

Diary from Quarantine – 20 – *Give if you can, take if you need*

April 8

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“Give if you can, take if you need” is a quote from Giuseppe Moscati, a doctor from Naples (1880 – 1927) who was sanctified in 1987.

In the last few weeks in Italy, we can read it on the so-called “solidarity baskets” that hang from the balconies in many cities.



The initiative started in Naples, where people who can afford it can leave in the hanging baskets canned food, pasta, bread, but also clothing or soap, and people in need can just take what is necessary.

Here in Milan, the most cosmopolitan city in the country, the baskets have this sentence written in eight languages, and this popular, old-fashioned form of solidarity is spreading fast.

In Montichiari, a town near Brescia, here in Lombardy, the entire town coordinated to produce face masks: the idea came from two local dressmakers, some factories donate the fabric, women sew the masks, the butcher donates the bags, and students deliver them after their daily homeschooling hours.

The Senegalese communities all over the country are donating money and hand sanitizers. The Oromo Ethiopian community in Milan [donated](#) food to the Red Cross to distribute it to families in need: *“The Red Cross saved us from the sea and Milan welcomed us and our children. For this reason today we wanted to give a tangible sign of our solidarity”*.



And we cannot forget Sameh, the Egyptian greengrocer not far from where I live: *“Ten years ago you welcomed me and now I want to thank you. Everything is going to be ok. If you need it, the fruits and veggies you see on this table are for free.”*

This is what he wrote on the window of his little shop.



One day, hopefully not too far, this nightmare will be over. That day, it will be everyone's duty to remember these spontaneous acts of solidarity and the migrants who managed to help us even if they do not own much for themselves.

They have the right to be remembered, and juxtaposed to a bunch of unscrupulous shopkeepers who are selling surgical masks (the weakest type) for three or

four euros each. But we will have time to talk about these people's paltriness.

