

A Sustainable Environment: Our Obligation to Protect God's Gift

by
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The Impact of the Coronavirus on the Global Society

The coronavirus has caused numerous negative impacts on almost everyone in the world. This air borne virus, despite its relatively short life span, has forced all concerned people to stay far from any potential carrier. The virus has caused many deaths worldwide and due to the necessary precautions has negatively affected the economy and has increased unemployment significantly. Virtual technology has allowed some businesses to remain open and has allowed communications between families. Considering these negative activities, are there any ways that this pandemic has had a positive outcome?

Let's take a look at what I consider the four major environmental issues: over consumption of the natural resources, diminishing quantity and quality of fresh water, climate change, and rapid population growth. What might be the impact on each of these issues?

The pandemic seems to make people more efficient with their grocery shopping. Since they plan to shop less often, they want to be sure their purchases are efficient – thus less waste. The grocery stores are selling almost everything they purchase, so again the waste is minimal. With many of the businesses being shut down, there may be a vast decrease in natural resources in general. For instance, construction wood and other cellulosic products may be in less demand. It appears that the consumption of our natural resources may decrease as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. The Global Footprint Network will probably announce in early June the expected Earth Overshoot date. That is the day in this year when the world will have consumed all the natural resources that will be generated in 2020. In 2019, Earth Overshoot Day was July 29, and it has been determined to be earlier every successive year. This may be the first year, however, that it will be a little later.

The emissions of carbon dioxide will certainly decrease as a result of the lockdown rules set by most countries. Some of the largest emitters of carbon dioxide are the trucks, automobiles and airplanes. While many trucks are still needed, automobile and air traffic has decreased considerably. For example, reports show that air pollution from nitrogen oxide, another transportation polluter, has decreased significantly in China. Airborne particles in northern India are at a 20-year low due to decreased factory activity as well as reduced car, bus, truck and airplane traffic. A comparable reduction in carbon dioxide emissions should also result in India. Similar reductions across other industrial countries should decrease carbon emissions worldwide. This will have a definite improvement of climate change.

With respect to water, since about 60-70% of the water consumption is by the agricultural industry, it is expected that the consumption of water will decrease if the consumption of our natural resources will decrease. Since many industries have reduced activities, the water consumption of the industry sector, which is about 20-30% of the total, should also decrease. The smallest portion of water consumption is by human activity. It is likely that this will also

decrease as homebound people tend to be more efficient with water when it is consumed at home. Showers at home are usually shorter than those at hotels or health clubs. So overall, we should see a decrease in water consumption worldwide. In terms of water quality, this is also improving as exemplified by the clearness of the canals in Venice, Italy where there is little boat traffic to stir up the bottom. It is the clearest it has been in 60 years with even dolphins swimming there.

The fourth environmental issue, which is excessive population growth, should also show some positive effects. The world population has been having a net increase of about 10 million people every six to seven weeks. With the increase in the death rate due to the coronavirus, the population growth should slow down. Also, with so many countries having lockdowns of a few months, unwanted pregnancies should also decrease. Even after the lockdowns are lifted, people are going to be more careful with their networking activities.

In a few months, most of the world will be opened up, businesses will again be active, and people will be going to work as before. However, it is very possible that going back to a normal life will be a “new normal”. This “new normal” will make people more careful about all of their activities and more efficient.

While this pandemic has been a devastating activity in terms of human health and the overall economy, it seems to have a positive impact on the environment. God created this planet to provide for mankind, but it seems that we have not cared for it as expected. Maybe this pandemic is a message from God to take better care of the planet, and the few months of lockdown is showing us how to do it. So let's get somewhat used to it and go forward with more Care for Creation.