

## 2020: THE YEAR THAT NO ONE EXPECTED BUT THAT WE WILL ALL REMEMBER



Photo: forbes.com

**T**welve months ago, some headlines mentioned an outbreak of a new coronavirus in China, but its effects and symptoms were still unknown. In a short time, the virus spread and to other continents. In a matter of weeks, the entire world was affected by an unprecedented pandemic. Most of the population had to modify their routines, work schemes, and lifestyles. The prevention measures drove some businesses to bankruptcy, separated families, and damaged the economy. Schools and universities have opted for online courses and now rely heavily on parental guidance and tutoring. Hospitals have adapted to the needs of patients. Airlines have collapsed, as have hotels and the tourism industry. Restaurants evolved: Fewer tables, QR menus, and a predilection for food delivery. Hundreds of thousands of people have died, while millions have been infected; Every time we know more people who have struggled directly or indirectly with COVID-19. However, we must embrace the positive, and there is much to look back on this year.

Companies have been forced to innovate in different ways. From setting up new technology, modifying work schedules, and fostering new communication technologies. The preventive measures have increased awareness of caring and the importance of looking out for others. In the absence of a vaccine or treatment, innovation and technology will drive digitization. For example, the Mayo Clinic has developed a technology for robotic vehicles that collect and deliver medical samples to avoid exposure to the virus.



The World Economic Forum (WEF) also emphasized focusing on the positive. From this idea of a new big global reset, the WEF indicates that we will never return to normal. However, alongside the health crisis, some aspects will gain relevance over time, such as climate change, human rights, and sustainable development. For example, the WEF launched a platform with indicators to measure progress on the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as criteria concerning Environment, Society, and Governance (ESG). They also designed an initiative known as "the race to zero," which mobilizes a coalition of strategies to reduce carbon emissions.

I recently had the opportunity to listen to the Jesuit Father Javier Melloni, who reflected on the lessons from the pandemic. We need to be more aware of all the fears that this confinement and the uncertainty have brought upon us. Anxiety, frustration, and isolation arise. But we must not let them get the best of us. We have to appreciate the opportunities derived from this pandemic. Families have remained more united this year, we have become more responsible for our environment, and confinement has helped us enjoy alone time and to be grateful for every minute of health. The coronavirus has paved the way for us to connect more with nature and understand the need to take care of our planet, its flora, and fauna, to avoid phenomena of this type and become a more resilient society.

For many, this year has been eternal; It has been plagued with tragedies and bad news. On top of the health crisis, the economic one will hit even harder in the coming years. There have been political changes, natural disasters in some parts of the country, and collective anxiety. However, we must overcome these challenges and come out stronger. The confinement invites us to reflect, observe, and renew ourselves. Regardless of the challenge, adaptation and strength will depend on our ability to learn.