

Greetings and much love from Italy.

My dear colleagues, I want to offer up my support and solidarity as you in the Bay Area begin to adjust to this new normal. As most of you know, I am finishing up my maternity leave this spring in Rome, where my son was born while we were under the sponsorship of the American Academy in Rome. Life has been surreal over the past weeks, and much of what we've been experiencing here is fast approaching you.

I am so relieved to see that strong action is beginning to be taken in the United States, as we have been incredibly worried about the situation in the U.S., where the severity of this pandemic was ignored and denied by the highest leadership for far too long. It is such a relief to see that the tide is turning.

**I want to implore you to implore your students, friends, family, neighbors, everyone you know who would benefit from the message, to take these measures seriously and do everything you can to eliminate unnecessary contact with other people. It's been two weeks now since the Italian government closed all schools in the country and began to take steps to limit people's movement and contact with others. Last week, full lockdown began, and we have since then not be allowed to leave our homes except for food or medicine, carrying traveling papers to show the police if stopped. At the time that this all began, there was not a single infection yet in Rome. The threat did not feel imminent or severe. It took some days, and hundreds of deaths, for everyone to really begin to understand how crucial these extreme measures were.**

**The situation in the north of the country is heartbreaking. Hundreds of patients dying each day, alone, as no one is permitted to visit hospitals, and without a funeral for the foreseeable future. The Italian doctors who are having to choose who will be given a chance at treatment and who will be allowed to die are dealing with exhaustion, sorrow, and likely PTSD. All of this happened after a lockdown, which was resisted and accepted in only a halfhearted fashion for days. Time that cannot be recovered.**

I hope that you will benefit from our example and not have to learn as we did just how important it is that we not leave our houses. If we in Italy could go back in time a week or two, I am sure that we would all accept the restrictions with more solemnity and a greater willingness to make what individual sacrifices were demanded for the greater good. I hope that the steps being taken there in the U.S. today are enough to stem the flow. I hope the people around you are all able to more quickly adjust to these very important demands.

I am thinking of you all as you face quarantine alone (yet together). And as you face the uncertainty ahead, not knowing how yet to serve our students, and when or how this crisis will resolve. I am with you. As the Italians say: ANDRA TUTTO BENE!

Elizabeth

