

God Never Lets a Crisis Go to Waste

This article is from the “Edifying the Body” section of the Church of God Big Sandy’s website, churchofgodbigandy.com. It was posted for the weekend of June 20, 2020. A version of the article was posted at cnsnews.com on May 26. (The writer is a priest of the Diocese of Camden, N.J., who serves as parochial vicar at St. Agnes Parish in Naples, Fla.)

By Michael P. Orsi

NAPLES, Fla.—From time to time throughout these weeks of lockdown, I’ve heard people speculate about whether the coronavirus is a chastisement sent by God. In a time when society often seems unable to distinguish between morality and immorality, the idea of a pandemic as God’s punishment can seem plausible.

It isn’t good Catholic theology, however, since we know that Christ’s death was the ultimate atonement for human sins and failings. He bore the brunt of the punishment due us.

Permissive will

The appearance of a new disease, like any catastrophic event, happens because God made our natural environment the way he did. It’s the product of a world in which both good things and bad things can happen. To put it in theological terms, it’s an expression of his permissive will.

This doesn’t mean that God has no interest in it. On the contrary, his all-too-clear message to us, evident in the pandemic, is that we need to change. We must do things differently.

Theories of origin abound

Theories about how the pandemic began abound.

- Was it a matter of poor sanitary and food-handling practices in that Wuhan market?
- Was it caused by poor security procedures in that nearby biotechnology lab, allowing the escape of a dangerous pathogen?

We may never know the answer—which indicates one thing that definitely has to change: the intentional lack of transparency in China’s communist regime. Valuable weeks were lost, during which contagion spread and countermeasures were delayed, because the Chinese government didn’t alert the world to a growing threat.

Depredations of nature

Whether that biotech lab was directly involved or not, the lives lost to COVID-19 show us that, even with all our scientific advances and technological so-

phistication, we're not immune to the depredations of nature. The days of plague are clearly not behind us.

That's a useful corrective to the overconfidence we tend to have in our own human cleverness. It's also a timely warning to the business and financial communities and to those individuals who invest in bioscience research, especially research that's related to biological warfare and weapons of mass destruction.

The old movie cliché warns that there are some things man was not meant to tamper with. At the very least, we should proceed in this delicate area with extreme caution and moral discernment.

Easy to question

We also need to stop making everything political.

- Was the administration late in grasping the seriousness of the contagion threat?
- Should countermeasures have been initiated earlier, on both the federal and state levels?
- Did government agencies make the proper moves?
- Were their policies effective, their decisions correct?
- Did the medical establishment move decisively?
- Did nations cooperate fully and appropriately?
- Did international organizations function in ways that fulfilled their missions?

You could answer yes or no to any of these questions. And, because this disease was new and no one really understood how severe its consequences would be, either a yes or a no answer could be considered correct. It's all in how you look at things.

Torrent of criticism

But the torrent of criticism flowing in every direction has contributed nothing to the saving of lives. Rather, it's only served to make a charged political environment even more volatile.

What we have learned from this is that human beings, political leaders, governments, nations, organizations all have to be truthful and open. International cooperation must be total. With a crisis of this magnitude, where everybody on earth is in jeopardy, the inevitable jockeying for political advantage has to wait.

Political cynicism or great blessing?

The saying "Never let a crisis go to waste" has a negative connotation, because it reeks of political cynicism. But, in a sense, it speaks to a great blessing.

Perhaps God should be credited as its author, because he never lets any crisis go to waste. And he never abandons his people.

God is speaking to us right now, calling us to examine all the questions raised by this pandemic. He's calling us to be better people, to make a better world.

We should recognize the opportunity he's set before us and act upon it.