

We are the keepers of our sisters and brothers

Our lives have been changed forever.

The extent of it may not be known now, but it will become clearer over time.

I would like the reader to consider the following question, "are we really in this lockdown together?"

Allow me to rephrase the question; "are we all in the same boat?"

I am not persuaded that we are in the same boat.

Let's take the analogy further: some of us are on a cruise liner, some are in rubber ducks, still others are in rowing boats possibly without an oar, and too many are clinging to pieces of jetsam and flotsam battling to stay afloat.

The loss of personal income precipitates having to prioritise our regular monthly expenditure.

Reaching out to family and neighbours has lost its spontaneity because of social distancing.

Going out to buy essential foodstuff must be planned with some military precision.

Remember to keep the receipt for the purchases in case one is stopped by the police or military and oh! "Do I have my identity document with me?"

Here is the rub. If you received full pay or even part of your normal income for the month of April as well as other benefits during the lockdown, then you number amongst the most fortunate of people.

Daily we are informed about the financial and socio-economic impact upon the lives of people.

Scenes of desperation play themselves out on television news and social commentators each have their own take on the matter.

In fact, there are still people who stand at traffic lights despite fewer cars being on the road. But they are there, waiting expectantly that someone might just reach out to assist them.

Lowered to Level 4, the restrictions accompanying it has brought little respite to those who have little to no access to food.

We see lengthy queues of people waiting to receive food parcels – even this humanitarian act has not gone unscathed by corruption.

Nonetheless I am mindful of a saying I heard years ago: "I don't know what the future holds; but I know who holds the future".

Wishful thinking? I do not think so!

Nevertheless, in moments of doubt, many may question God at a time such as this and ask, "Where are you God?"

What occasions such a heart wrenching question?

A Senegalese proverb is apt here: "An empty belly has no ears". I first came across this idiom in a Missiology class whilst a student at theological college.

It confronts us with the moral dilemma as to how one can engage a hungry person in a discourse of any kind whilst they are hungry.

Will a person who does not have access to food be open to engagement of any kind?

Apropos the initial question, I do not believe that we are all in the same boat.

The only common denominator of the nautical analogy is that we are at sea together but some of us are in more secure vessels than others.

The challenge before us is securing safer passage through the pandemic by our mutual responsibility towards others through good citizenry.

Ubuntu (I am because you are) is not about accumulating things for self but to secure that each person, made in God's image, is not left behind in combatting hunger in our Metro, country, and the world.

I pray we take heart from the words of a song made famous by Sam Cooke in 1965, "A Change is Gonna Come" because we are a community of faith, hope and love.

Let us therefore affirm the dictum that we are our sisters and brothers' keepers.

So, I commend this well-known prayer:

God bless Africa,
Guard our children,
Guide our Leaders and
Give us peace
For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Edward Daniels, Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Port Elizabeth