Pacific Theological College, Fiji

Dear friends and partners in God's mission work,

Warm greetings on this Sunday morning!

Fiji has just confirm its second SARS-CoV-2 case, most popularly known in social media as the coronavirus. With the exception of PNG, Maohi Nui or French Polynesia and Kanaky or New Caledonia, most other Pacific islands states haven't recorded any confirmed case yet. But be that as it may, anxiety and fear are evident among people here in the islands. Panic buy has been happening here in Fiji over the past week, flights are cancelled and people are stranded in places and countries, other than being at home.

The Pacific aside, one can imagine (given our experience of anxiety and fear) a similar, even worst situation in the countries in which you, live and have your families, friends and those close to you. At this difficult and worry-filled time, we at the Institute for Mission and Research based at the Pacific Theological College are thinking and remembering each one of you in our prayers. Isolation is painful, sometimes heartbreaking and we know the anxiety is overwhelming. Some of us know people who are already sick. And it's especially hard to face a moment like this one. Our message to you, as friend, partner and colleague in God's mission is "solidarity of love, compassion and justice".

Earlier this week in Fiji a group of 8 employees gave up their jobs at a local tourist company so that their work colleagues can continue to work and earn an income at a time when the tourism industry is taking a major hit, down from 95% full flights to only about 10%. But what united them (this group of workers who gave up their jobs) was a sense of common purpose, of helping to bring something into being that was greater than anyone could achieve alone. Communities build; they do not destroy. They bring out the best in us, not the worst. They speak not to our baser emotions such as fear but to higher aspirations like building a world free of diseases, hunger and want. This is our common message. That despite the fears and anxieties which are understandable, we must always strive to encourage our friends and families appeal to higher aspirations.

May you all stay safe and well during this time! Take care of yourselves, families, friends and those close to you, and encourage each other to aspire to higher, noble dreams than just fear and anxiety.

With God's blessings and our kindest regards!

Casi

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"Fear not death but rather a life not lived with love, compassion and justice" (Varea Basilio)