

# New Horizons from Disasters

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The word ‘Apocalypse’ immediately makes us think of the end of the world, of the earth and of the universe: "...in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.” (Mk 13:24-25). St John had seen in a vision the apocalypse: great earthquake, black sun, bloody moon, falling of the stars, scrolled sky (Rev. 6:12-14; 8:5-10); terrible thunder and lightning, violent earthquakes splitting the great city causing the nations to fall (Rev 16:18-19); huge hailstones from heaven and then an outbreak of massive plagues (Rev 16:21; 9,18).

Is apocalypse really something frightening? At least, in line with the theory of big bang, creation is evolved from big bang and from the subsequent series of disasters. One can observe this phenomenon of catastrophes leading to new ‘creation’, in the natural calamities such as the earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. The Greek term *apokaluptein* means ‘to uncover’, ‘to reveal’.<sup>1</sup> At the end of time, something very important will be revealed. Despite the enchanting glow of the sun, moon and stars, something very important remains hidden, inaccessible to people. What is it?

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<sup>1</sup> Apocalypse (Greek ἀποκάλυψις "unveiling", literally "disveiling " from Greek καλύπτειν "to veil". Cf. <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apokalypse>

At the end of the world, there will be a total terrifying darkness. The stars will be falling down from the sky, which then causes cosmic tremors. All these disasters are just preparation for the apocalypse, the uncovering. Revealing what?

At night, the stars shine beautifully in the sky. However, at night the sun is obscured; no sunlight can be seen. Nevertheless, when the sun is uncovered (*apocalypse*), the sun slowly rises on the horizon; then, metaphorically speaking, the stars are darkened. The stars are still there, not fallen from the sky. However, we no longer see the stars. When the sunlight is uncovered, then the starlight has no meaning anymore.

Humanity has much knowledge of God through theology and philosophy, church doctrine, catechism, religions and religious symbols. Humanity also has God experience through religious rituals, holy masses, prayers or meditations. Despite all this knowledge about God and experience with God, the omnipotence of God, the perfect light of God, is very far from all of us.

How is God in Himself? That is hidden for the whole world. However, this mystery will not remain so veiled forever. One day will come for the whole cosmos, when God, as He is, will be revealed. Before that comes a cosmic tremor, a wake-up call, for that great revelation: seeing God face to face. This is the end of the world: the Apocalypse, the full revelation of God, the Eternal Sun. Jesus Christ said, "Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory." (Mk 13:26). St John in the Book of Revelation described his vision: after all the cosmic catastrophes, plagues and

suffering on earth, he saw heaven opened (Rev 19:11), the King of kings and Lord of lords was revealed (Rev. 19:16). He saw a new heaven and a new earth (Rev. 21:1), everything on the earth was transformed and was shining in glory (cf. Rev. 21:10-21) with the light, not from sun and moon, but from the glory of the Lord God the Almighty (cf. Rev. 21:22-23; 22:5).

With the rising of the Eternal Sun, God's appearance on the cosmic horizon, all the things, for which the world has so wrongly longed and also fought so hard, will no longer be relevant. They will be darkened, and suddenly fall into nothingness.

Such an apocalypse, exposure, we expect not only in the cosmic scenario, at the end of the world. It also happens in our personal lives. People will finally discover God's light in various personal disasters.

From Saul to Paul! It was the passion of Saul to destroy Christians. He thought that with this action he was doing something good in the face of God. However, on his way to Damascus on horseback, where he wanted to send more Christians to prison, the Apocalypse occurred: the revelation of Christ as the true light. That light hit him like lightning. He fell off his horse and went blind (cf. Acts 9:1-22). Everything that he had considered important up to that time ended up in darkness and became irrelevant. St Paul writes, "I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ...." (Phil 3:8).

Not only in the personal life but also for the humanity as a

whole, catastrophes can come in the form of all kinds of terrible natural disasters, horrible wars, and shocking pandemics. The consequence of the pandemic in 2020 has already reached to apocalyptic proportions, for it shakes now the whole humanity in all its realms: political, economic, cultural, moral and religious. It seems that all the well-cherished values and practices are now relativized. Religious authorities, for instance, were weighing the validity of participating in the religious ceremonies through mass media. During the pandemic they were asking people not to come to the centres of worship, and recommending the faithful to follow the religious ceremonies in the mass media.

By June 2020 more than 500,000 lost their lives; the world is struggling to estimate how many are affected with the virus. There is no adequate word to describe human sufferings, through job losses, and lack of supplies of even the food products, in different parts of the world. It has affected the poor very much, because most of them were living from daily wages. Now all of them are sitting in their huts, if at all they have one, with their malnourished children: yes, “pestilence and mourning and famine” (Rev. 18:8). Not only the poor but others are also affected by the pandemic in one way or other. The Ocean luxury liners, which were supposed to give only luxurious treatment to the super rich customers, turned out to be a horrifying hell for them. The litany of sufferings tantamount to apocalyptic proportions are filling the columns of all the newspapers of the world. Yes, all are affected by the pandemic almost like what is stated in the Book of Revelation: “Then the kings of the earth and the magnates and the

generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains,..." (Rev. 6:15).

To get consolation and help from God especially at the time of hardships and suffering, the faithful used to congregate in the places of worship. Suddenly, the people were not allowed to enter the centres of worship. Unknowingly people may think of what in the Book of Revelation stated: "No one could enter the temple until the seven plagues...were ended." (Rev. 15:8).

In this time of almost Apocalyptic Disaster, there happens some kind of *apokaluptein* 'to uncover', 'to reveal'

In the suffocatingly long lockdown period, people are reflecting about their own life: they start to realize that all that they used to consider as very important, are not that important in their life. The inevitable extravagant personal and family celebrations, for instance, where a lot of money were lavishly spent, are all of a sudden stopped. People began to think, yes, we can live without wasting money for extravagant galas. Religious leaders also began to reconsider the need of changing some of the regulations to their followers, as they found that they cannot enforce stringent regulation in attending and practicing religious ceremonies and rituals. As the mass media industry was booming, many people were skeptic and having even a kind of allergy towards the modern mass media especially in practicing and participating in religious rituals and ceremonies. Now, however, they are thankful to God for the advancements of modern media. People began to reflect what the basics and the essence of

their religion are.

There comes in the horizon of humanity extraordinary compassion for the suffering humanity. Heart-warming tales of helping hands are narrated daily in the media.

For years those who were concerned about the atmospheric pollution recommended lesser flights in the sky, lesser cars on the roads, etc. All those recommendations were all in vain. But all of a sudden, almost all of the flights are landed, people are not allowed to travel.

The idea of home office was not something new. But in the pandemic, it shows how it can be very helpful. With that practice of home office, people began to consider new visions of going to work, being in the office etc. At the beginning of the outbreak of the pandemic and lockdown, the streets were empty even in the morning rush hours. That has helped many managers and CEOs in the world to think: Is it necessary that because of the work all must travel between 8.00-10.00 in the morning, often leading to traffic chaos, or is it necessary to have trams and trains jam-packed with commuters? Reduction of motor vehicles daily for commuters can reduce a lot of environmental pollution.

Home office brings a new dimension to the very idea of management. The employees must come to the office. Are the managers are coming to the office especially to monitor whether the employees are doing the work? Here comes the difference between a leader and a taskmaster. Taskmasters are concerned that if they are not present on the spot, the employees will not be fulfilling their duties. A

true leader has a great confidence in their employees. It is common knowledge that one is a good leader if her/his subjects are following the instruction even in her/his absence.

Environmentalists were concerned with the smoke coming out of the chimneys of the factories. There was no one to listen to their concerns. Chimneys continued to expel smoke continuously into the air. But, suddenly, most of the chimneys stopped pumping smoke into the atmosphere. What, a lot of international mega environmental conferences or worldwide strong demonstrations such as ‘Fridays for Future’ could not achieve, has the microscopic virus achieved indirectly towards the betterment of the environment! In some parts of the world, for instance, for years people have not seen the horizon because of the environmental pollution. Now, they see a clear and new horizon, especially in the mega cities.

Catastrophes, small or of apocalyptic proportions, are a wake-up call to have new perspectives in the international, national, social and personal life. What kind of apocalypse, revelation or enlightenment would have to happen to know what is really important in life? "Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever." (Dan 12:3).

Illustration photo, Judith Cronauer