

NEVER WASTE A CRISIS

trócaire

INTRODUCTION

In 2020, Trócaire launched a twenty-minute documentary called *Never Waste a Crisis*.

This documentary explores how certain governments are using the COVID-19 pandemic to crack down on minority groups and civil society space. The film also examines the crisis in the context of business and human rights; for

example, the ongoing targeting of human rights and environmental activists and the fast-tracking of development initiatives which threaten the safety, security, and rights of local communities.

HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

The aim of this resource is to open up the documentary for discussion in a parish or faith community setting.

The format can be tailored to suit your group, but a suggested format is below:

- Gather a group who are interested in topics such as ecology, human rights, overseas development and Catholic Social Teaching. If it is safe to do so, this group might meet in person, but you could also do this online via a platform such as Zoom.
- The documentary is divided into an introduction followed by three chapters. You might show this over two separate sessions (for example, the introduction plus chapter 1 followed by chapters 2 and 3) or you could host a viewing in one session followed by discussion.
- The questions below can be used for reflection with a group on the issues raised in the documentary. There are also quotes from *Fratelli Tutti* and *Laudato Si'* to link Catholic Social Teaching and the issues raised.
- Opening and closing prayers are suggested. The group leader can use these or include them as part of a deeper reflection time.

OPENING PRAYER

A Prayer to the Creator *Fratelli Tutti, 287*

Lord, Father of our human family, you created all human beings equal in dignity:
pour forth into our hearts a fraternal spirit and inspire in us a dream of renewed encounter, dialogue, justice and peace.
Move us to create healthier societies and a more

dignified world, a world without hunger, poverty, violence and war.

May our hearts be open to all the peoples and nations of the earth.

May we recognise the goodness and beauty that you have sown in each of us,
and forge bonds of unity, common projects, and shared dreams. Amen.

INTRODUCTION: NEVER WASTE A CRISIS

'Desperate times call for composure and for radical responses that will provide hope and bring maximum benefit to those who need them most.'

Taoiseach Leo Varadkar, March 2020

In times of crisis, governments are required to act to save lives. Restrictions on some human rights can be justified when they are strictly necessary, temporary in duration and do not disproportionately affect certain groups. COVID-19 has, however, exacerbated situations of injustice worldwide.

For Discussion

- What did you find difficult during the pandemic?
- Where did you find hope during the pandemic?

For Reflection

'The recent pandemic enabled us to recognise and appreciate once more all those around us who, in the midst of fear, responded by putting their lives on the line. We began to realise that our lives are interwoven with and sustained by ordinary people valiantly shaping the decisive events of our shared history.' (*Fratelli Tutti*, 54)



CHAPTER ONE: A SMOKE SCREEN

'We need to think of ourselves more and more as a single family dwelling in a common home. Such care does not interest those economic powers that demand quick profits. Often the voices raised in defence of the environment are silenced or ridiculed, using apparently reasonable arguments that are merely a screen for special interests.'
(*Fratelli Tutti*, 17)

For Discussion

1) Some governments are using or have used the pandemic as a smokescreen. In this documentary, examples are given from Zimbabwe, Honduras, Guatemala and Palestine. Discuss.

2) The pandemic doesn't exist in a vacuum, instead it interacts with well-established structures of injustice. What examples are given from Palestine and Guatemala?

For Reflection

'In today's world the sense of belonging to a single human family is fading, and the dream of working together for justice and peace seems an outdated utopia.' (*Fratelli Tutti*, 30)

'Once more we realised that no one is saved alone; we can only be saved together ... we are part of one another, we are brothers and sisters of one another.' (*Fratelli Tutti*, 32)

CHAPTER TWO: BUSINESS AS USUAL

The corporate race for natural resources has already put millions of people around the world at risk of abuse, especially indigenous communities. Some transnational corporations involved in industries such as mining, agri-business and energy production are responsible for land grabs and environmental damage on a large scale. People seeking to protect their land and their environment face growing levels of violence and intimidation.

For Discussion

- 1) What examples of these injustices are in the documentary? Who is particularly vulnerable?
- 2) How have some players in the mining industry exploited the pandemic?
- 3) Why is defence of the environment so important especially in the context of protecting human health?
- 4) Are there local examples of destructive 'business as usual' behaviour that we can point to here in Ireland?

For Reflection

'It is essential to show care for indigenous communities and their cultural traditions. They ... should be the principal dialogue partners, especially when large projects affecting their land are proposed. For them, land is not a commodity, but rather a gift from God and from their ancestors who rest there, a sacred space with which they are to interact ... Nevertheless, in various parts of the world, pressure is being put on them to abandon their homelands to make room for agricultural or mining projects which are undertaken without regard for the degradation of nature and culture.' (*Laudato Si'*, 146)

'Whether believers or not, we are agreed today that the earth is essentially a shared inheritance, whose fruits are meant to benefit everyone ... Every ecological approach needs to incorporate a social perspective which takes into account the fundamental rights of the poor and the underprivileged.' (*Laudato Si'*, 93)

CHAPTER THREE: BUILD BACK BETTER

The idea of returning to the way things were gives us a sense of hope. But when we interrogate this normality, what do we see? We see an already sick world, a world of gross inequality; we see a planet on its knees because of environmental destruction. Is this a normality that we are prepared to return to? The global crisis presents an opportunity for a recovery based on human rights and compassion.

For Discussion

1) Siobhan Curran (Trócaire) offers suggestions for things we need to 'build back better' in relation to human rights and the environment. What are some examples?

- 2) Profit is the main driver of corporations on a global scale. When are we forced to put a stop to this logic? As consumers, what can we do?
- 3) Can you think of an example of where we in Ireland can 'build back better' in our economic policies and activities?

Whether it's challenging the actions of oppressive governments or big business, now is a crucial time to act towards a more just and sustainable world. Each of us can play a part in building back better.

'I think you have to choose civilisation every day, it has to be an active choice, it doesn't come by itself ... we have a choice, and we can choose it.'

**Mary Lawlor, United Nations
Special Rapporteur on the situation
of human rights defenders**

For Reflection

'Although we are often not aware of it, we depend on these larger systems for our own existence. We need only recall how ecosystems interact in dispersing carbon dioxide, purifying water, controlling illnesses and epidemics, forming soil, breaking down waste, and in many other ways which we overlook or simply do not know about.' (*Laudato Si'*, 140)

'Today we cannot fail to recognise that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach, which must integrate justice into discussions on the environment, in order to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.' (*Laudato Si'*, 49)

'Love of neighbour is concrete and squanders none of the resources needed to bring about historical change that can benefit the poor and the disadvantaged ... There is no one solution, no single acceptable methodology, no economic recipe that can be applied indiscriminately to all ... Everything then depends on our ability to see the need for a change of heart, attitudes and lifestyles.' (*Fratelli Tutti*, 165–166)



CLOSING PRAYER

An Ecumenical Christian Prayer From *Fratelli Tutti*, 287

O God, Trinity of love,
from the profound communion of your divine life,
pour out upon us a torrent of fraternal love.
Grant us the love reflected in the actions of Jesus,
in his family of Nazareth,
and in the early Christian community.

Grant that we Christians may live the Gospel,
discovering Christ in each human being,

recognising him crucified
in the sufferings of the abandoned
and forgotten of our world,
and risen in each brother or sister
who makes a new start.

Come, Holy Spirit, show us your beauty,
reflected in all the peoples of the earth,
so that we may discover anew
that all are important and all are necessary,
different faces of the one humanity
that God so loves. Amen.

TAKING ACTION

‘Become a Campaigner’ – Join our activist community today to be the first to view our documentaries, get invitations to our events, and be part of making real changes that impact positively on people’s lives. Sign up here: <https://www.trocaire.org/petitions/become-a-campaigner/>

