

# Born Blind

Surprisingly, I've only been asked by a few people if the Coronavirus is a punishment from God. This may surprise you 😊 but I don't know. I've shared with these folks that society was never more Catholic than at the end of the 13th century. Catholicism was infused into the whole fabric of society from top to bottom.

For example, there were King and Queen saints and worker guilds, which in many ways served as Medieval unions, with the major exception that they were infused with Catholic Faith. These guilds made sure any member who died had a Catholic funeral Mass and burial, and to the best of their ability, they took care of the survivors. The universities were Catholic. The art was Catholic.



Yet, without much change in society on the ground level, in the very next century, up to half of Christendom died from the Black Death. Yes, there were problems in the Church – the Avignon Papacy and the philosophical pollution created by William of Ockham, etc. – but it's hard to make sense of such a drastic loss of human life, and the heartbreak it must have caused, when you view their Catholic society. Would God actually punish a totally Catholic culture in that way?

Certainly in the Old Testament, famine, war and plagues were viewed as punishments from God. The Israelites viewed them as a reminder that they had lost their way and needed to repent and amend their lives. The Old Testament writers, however, did not enjoy the fullness of God's revelation in the way the New Testament writers did in Jesus Christ. Their testimony of the words of Our Lord should give us pause before declaring with complete confidence that a tragedy is a punishment from God.

The New Testament takes a more cautious approach. A Catholic understands the Old Testament through the eyes of the New Testament. Therefore, I'd advise caution in drawing dire conclusions regarding the Coronavirus as a sort of biblical punishment. That stated, I can't help thinking of the Blessed Mother telling the young seers at Fatima that war is a punishment for sin, although one shouldn't equate the message of Fatima with the New Testament either.

It's now time to address the Sunday Gospel reading which tells the story of the man born blind. In early Jewish biblical writings it was implied that people with physical defects were contaminated and/or came from particularly sinful backgrounds. When people suffered personal tragedy it was viewed in a similar manner (Luke 13:4). In later wisdom literature, closer to the birth of Jesus, such as in the Book of Job, it was viewed in a more cautious and humble manner more with the sense of: Who are we to understand the mind of God?

That mentioned, in the Gospel both the disciples and the adversaries of Jesus draw the false conclusion that this man must be a sinner because he has lived up to this point as a blind man. I assume they thought he was a particularly bad sinner compared to themselves. If so, they were really lost. They didn't even see their own sinfulness. Regardless, Jesus denies that the blind man's condition at birth had anything to do with his personal sinfulness or his parents' sinfulness. In this case, the man was born blind to reveal the glory of God through healing him.

In short, we have to take a balanced view of this pandemic. I wouldn't dismiss the thought that the Coronavirus could be a punishment from God. We all need to re-examine our lives and priorities. Unfortunately, it looks like we will have plenty of time to do so. I wouldn't fully buy into it either. More importantly, I would view it as an opportunity to reveal the glory of God to others.

A crisis of this type can stimulate us to be kinder, more helpful, more patient, more understanding and even to share our toilet paper with those in need! Perhaps, more than anything else, we could become more prayerful. This is a GREAT opportunity to become devoted to Our Lady and Our Lord through praying the Rosary. Also, perhaps we could use this time as an opportunity to read about our Catholic Faith. If you want suggestions, I have plenty, so give me a holler.

Finally, remember that a person proves their worth in a time of crisis. Character, or lack of it, is revealed when the chips are down. Many of you are the leaders of your families. Rally the troops, gather your resources and make a firm resolution that nothing will shake your Faith or break your will going forward. To quote St Paul, "I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret to be content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:12-13).