



MAY JESUS CHRIST BE PRAISED!

MAY 10, 2020 / FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Spiritual Ponderings:

Corona Virus & the Sacraments - Part II

I am using an article that I read to guide my reflections on the Church and the Corona Virus. The article is called: "Epidemic Danger and Catholic Sacraments" and was written by a theologian named Thomas Joseph White. I felt God asking me to use this article as a stepping off point for my own reflections on what this strange time of "social distancing" means for the Church. Quotes from his article will be in bold and my commentary and reflections will be in normal font. *Thomas Joseph White, O.P., is director of the Thomistic Institute in Rome.*

The Catholic perspective on the common good and solidarity can and should naturally align with the act of public reason requiring temporary quarantine, not protest it in the name of a misbegotten exaggerated libertarianism. It is true that Christians can and should maintain measured reserve regarding political regimes and the state, especially when they illegitimately ignore the moral obligations of natural law or encroach upon arenas of religious freedom. But Christians should also be on guard against exaggerated individualism, magical thinking that ignores scientific evidence, and religiously rationalized narcissism.

There have been those in human history that have tried to use the state to take away individual rights. There are times though where people are called to work together to sacrifice some freedoms for the good of an individual or group. This should be done out of love though and not out of force. I remember watching a documentary on the life of Mother Teresa. In this documentary, the Archbishop of San Francisco gave her religious order a beautiful house to use as their convent. The film crew videotaped Mother Teresa and her nuns going through the house, ripping up the carpet and taking out the hot water heater. Mother Teresa explained that her sisters would freely give up these material possessions in order to serve the poor better. Maybe another way to look at it, if the Government told me not to say Mass because it had outlawed Catholicism, I hope that I would have the courage to celebrate Mass. In this case though my Archbishop has asked me to not say public Mass because he does not want me to accidentally spread a virus that may kill somebody. I don't want to be responsible for accidentally taking a life, if I can avoid it. I recently read an article of a church choir in Washington State that lost half of its members (something like 22 plus people) to the virus because they did not head the "Stay at home order."

Protesting quarantine because it disrupts one's lifestyle choices can be a sign of displaced individualism, denial of reality, and bourgeois entitlement. Furthermore, it is obvious at this time that the national community must agree on measures of public health as a precursor to resolving larger political and religious disagreements. Here Christians should exhibit a sense of solidarity in pursuing the common good, and foster a sense of greater empathy for those who are especially vulnerable: the elderly, those with pre-existing medical conditions, people with disabilities, and the poor who frequently have a lower quality of health, to say nothing of the young and ordinarily healthy people who are also dying from this disease. To cause division on the fundamental good of protecting human life during a pandemic by way of moderate quarantine measures seems to belie these efforts.

I wish we had a vaccine for this virus or a reasonable treatment. We don't and while the people in the medical field work hard to come up with these, we can do our part to save lives. I hated seeing my grandmother suffer when she neared death close to 10 years ago, I told myself and God that I would do anything to alleviate even the tiniest bit of her suffering. In the same way, if staying home can help me prevent someone else from suffering, I will do so.

The first thing to be said about the suspension of public masses is that it is not innovative nor is there any evidence that it stems from undue influence of a secular mentality. In fact, there is clear evidence that in medieval and modern Europe, as well as in the U.S., this form of response on the part of the Church is a very traditional and time-tested one. St. Charles Borromeo has been mentioned much in these discussions. He closed the churches of Milan due to a plague in 1576–77. During this time, he arranged for masses to be celebrated outside and at street intersections so that people could watch from their windows. There wasn't any question of distributing communion since it would have been rather unusual in this period for most people to receive regularly at mass. This lasted about two years.

First, let us start by praying that this will not last 2 years. Second, it is a little comforting to realize that this is not the first time that the Church has faced issues like this. Are we fully taking advantage of all the Church has to offer now? Many parishes are streaming Masses. One person told me, that he and his wife are using this time of social distancing to stream Masses from around the world. They "have been" to Mass in Rome, England, Ireland, and other places without a passport. It has allowed them to discover the universality of the Church in a new way. I personally have discovered a new way to reach out to people through my daily video Gospel reflections. How are we growing in our faith during this tough time?



May 10 2020 → Fifth Sunday of Easter → Lectionary: 52 → Gospel JN 14:1-12

Jesus said to his disciples: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be. Where I am going you know the way." Thomas said to him, "Master, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, then you will also know my Father. From now on you do know him and have seen him." Philip said to him, "Master, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you for so long a time and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on my own. The Father who dwells in me is doing his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else, believe because of the works themselves. Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do greater ones than these, because I am going to the Father."

Spiritual Reflection: Being a Christian is not about passing a test or completing a race as it is as much a mastering the art of living by apprenticing ourselves to Jesus.

Spiritual Questions

1. Do you experience the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ?
2. How do you contribute to the building up of the Church so people can find the Truth, The Way, and the Life?
3. How is Jesus the Truth, The Way, and The Life for you?
4. What are your feelings about Thomas in today's Gospel?
5. What are your feelings about Philip in today's Gospel?



Thought of the Day

- Sunday** The most reliable way to predict the future is to create it. - Abraham Lincoln
- Monday** Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power. - Abraham Lincoln
- Tuesday** Sir, my concern is not whether God is on our side; my greatest concern is to be on God's side, for God is always right. - Abraham Lincoln
- Wednesday** We can complain because rose bushes have thorns, or rejoice because thorn bushes have roses. - Abraham Lincoln
- Thursday** A day spent helping no one but yourself is a day wasted. - Abraham Lincoln
- Friday** If there is anything that links the human to the divine, it is the courage to stand by a principle when everybody else rejects it. - Abraham Lincoln
- Saturday** The best way to destroy an enemy is to make him a friend. - Abraham Lincoln

PRO-LIFE



May 2020

We pray that the Lord, whose word is upright and whose works are trustworthy, may inspire everyone especially leaders of nations to proclaim the sanctity of heaven. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

For those who have gone astray like sheep, especially our love ones, that the shepherd and guardian of their souls, our Lord Jesus Christ, may find them and bring them home. Amen.



St. Monica Society

Please join us in praying a special prayer each month for Catholics who have fallen away from their faith.

Catholic Prayers

A HEALING PRAYER.

O Jesus, Good Shepherd, You heal the sick and needy. I give you all those parts of my body which have suffered from illness. You know what it is like to endure pain. Look kindly on me today and heal me. Restore me to strength of soul and body.

Give Your gift of wisdom to my physician that he may be guided by the Holy Spirit in all he does. Bless my nurses so that their hands will become Your hands as they touch me. Bless, too, my medication. O Jesus, grant us all Your healing grace of love and peace. Amen.