

CHURCH

Health terrorism identifies its next culprit: the Jubilee

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We are only a week away from the beginning of the Holy Year, a great event of faith that has been a fundamental moment in the life of the Church for 700 years. Throughout history, Jubilees have been celebrated in very difficult circumstances, during wars and

famines. The Jubilee of 1350 came just two years after the apocalyptic plague known as the Black Death decimated Europe. The Jubilee of 2025 will be celebrated five years after the SARS-Cov 2 pandemic, but more importantly in a climate that, as we have seen, has become one of continuous health emergency.

In recent days, the 'experts', the 'scientists', to use the terms of the *mainstream* press, have made a comeback, raising their cries of alarm about the forthcoming Jubilee. The Adnkronos agency has taken them up and relaunched them. The content is this: the millions of pilgrims (an estimated thirty-five million over the course of the year) will inevitably bring millions of viruses and bacteria to Rome and Italy. According to these alarmists, what micro-organisms should we be afraid of? First of all Covid, "with unknown variants". It does not matter if, precisely because they are unknown, it is not known whether they will be dangerous or not, or whether they will be less serious than the Wuhan strain, as all the subsequent variants have proved to be; the name Covid is always frightening, it is the trademark par excellence of the 'era of pandemics' of which the World Health Organisation (WHO) speaks.

Mass movements of people can cause epidemics of respiratory viruses. This is what the epidemiologist Massimo Ciccozzi, one of the authors of an analysis of the health risks associated with the Jubilee, told Adnkronos Salute. We have to be ready, and I think we are partly ready, but we still have to do something. We can't have any surprises, so that we don't have so many respiratory viruses, from Covid to influenza, but also respiratory syncytial virus. As there is still no pandemic plan for 2024-2028, we will have to apply PanFlu, let's try to apply it".

The epidemiologist also recalls the outbreak of MERS (a virus similar to SARS) during the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia a few years ago. And here the question immediately arises: is it possible that only major religious events are a source of contagion? Are football championships, the Olympics, gay pride marches with tens of thousands of participants immune to health risks because these critical events are never reported?

On the contrary, the Jubilee - for some reason - will bring all kinds of micro-organisms, not just Covid. There is also talk of the ever-present monkey pox and much more.

Furio Colivicchi, vice-president of Fism, the Italian Federation of Medical and Scientific Societies, said: 'When large numbers of people move around, there is always a risk of infections spreading. That is why health surveillance must start at the Italian borders. There are too many unknowns: for example, we do not know the current spread of avian flu and monkeypox (now Mpox). And given that millions of people will

be arriving in our country from areas where bird flu and Mpox have already been reported and are present, such as South America and North America, we have to be very cautious. The alarm is there, we doctors are worried because we are talking about a public health issue that must be approached with the utmost vigilance.

According to Matteo Bassetti, a renowned infectious disease researcher, there will be an invasion of tropical diseases of biblical proportions, with pilgrims coming from the countries of the South: Dengue, Zika, Chikungunya, yellow fever and malaria. These are diseases caused by insects found only in the areas from which they come, but Bassetti ignores that: mosquitoes and others will travel on the planes and disembark with the pilgrims. Here too, one could reflect on the fact that the plague-spreaders are only the Catholic faithful, who travel to Rome by official means and undergo airport controls, while migrants disembarking in overcrowded makeshift means of transport have never been considered a health risk.

Colivicchi concludes: 'We have a difficult time ahead of us, the situation is critical. How d we deal with the looming health apocalypse? It will certainly be necessary to start wearing masks again, especially during the coldest periods, and to vaccinate the most vulnerable people, including the elderly, the chronically ill, heart patients and people with respiratory diseases, against Covid, influenza and pneumococcal diseases," warns the expert.

In conclusion, we can expect a resumption of media health terrorism during the Holy Year. It is not difficult to interpret these publications as a rather explicit invitation not to go to Rome or to the other Jubilee sites, churches and sanctuaries. And to see pilgrims as dangerous to public health, and to direct media hatred against them.