

May 7, 2020: The Calculated Risk

In addition to a reflection on the readings of the day, I am going to be sending out these additional comments as we move off of square one and work toward opening up toward a more regular exercise of our Christian communal life together. That movement has a lot of moving parts and not all of them are in place, not by a long shot. So, as we move forward, I'd like to highlight various elements of what navigating through these dangerous waters will look like so that we can increase our chances of success and avoid the necessity of going back to square one and starting over.

For me, before we make a move, it's important to acknowledge that the only absolute assurance that no one will contract the corona virus in our church is to leave it locked up until there is a vaccine. That does not seem feasible. So, the effort to open up the church again to private devotion and the celebration of the sacraments has an inherent risk that we cannot take away. We can only seek to minimize it.

For that reason, the archbishop has extended the dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass on Sunday until August 15th. That date is somewhat artificial. According to canon law, a dispensation cannot be indefinite. It has to have a time frame. But, that being said, there is nothing that would hinder the archbishop from extending the time frame if circumstances warranted it. He may very well do so, given the risk that gathering for Mass under these circumstances entails.

One way of reducing the risk is to limit those who are invited to return to attending Mass to people under the age of 65 and who are free from any medical conditions that put them in jeopardy if they were to contract the virus. That's the rationale for that decision. The vulnerable should continue to stay at home. That is a given.

More tomorrow...