

tax holidays for paying pension funds? Why are people who have been evicted by their landlords being forcibly removed from the only land they can find to live on?

Looking at a community close to us in Cape Town, take for example the people living in the Mitchell's Plain area. They face multiple quandaries: (1) they are hungry, (2) a camp for homeless people, whose living conditions are the subject of dispute, has been set up in the area, (3) they are nervous about the behaviour of police and soldiers, and (4) on top of it all, they worry about contracting COVID-19.

Now consider this definition from a the National Institute of Mental Health in the United States: "A traumatic event is a shocking, scary, or dangerous experience that can affect someone emotionally and physically. Experiences like natural disasters (such as hurricanes, earthquakes, and floods), acts of violence... as well as car crashes and other accidents can all be traumatic."

Many of the interventions by government, NGOs and faith communities understandably focus on the economy, food and shelter – but we mustn't underestimate the trauma we are all experiencing at one level or another. Food is physical and real, but while mental scars can't be seen, they are deep and real with devastating effects.

During my online meeting with young people on Monday, a big concern raised was their feelings of stress, anxiety and fear – a confused mix of emotions – about their academic studies and their finances as they face the uncertainty of the coming months. It raised the question, how do we put support structures in place for them?

I worry particularly about young people and women on the frontline, but this affects us all. Both now and after COVID-19, we are going to need an emotionally and psychologically healthy society, and of all people it is us in the church who should be giving attention to our people's mental well-being.

We shouldn't feel scared or awkward when all of a sudden we feel anger, frustration, anxiety or other similar emotions. It is important for us to acknowledge to ourselves our feelings and the importance of dealing with them both now and when this time is over. The trauma will live beyond COVID-19 and we need to create spaces in which to deal with it.

A crucial way of maintaining our emotional health is keeping up as much as possible our daily rhythms of prayer and worship: Morning Prayer, our midday prayers, the Evening Offices, the Eucharist, including a spiritual Eucharist online, and our lectionary readings – we're including them on the Twitter channel of my family's Trust at <https://twitter.com/ArchTrust>.

I find a rhythm based on the Benedictine tradition helpful: study, work, play and pray. Find time for physical activities, planting and weeding a vegetable patch for example. Also create prayer communities with your family, at home as well as online, setting specific times for prayer, and try within your means to create learning opportunities for your children.

Using that rhythm as your framework, try to remain positive, hopeful and keep focussed on a realistic vision for the era which will follow COVID-19. To repeat to you what the young people told me on Monday, this too shall pass. And listen to and acknowledge Jesus' words: "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done" (Luke 22:42); and "Abba, Father," he cried out, "everything is possible for you. Please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine." (Mark 14:36)

God bless.

††**Thabo**

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