

New Year and Hope

by MARIO J. PAREDES



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Human beings live because we dream, we imagine, and hope for a better tomorrow. Hope is the engine of human life. When I graduate, when I get married, when I have my first job, my first house, my first child, my first car, my first vacation, tomorrow, in two years, in five years, in ten years, everything will change, everything will be better. . . Without hope, life would have no meaning; it would not be worth living. And so, during our daily wait for hope, from the best and noblest desires of every human being, our lives pass by waiting for better times. . .

Perhaps no situation, no moment, better symbolizes our waiting for hope, like the arrival of a new year. The arrival of a new year symbolizes who we are: beings made of and in hope. When the clock marks the beginning of a new year, the best longings, dreams, aspirations for a better future for humanity also beat in the hearts of all men and women—especially when the year comes after two so full of so many, so varied, and enormous difficulties, consequences—especially—of a pandemic, on a global scale.

Pandemic times that do not pass, that do not end. Pandemic times that, despite wanting to call them—from this point on—post-pandemic times, still have us mired in the ups and downs of news about quarantines, infections, and deaths, in the uncertainty of the “herd immunity” that has not arrived because of those who have not yet been vaccinated, because of the shortage of vaccines that are still not enough for many in many corners of the earth, etc.

All this challenges us all on many fronts. The new year, hopefully a post-pandemic year, comes with enormous challenges for all humanity. The construction of a “new normal” challenges us in all areas of society just as we are challenged by the restoration of life and the economy of our families and societies. Because there are millions of men and women who lost their jobs or their educational opportunities, thousands of companies that were closed, millions who seek to emigrate in search of better living conditions, countless families who mourn their deceased loved ones, and many changes that the COVID-19 pandemic imposed on us for all human beings and families and for our social coexistence.

All this urges us to build a new way of being and living in the world, a new way of relating and interacting with human beings to achieve human communities and societies that are more humane, friendly, and livable, and a better world that better reconciles with our noblest wishes and best hopes. In other words, a more equitable and just world, more fraternal and supportive, and with more and better space-times of abundant life for all. For all of this, it helps to go back, review and reflect on the lessons that the pandemic leaves us all. It helps to reflect on the values and main interests that drive our personal, family, and social life plans. It will help to reflect on what is lasting and what is transitory in life, on the essential and the superfluous and superficial in human

existence, on the fundamental and permanent, and on what is ephemeral, vanity, and tinsel.

Because in recent decades, as never before in the history of humanity, we have experienced unusual and rapid developments, material achievements, and advances in science and technology, but we have not grown—neither at the same rate nor by the same measure—in the field of human spirituality. We are a humanity full of material achievements, but, at the same time, we experience slowness and, even serious setbacks in the fields of humanization. We have advanced in the attachment to immanence and materiality but, perhaps in the same proportions, we have despised truth, justice, life, and we have turned away and turned our back on the transcendental values of the human being. All of which explains a present in which, for example, large sums of food are produced—as never before—but, at the same time, the number of hungry people in the world grows every day.

Technology and the means to communicate abound, but loneliness grows, and the quality of human communication diminishes. Our armament grows and becomes more sophisticated, but there is a lack of resources for healthcare in the world. Corruption increases in the governments of the world, and, with it, the great masses of migrants grow from all corners of the earth.

At the dawn of a new year, this shallow panorama of contradictions, inequality, and injustice in the world challenges and commits us all to give the best of ourselves to make possible the new and better world of which we all dream. People and governments must strive for the honest search for the common good, a compassionate and caring human coexistence, especially with the world’s neglected, personal, family, and social relationships in which being prevails over having, the truth about lies, and life about death. There is an urgent need for a human existence in which our own bodies, the bodies and lives of others, and nature are not fields of exploitation and markets, but spaces for encounter, respect, love, and life. We must respect ourselves and respect the rights of others based on the enormous dignity of each human being. We must learn to live together as brothers and sisters in this “common home” that we call planet earth.

So, when we inaugurate the new year 2022, I invite you all to, united, work to make the best dreams come true that, in the minds and hearts of all, inspire our existence in order to achieve a humanity and a world where we can continue to believe, love, and hope Happy New Year!

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