

Theology of the Virus

3rd Sunday of Lent (Year A)

March 15, 2020

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The coronavirus has certainly been a topic of conversation this past week. We want to take the proper precautions (like not sharing the communion cups or exchanging the sign of peace) in order to prevent the virus from spreading any more than it already has. As with anything, reactions have ranged from total panic and fear to total dismissal of its seriousness. Leaving aside the extremes, I think this virus can remind us of a very central theological point: we are all equals. In the eyes of the virus, any body can get it.

For much of our lives, we have set up hierarchies as to who is important. We consider some people more valuable than others. The coronavirus, however, shows no consideration for our many human made divisions- rich or poor, woman or man, Catholic or Protestant, ordained or lay, Hindu or Muslim, black or white- anyone who comes into direct contact with it can get and carry it. All of our social constructs that we put so much effort into don't mean much to the virus. No one is untouchable.

In today's long Gospel passage of the woman at the well, we have all kinds of man made divisions being crossed by Jesus. In it, we have someone who would not have been considered important on multiple accounts: a woman, a Samaritan, not a Jew, and someone who had many failed marriages. Yet, Jesus approached her as an equal and talked with her. Even though she was probably embarrassed about her life, Jesus understood her with compassion and mercy. By the end, the woman had the honor of becoming the first missionary to the Samaritans- 'come see the man who told me everything I've ever done.' As we heard, "many of

the Samaritans of that town began to believe in him because of the word of the woman who testified.”

Like Jesus, we should cross through our human made divisions and strive to relate to everyone as our equal.

Do I consider myself more important than those around me?

We certainly will be hearing much more about the coronavirus in the days and weeks ahead. Every time we hear about it, instead of just hearing about its political, medical, or scientific implications, let us also remember its theological implications: that we are all equals.