

# Editorial

## Helping Professions and Social Science Issues during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Many cities in Central Europe are decorated with beautiful Baroque plague columns. These were built in order to express gratitude for the retreat of the epidemic and as a request for protection from other potential epidemics. Although the plague had subsided with the progress of hygiene and sanitation since the second half of the eighteenth century, people in our countries were still threatened by various infectious diseases such as cholera, typhus, or tuberculosis. During the twentieth century, however, we made such enormous progress in public health protection that awareness of the fragility of human life and society which faces invisible microorganisms seems to have receded into the background. Life expectancy has been steadily increasing and attention has been paid primarily to non-communicable diseases or other types of threats, such as climate change. Despite appeals and analysis from the World Health Organisation and infectious disease experts, most countries were almost unprepared for pandemics in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. The attack of the new coronavirus was therefore a sudden shock for many, and it brought new challenges and, perhaps, 'signs of the times'. Each of us has been affected in some way by this pandemic.

This monothematic issue focuses on the reflection of social science issues related to covid-19. The authors address these issues in terms of helping professions mainly, that is, social work, pedagogy, psychology, etc. There is also an overlap into the fields of philosophy and theology, as is characteristic for our journal. In an extensive collective study by **David Mutemwi** and his colleagues, we move to sub-Saharan Africa and look at how a much poorer society has responded to the challenge of a new disease. The authors of this philosophically tuned collective study discuss the factors that have contributed to the fact that some countries, such as Zambia, have dealt with public health protection – at least so far – more effectively while using far less resources than developed and rich countries such as Czechia. Philosophically and theologically tuned is also the contribution of **Emanuele Lacca**, who looks at the pandemic in terms of the social doctrine of the Church, especially regarding its basic principles – solidarity and subsidiarity. Theological reflection is also represented by an article by **Jana Maryšková**, in which the author deals with the interpretation of the coronavirus pandemic in the light of the doctrine of the 'signs of the times'. Another three articles offer a view representing the perspective of social work. In the review study, **Karel Řezáč** deals with the issue of quality of life, using a neo-Aristotelian-oriented approach, currently developed mainly by the Indian economist Amartya Sen and the American philosopher Martha Nussbaum. This approach consists mainly in the analysis of the fulfilment of the basic human potentialities. The results of qualitative research, which uses an online questionnaire and interviews with hospital chaplains, are then presented by **Ondřej Doskočil** and **Andrea Beláňová**. One of the interesting findings is that the pandemic affected the self-concept of many chaplains, especially 'depending on how they could operate in the hospital during the pandemic. The pandemic crisis has in many cases accelerated the development of relations with the institution and staff, whether for better or worse.' Using qualitative methods, **Josef Nota** then deals with

experiencing the challenges of covid-19 from the perspective of employees in a day care centre. We also bring two contributions from the pedagogical environment. The first is by **Stanislav Suda**, who describes the phenomenon of crisis in the essays of students of leisure pedagogy. In them, the author identifies seven more general attitudes, such as 'it is just like that', 'anxiety and worries', 'stop, challenge', etc. **Stuart Nicolson** then addresses the topic of homeschooling which has remained relatively untouched even during the various measures introduced to prevent the spread of the epidemic. For this reason, amongst others, it remains a valuable alternative to institutionalised education.

In the Varia category, we present a study by **Adéla Mojžíšová** and **Bohdana Břízová** on the topic of social support for seniors in the home environment. Based on quantitative field research, the author concludes that 'the majority of seniors living in their own household [...] do not feel lonely' and that these seniors cannot be considered a socially excluded group.

I wish you an enjoyable and enriching time while reading the new issue of the journal.

**Daniel D. Novotný**  
Co-editor *Caritas et veritas*