FAITH AND RELIGION DURING THE PANDEMIC

by:
Lady Mae M. Esconde

Filipinos are recognized for their strong religious convictions. Even in the middle of the most trying times in their history, their faith has remained unwavering. The COVID-19 pandemic's seclusion did not prevent Filipino Catholics from expressing their religion; rather, it strengthened it. Allowing Filipino Catholic devotees to attend Church events, they went to the Quiapo Church simply to attend the feast of the Black Nazarene and get a chance to hold its image with the firm belief that God's grace might shield them from the epidemic. Local medical professionals, on the other hand, referred to their dedication as a "super spreader" in this time of need, a sign not of hope but of despair.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has turned into a global health disaster, with over 111 million coronavirus cases recorded as of February 24, 2021, and 2.4 million people dying from the epidemic globally. To contain the virus and prevent it from spreading further, the international health sector created a contingency plan that largely focused on reducing physical contact between individuals. As a result, the idea of social distance was discovered to be the best approach, not to mention the contribution of maintaining excellent cleanliness; putting individuals in quarantine is the same as putting the virus in isolation until it can no longer support itself. As a result, governments throughout the world have adopted their own social quarantine policies.

Since the enormous lockdown began in the early quarter of 2020 as a result of the ever-increasing incidence of COVID-19 infection, which began in the Chinese province of Wuhan in December of 2019, the lives of people all over the world have never been the same. The global civilization is in the midst of the 'new normal,' in which people's natural desire to socialize and express themselves has been subdued. People were compelled to
restrict themselves to the safety of their own houses. The scope of human socialization and personal mobility was restricted to communities and families. The pandemic's withdrawal from community life allowed many people to spend more time with their families, which is often harmed by the fast-paced existence of today's society. Family relationships are being rekindled and explored, which is possibly one of the many beneficial impacts of the lockdown. However, while the lockdown had a good influence on family relationships, it had significant consequences, particularly for many people's mental health.

Withdrawning from a person's natural need to engage in social life and express himself in the process has a profound psychological impact, leading to despair and anxiety. In other words, depriving a human person of his or her natural propensity to express oneself in the process of socialization may result in a psychological collapse, simply because the human person is a social creature who cannot help but express oneself via the process of socialization. Even though the epidemic has quelled this natural want to socialize, there are still methods to cope with the pressures it entails.

Keeping one's spirituality and confidence in a supernatural entity is the most common reaction to the pandemic's worries. Having faith in God has been proven to help people retain mental stability because it gives them purpose and a reason to hope for the best in the midst of the chaos. When insanity appears normal, faith and spirituality may be able to keep individuals sane. People often cling to their faith as a source of strength in difficult times.

In the Philippines, where the majority of the population is Roman Catholic, faith in Christ takes precedence despite the pandemic's deadly impact. Even in the middle of the lockdown, Catholic Filipinos have found methods to demonstrate their religion's solidarity and togetherness by attending online masses, listening to religious conferences, and repeating devotional prayers online and at home. The epidemic did not weaken the faith of Filipino Christians, but rather strengthened it. Filipino Catholics' religion has
given them cause to hope for a brighter tomorrow and to keep their sense of purpose in life. This same faith, on the other hand, might be to blame for COVID-19's widespread spread. Filipinos' own expressions of religion have the ability to spread the sickness. Local healthcare personnel were dismayed when the Philippine government permitted people to attend church events such as the feast of the Black Nazarene because people tend to overlook the existence of the virus in their midst. The festival drew a large number of worshippers to Quiapo church. Medical professionals in the Philippines have emphatically condemned such conduct and dubbed the incident a "super spreader" in a local media story. If others are oblivious to their efforts, the religion that offers hope may be a source of despair for some, especially those on the front lines of medicine.

Reference:
Retrieved from: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7989222/