Confinement is not a bad thing! Butterflies come out of cocoons after all

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Crisis is not only a bad thing; good things come out of crisis. Yes, we are concerned about COVID-19 but opportunities are found in the challenges we face. Crises seem to bring the best out in people. We become a better version of ourselves; a stronger yet more empathetic one.

I am saying so out of experience. This is the fourth time I experience confinement. The last time was in 2006 during a war in my home country, Lebanon. The war got tougher and on July 14, 2006 we decided to leave. We were fortunate that my mother and sister were U.S. citizens, so the U.S. embassy evacuated us. After a 14-day evacuation journey from Tyre, Lebanon, transiting through Beirut and Cyprus, we finally landed at Baltimore Washington International Airport. From there my cousin picked us up and accommodated us for a month at her house in New Jersey.

All my ambitions had to stop. All my goals had to change. A new chapter of my life started. Adaptation, hard work, hope and resilience were at the heart of every day. During the subsequent years in my new home, I got married, had three beautiful children, worked at the United Nations, earned a Ph.D. in Economics, and became a full-time faculty member at Saint Peters University.

That experience left a specific mark on me as it really made me stronger and a different-better version of myself. When the war started, I used to tell myself: if I survive, I will enjoy life more. I will laugh more and I will travel more. However, during the confinement, I felt a deep need to help others, and it made me feel better. Then, it struck me that this is the real meaning of life. Thinking of others and sharing any goodness God gave us is the true happiness in life. The same happened when the pandemic crisis started. I was worried about my students at Saint Peter’s University. I was worried about their health, financial situation, and morale. They went through so much. Some of them lost dear ones. Others became infected or had to deal with family members being infected. Most of them lost their jobs. Yet, they managed to transition to online learning and keep the hard work. I had a student who lost her dad and yet finished the semester successfully and graduated on time. Her expression is still in my ears when she said “my dad will be proud of me. I want him to be.”

I am proud of my students. They became stronger without knowing. They became tougher when facing challenges. They learned how to prioritize and work hard. They learned that there is a solution for everything. They learned to have love and compassion for every human being. They will reach places.

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