modern/colonial world-system that devours all of life. We cannot and ought not return to "normal" as former Vice President Joe Biden and his advisers recommend.

Living the (im)possible possibility of the Gospel, I believe, means questioning, disobeying and changing the rules of modernity/coloniality — the entire colonial matrix of domination that ravages lives, communities and indeed, the fragile interdependent web of life that is this planet. We need the Spirit to enkindle in all of us the fierce urgency of now so we may discern new ways of living that renew the face of God's creation this coming Earth Day.

I wholly agree with Franciscan Fr. Daniel Horan that we need a shift from a myopic pro-life stance focused on only one issue to "embracing the seamless garment," that "requires that our concern for and protection of life be shaped by an integral ecology, which recognizes that 'everything is connected' and nothing is meant to be treated in isolation."

There is a deeper problem, however, to the myopic pro-life stance of the U.S. Catholic bishops' conference: the neoliberal economy and market democracy by which we live is killing all of us and the planet. The entire system under which we struggle to live is constituted by what St. John Paul II termed a "culture of death" in his encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*.

Yet the U.S. Catholic Church and society proceeds *as if* the current system by which we live supports the conditions of the possibility for all human and non-human kin to thrive.

If we are going to engage a way of life that hears and responds both to the cries of people and of the earth, as Pope Francis exhorts in *Querida Amazonia*, we North Americans need to begin with (un)learning how coloniality lives inside of us.

That is no easy task. Too often, in too many ways, we assume our desires, beliefs and expectations are right, good and universal. We tend to live as if others around the world ought to live the way we do.



(Unsplash/Louis Reed)

When the president of the United States argues that "WE CANNOT LET THE CURE BE WORSE THAN THE PROBLEM ITSELF" or Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick suggests that the elderly, those most at risk from coronavirus and the fastest growing segment of the workforce, should sacrifice their lives to save the economy, then we should realize that the entire system demands the dispensability and disposability of vulnerable lives. Our society's cruel ethic is that the economy trumps vulnerable people, grim pun intended.

In his essay, "Pandemic be damned, the business of America is business!", Michael Winship incriminates Trump for tap-dancing "at the Masque of the Red Death." It seems more like we are all in a deadly tap dance inasmuch as we do not question or turn our backs to all of the assumptions and mythologies of American individualism,

innocence, exceptionalism, success, ownership and unfettered consumption and competition.

Indeed, the coronavirus stimulus package reveals that the incessant gravitational pull of our political system is oriented toward saving "the business of business" rather than a "people's bailout" to direct transformational change that cares for the most vulnerable of our human and non-human kin.

The coronavirus exposes the weaknesses, vulnerabilities and inequities of a health care system oriented to profit over people. On many metrics, the U.S. health care system is the worst among so-called developed countries. A large portion of our population lacks health insurance. Too many suffer medical debt. More Americans die from preventable causes and a preventable gun epidemic.

The sickening reality is that 70% of low-wage workers must work through an illness with no paid sick leave. The death-dealing reality is that, to quote Vox, "the United States rations care in a simple, cruel way: If you can't afford it, you can't get it."

While restaurant workers lose their main source of income or hours are cut, for nearly 5 million home health care workers the coronavirus is a war on multiple fronts that includes surviving at minimum wage *if* they can maintain full-time hours and *not* get sick.

As the pandemic stretches health care supplies — thin in no small part because the White House eliminated the National Security Council Directorate for Global Health Security and Biodefense — the administration still endeavors to repeal the Affordable Care Act and its expansion of Medicaid to low-income adults, "and impose rigid caps on the federal government's Medicaid spending."

Exposing the lie of pharmaceutical giant Pfizer's mission that "life is our life's work," as Nicholas Rose argues in *The Politics of Life Itself*, we have been reduced to biological citizens who must "undergo perpetual assessment, continual incitement to buy, constantly to improve oneself, to monitor our health, to manage our risk." No form of life escapes commodification.

It is time to notice, as the U.N.'s environment chief Inger Anderson cautions, that nature is sending us a clear message that humanity is putting too many pressures on the natural world.



(Unsplash/Nikola Jovanovic)

Reflecting on 60 years working for global conservation, Jane Goodall recently told NPR's Science Friday that she suddenly realized, nearly 50 years ago, that the habitats of the equatorial forests across Africa and the Amazon were "being destroyed as human populations grew, as the Western world got more greedy and wanted more and more stuff, as the economy" creates "goods that are going to be self-destructive in so many years, where people go on buying and buying, wasting and wasting. It's a vicious cycle."

Unless we break that vicious cycle, Goodall warned that "it's absurd to think that you can have unlimited economic development in a planet with finite natural resources."

The conditions of the possibility of the change we need, she wisely perceives, is embedded in the reality that "we are part of the natural environment. We are not separated from it."

May people of faith enter Triduum remembering the ashes with which we were blessed on Ash Wednesday, as a way of humbly opening ourselves to the transformation of Easter hope. May we rise up with Creation Justice Ministries this coming Earth Day to join together in prayer and reflection so that we will imagine and find new ways of living with and for all peoples and biomes crying out for justice and life.

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