

Discussion Questions

Christianity in a Time of Sickness

Tomas Halík

Fr. Halík begins with the premise that this time is not a short-term interruption of life after which we will return to the way we were. Life will forever be different, not simply because of the virus, but because “the global vulnerability of a global world is now plain to see.”

- **What do you think he means by this?**

Fr. Halík writes: “If the church is to be a hospital, it must, of course, offer the health, social and charitable care it has offered since the dawn of its history. But the church must also fulfill other tasks. It has a diagnostic role to play (identifying the “signs of the times”), a preventive role (creating an “immune system” in a society in which the malignant viruses of fear, hatred, populism and nationalism are rife) and a convalescent role (overcoming the traumas of the past through forgiveness).”

- **How can the church fulfill its diagnostic role, its preventive role, and convalescent role?**

When speaking of the emptying and closing of churches, Fr. wonders why we have blamed this on the rise of secularism (and other outside influences) instead of seeing this as “another chapter in the history of Christianity is coming to a close, and it is time to prepare for a new one.” He continues: “Maybe this time of empty church buildings symbolically exposes the churches’ hidden emptiness and their possible future unless they make a serious attempt to show the world a completely different face of Christianity. We have thought too much about converting the world and less about converting ourselves: not simply improvement but a radical change from a static “being Christians” to a dynamic “becoming Christians.”

- **What is your reaction to these words?**
- **What does “a radical change from a static ‘being Christians’ to a dynamic ‘becoming Christians’” mean to you?**

In the section “A Call to Reform,” Fr. Halík writes: “Maybe we should accept the present abstinence from religious services and the operation of the church as kairos, as an opportunity to stop and engage in thorough reflection before God and with God. I am convinced the time has come to reflect on how to continue the path of reform, which Pope Francis says is necessary: not attempts to return to a world that no longer exists, or reliance just on external structural reforms, but instead a shift toward the heart of the Gospel, ‘a journey into the depths.’”

- **What does he think constitutes this shift? Do you agree or disagree with him, and why?**

Two quotes and a question for reflection from Fr. Halík:

*“Today Christ is knocking from inside the church and wants to get out.”
(Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio the day before his papal election.)*

*“He is not here. He has risen. He has gone ahead of you to Galilee.”
(paraphrased by Fr. Halík from Mark 16:6-7)*

- **“Where is the Galilee of today, where we can encounter the living Christ?”**