

COVID-19 has enriched our understanding of religion

It is held together by love with no exclusions, it has recognisable cultural but non-exclusive characteristics, and it is based on love.



What has happened, is happening, since our pandemic began, is that very many people have become very ill, very many people have died, very many people live neither ill nor dying but very frightened. The educated among us recognise that we have so ill-treated our earth that this situation was inevitable. Children especially have realised this, and knowing that the earth they will inherit is in dire straits they have made lots of noise and actions towards

returning it, and us, to viability. While it is true that never within memory has such a widespread calamity visited us, never have so many people either individually or as organizations so clubbed together to lessen the pain and suffering it is causing. Heroism is almost the badge of our tribe today. Yes, we have to contend with the very rich and very selfish and very politically minded social leaders, we also recognise that even among them there are glimmers of genuine compassion. And believe it or not (!) that's genuine religion at work.

Religion has been glutted with pious practices, all sorts of liturgies, chants, readings, clothing, pilgrimages, and so on and on. All very good, yes: but the purpose they serve is the bonding of the group together. In other words: an intensification of mutual love. And where there is love, there is God. More specifically: that IS God. Love is God. The bad news is, often such practices alienate, they distance adherents following that series of activities from others who follow a different – or no – series. What distances people from one another is by definition bad news. Where love is diminished there is the beginning of both fear and hostility. Bad. So: we have been misled, all of us, by believing that our religious practices enrich us. What they do is they bond us a little more together. And that's healthy. But the long prayers and super-human suppositions, that there is a listening God who will work a miracle if we all pray this way and not that way, that this is what God promises, that this is the foundation of my religion, etc etc. All false. A religion not founded on mutual love is already spurious. Religion is this: our culture promotes a particular way of acknowledging God. 'God' can be variously translated. Religion may of course be cultural, but never alienating That particular way, note, is local, tinged no doubt with the culture – nationality, place, language, age, convictions, relationships, habits and so on – of whoever was originally inspired to spread this particular message, usually a genuinely holy person. But the core is love.

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Read more at: <https://international.la-croix.com/news/religion/covid-19-has-enriched-our-understanding-of-what-religion-is-about/14112>