



## JOINT APPEAL

For more than a year we have been experiencing the incredible situation of the Coronavirus involving the whole world as a global phenomenon. Who would have foreseen such a fact that it had affected all people on earth?

There have been, just until today, 2,700,000 deaths by Covid-19 in the world. In addition the global contagion pushes us to distance ourselves from others, to isolate ourselves in homes, to protect ourselves from others, to stay away. Covid-19 has changed the life of all the world societies: stay locked in the houses, loneliness, laziness. Especially the weakest and the elderly in institutions have suffered the consequences of this. Today there is fog about the future. People are tired, lazy, saddened, reduced to an individual life.

During the pandemic everywhere, in the East and in the West, we have shared sufferings and difficulties, but Africa remains one of the continents that suffer most of all. In fact in addition to the Covid-19, people in continents like Africa have been always suffering from poverty.

While everyone in rich countries has rushed to the vaccine, Africa has been largely deprived of it.

In this complex context, the culture of individualism is reasserting itself, even more motivated by the difficult situation we are living in: "you have to think of yourself, of your Country, of your Community!"

Self-centeredness today, more than a fault seems to be a necessity. Fear and individualism are the feelings of these times. This concerns individuals, but also states, nations. Everyone is closed in himself. Others are seen as potential enemies, sources of contagion to defend against.

We are deeply convinced that, precisely in this difficult time, it is even more important to think of others and to act in favor of others. The pandemic has clearly shown how the selfish attitude does a lot of damages, while the altruistic attitude heals. In fact, if not everyone gets vaccinated, the risk of the resumption of the pandemic (with new variants) is very strong. In this case, altruism is also a personal need because only with global vaccination will we be able to truly defeat the virus.

In this framework the Japanese Lay Buddhist Association Rissho Kosei-kai and the International Lay Catholic Movement Community of Sant'Egidio have renewed the relevant Common Agreement of fraternity and mutual cooperation for Africa they signed on November 2, 2016, in which is firmly declared: "we are confident that we could build "pieces of peace" in a planet full of "pieces of war" as repeatedly Pope Francis said."

To give concrete meaning to our commitment, we appeal to developed countries to show their solidarity by funding the UN's COVAX program and granting it parts of their vaccine reserves. At the same time, we ask pharmaceutical companies to grant the possibility of producing vaccines for Africa without having to comply with the rules of patents, at least temporarily. We definitely believe that today, also due to the Covid-19 tragedy, the world needs a more generous commitment for peace and solidarity - and even more it is needed by a world sick with the pandemic of individualism.

To heal our world wounded by so many sufferings it is necessary to defeat the culture of fear and individualism, and to grow the CULTURE OF THE OTHER and the CULTURE OF SOLIDARITY, because - it is now very clear - NO ONE IS SAVED ALONE, WE ARE ALL IN THE SAME BOAT.

This is why - as we renew our personal deep commitment to Africa - we make a strong Appeal to all World Religions and all Nations:  
"LET'S NOT FORGET AFRICA!"

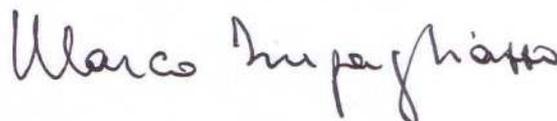
because Africa is our future, Africa is the future of the whole world!

Tokyo / Rome, June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021



Rev. Kosho Niwano

President designed of Rissho Kosei-kai



Prof. Marco Impagliazzo

President of the Community of Sant'Egidio