



**Union Mondiale des Organisations Féminines Catholiques
World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations
Unión Mundial de las Organizaciones Femeninas Católicas
Weltunion der Katholischen Frauenverbände**

Piazza di Ponte S. Angelo 28, 00186 Roma, Italia

Tel: +39 06 68 400 213

info@wucwo.org - www.wucwo.org

Letter of the WUCWO President on the global Coronavirus crisis

Dear friends,

I am writing to you while looking at a crucifix, which speaks of the love of our God who has come close, who has wanted to show his weakness until his death on the Cross, to accompany us, to guide us on the path to Salvation.

Thus, I wish to be close to each one of you, to the millions of women members of WUCWO organisations, who, like most institutions today, are experiencing for the first time a global pandemic, which is affecting or will affect all our countries and therefore our persons, families and homes.

Let me tell you how I am living this from Italy, one of the countries that has not yet managed to stop the spread of the virus, where many of us are locked in our homes. Almost everything is closed, and the economy is in a critical situation. Our health service is collapsing: artificial respirators are not enough; in several areas, hospitals are being converted almost exclusively into intensive care units; doctors have to decide who to intubate and who not to - as they are not able to treat everyone; and the number of dead and infected continues to grow every day. The most unprotected are the elderly and those who live on the streets, since they have no "home" to go to.

I hope you and your family are well. As President of WUCWO, I keep thinking about how we should live out our resolutions in this special Lent. I share with you my questions and convictions.

Will we understand how to take care of the planet by being responsible for making it healthy for everyone? As a result of the virus, our cities have less pollution and cleaner air, and the usually dirty waters - like those of Venice - are now clean and transparent. The world economic system, as it is based on insatiable profit, consumerism and individualism, has entered a crisis, but will it be able to find new alternatives to heed the cry of the planet and our discarded brothers, by applying the principles of *Laudato Si'*?

Will we be able to transform this tragedy into an opportunity to improve our families in the face of this difficult situation and take care of the most vulnerable members? Will children at home, married couples sharing many more hours than usual, the elderly in solitude, and the young overcoming their desire to be together give us the opportunity to deepen our family relationships, improve our ties and strengthen the family institution, as *Amoris Laetitia* teaches us? Will we succeed in giving a positive meaning to our use of time and social networks?

Will we succeed in eliminating violence and discrimination against women (*Evangelii Gaudium* 212) as we try to overcome this pandemic? Will women, until now victims of those who consider them an object, be able to be recognised for their maternal care and education to prevention, which are so key in this critical moment? Will we succeed in taking the solidary example of so many women doctors and nurses who, even risking their lives, are developing a collaborative work with men on the front line? Will the walls for immigrants from the south be destroyed in certain countries of the north whose citizens are now “discriminated” in different borders, now closed to avoid the spread of contagion? What will we learn?

I am sure that we will take steps forward if we take advantage of this Lent to educate ourselves to respond to the call to holiness. I offer my simple testimony: Pope Francis encourages my prayer, because every morning I follow his Mass through Vatican News on the Internet (accessible in different languages) and I let myself to be guided by his intentions - praying for the victims, the health workers, the authorities, the elderly, the families with their children... - and his homily. I have set myself the task of “fasting” from going out, from direct interpersonal relations, etc., that is, obeying the authorities. I also try to apply charity by taking care of myself, in order to take care of others.

As the mission of WUCWO states, I am confident that we must assume our co-responsibility before this “sign of the times.” And I hope that, as women of faith and prayer, we will not lack joy and a sense of humour - signs of holiness according to *Gaudete et Exsultate* 122-128 - the fruit of total trust in Divine Providence. May Our Lady obtain for us the living of each day of this Lent and the coming Easter season as a grace!

With all my affection,

María Lía Zervino, Servidora

Rome, Lent 2020