

# Editorial

## Potentials and Risks of Community-perceived Society for Pandemic Management

As you may know, the Chinese character for crisis is a combination of the character for danger and opportunity. Every crisis presents a threat and at the same time opens up new possibilities: for transformation, growth, and also reflection. This certainly also applies to the period of the past years marked by the Covid-19 pandemic.

In order to learn from the upheaval that society has gone through, we need to reflect on the experience. Now, in the autumn of 2022, we can look back on many things with a certain time gap, but at the same time with the knowledge that many connections and long-term effects remain hidden from us even now. In the words of the apostle: Our knowledge is only partial. Within the framework of scientific knowledge, this statement is also valid in connection with the division into different fields and disciplines. In this context, we could witness considerable one-sidedness in the first periods of the spread of the new disease and the introduction of state restrictions. Argumentation in the public space in the reflection of events, and especially during the justification of political steps within the pandemic management, was carried out almost exclusively in the spirit of the natural sciences. It was advocated by epidemiologists, immunologists, or vaccinologists, although it is clear that the pandemic is not exclusively a health problem, as it represents a complex phenomenon affecting the entire society and its diverse systems. Therefore, its reflection (and, in connection with it, also the search for future social responses to similar states and processes) should be seen from the point of view of humanities and social science approaches and the balancing of different attitudes and values (for example, an emphasis on freedom and solidarity). The pandemic is not only a topic of medicine, or even economics, as it sometimes has appeared that way in the media, but also of sociology and psychology, cultural anthropology and religious studies, ethics and theology or social work, as far as we see it as an academic discipline and not only as a practical field. We also want to contribute to paying off the debt in this area with the issue of the Caritas et veritas journal that you are currently looking at. We chose the title 'Potentials and Risks of a Community-perceived Society for Managing a Pandemic' to underline the importance of community, fellowship, and mutual cohesion in managing crises in general and pandemics in its specifics. It is not just a virus that spreads like an infection, but also fear or a 'bad mood', as well as trust and cooperation.

The thematic part of the issue starts with an interview with Hana Janečková, who views the management of the pandemic within society from the perspective of a sociologist. It is followed by six studies approaching the topic from different scientific and theoretical perspectives. Understandably, at the same time, the aforementioned diversity of attitudes and values, which is characteristic of our experience of the 'Covid era', is manifested in them. We can illustrate this statement, for example, by comparing two introductory texts. Both address the topic from the point of view of crisis management. While Bohumila Baštecká builds on the interdisciplinary discipline of

psychosocial crisis cooperation emphasising communication, reciprocity, cooperation, and citizenship, that is, 'bottom-up management', Štěpán Kavan in his research concerning the cooperation of crisis management workers and non-governmental non-profit organisations and experts follows rather the perspective of state authorities, that is, 'top-down management'. In their text, Soraj Hongladarom and Daniel D. Novotný go beyond the narrow boundaries of the Czech experience and address the importance of Buddhist ethics for the concept and role of volunteerism in handling the pandemic in Thailand, thus bringing a religious dimension to the discussion. Stuart Nicolson uses a theological-ethical approach when dealing with the topic and notes the importance of the Church's social teaching with its basic elements of subsidiarity, solidarity, and participation (after all, these are basic values for the aforementioned psychosocial crisis cooperation as well) for strengthening social cohesion in the face of the restrictions that accompanied the pandemic period. The community dimension is also present in Jan Kaňák's study, which seeks inspiration for community-based social work in the reflection of meetings between experts and clients within the #delamcomuzu project. David Urban, Alena Hricová (Kajanová), and Stanislav Ondrášek, on the other hand, follow a rather individualised path of examining the psychological burden of social workers in a period when their work and personal situation were significantly affected by a number of factors related to the pandemic.

I wish you inspiring reading!

Karel Šimr

Co-editor of *Caritas et veritas*