

## Human Flourishing and Adaptations to Future Pandemics

Dear Editor,

The recent article on the efficacies and impacts of national pandemic management strategies posed that there are various approaches to controlling the spread of the virulent virus.<sup>[1]</sup> Combinations of proven health protocol measures were identified. This author agrees to their findings but also gives additional insights on possible ways of human flourishing and ways to respond to challenges related to public health toward positive well-being.

Studies show that expressions of spirituality have contributed to great human flourishing in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>[2]</sup> Hart and Koenig described how religion made a difference during the challenging times of the pandemic as people and religious communities responded to stay healthy and alive. The role of religious involvement enhanced immune function and resilience against the coronavirus. It allowed individuals to stay mentally, socially, spiritually, and physically healthy during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>[3]</sup> In some regions, people utilized religion as a coping resource to find meaning and overcome the ordeals brought about by the pandemic.

In the Philippines, a religious expression called *dungaw* involves placing sacred images outside the homes to facilitate protection from deadly disease. Religious images were positioned in such a way that they faced outside the house, signifying a hope that the divine would protect them from the danger of death, console their suffering, cure sickness, prolong their life, restore health, and miraculously end the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>[4]</sup> Personal and communitarian religious expressions include devotion to prayer, gratitude, and imploring the help of the divine, positive support to one's neighbors, sharing of resources, and genuine concern for the well-being of oneself and of others. Through these expressions, some individuals find comfort, hope, and strength during challenging times.

It has also been denoted that religious communities are essential for public health work to combat depression and anxiety brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. They can address chronic and pre-existing health disparities by communicating with public health communities. Some develop internal policies and meet guidelines that are consistent with national health protocols.

As society learns from the traumatic lessons and experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic, people can also rise above these challenges. Hence, human flourishing amidst a public health crisis is achievable. We can learn

from both science and faith in order to survive and adapt to future pandemics.

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There are no conflicts of interest.

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