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A journal for restless minds

Colloquī *: to discuss*

Normal Interrupted

"Until it is safe" means never

Deacon's Diner

Food for a restless mind

Normal Interrupted

“Until it is safe” means never

Normal has been interrupted, placed on indefinite hold. If this was normal, this issue of *Colloqui* would have been dated March 20, 2020, the end of the third week of Lent, but this is not normal, far from it. Nine weeks have come and gone since the last issue of *Colloqui*. Nine weeks of isolation, quarantine, shutdown, fear, anxiety, but worst of all, debilitating restrictions and unjust, unwarranted limitations on our faith, freedoms, and finances.

We have been told this is for our own good and for our *safety*. We have been told this by “experts” with years of “dedicated” public service. We have been assured by the political class, government bureaucrats, the media (the American *Pravda*) and the power elite that these measures are necessary, and therefore, to borrow a slogan from the Borg: “resistance is futile.” And yet, we should remind ourselves at what grave peril we forget or ignore Benjamin Franklin’s sage admonition: “Those who would give up essential liberty to purchase a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety.” We have become a compliant people, far too comfortable in our easy-chairs surrounded by modern technological gadgetry to worry the heavy chains which now enslave us; life has become too easy and in our ease we have grown softer, more accepting, morosely averse to even a hint of risk. Eliminating risks is after all what we demand of the State at all levels; we have relegated to the State the task of providing us with the fondest of utopian safe zones. The citizen sentiment has turned a hard left, immanentizing the eschaton, seeking to bring about, through human action, heaven on earth while eschewing the promise of heaven in heaven with God. The State has become our god and we must kneel in fawning obeisance. We simply want to believe; after all, they are the “experts”, they *know* more than we do, and they have our best interests at heart. Or do they? Increasingly, it is becoming painfully apparent and patently obvious, they are primarily interested in their own above and beyond ours. As one Catholic philosopher recently wrote:

A pact without God is a pact with the Devil, and an

invitation to the Father of Lies to build upon the first human lie.

I’m aware that this is an “unmodern observation.” Those who disbelieve in God will hardly be caught out worshipping or substituting Satan in His place, if they are at all clever. Even a child caught out in theft will try to deny it, or excuse it if he can’t. As an aside, I would point to the tremendous salvific value of Confession.

My chief “political” worry at the present day is about the broad, but glib, rejection of religion. I would guess that a majority in Western society thinks it is irrelevant to their lives, and a growing number of these would expressly declare that they are “nones” on a questionnaire.

I call them glib, because they can’t imagine that this could be important; most have never devoted four minutes’ thought to this. Thank God, for the most part, they have not thought through the implications of their dismissal.

Or rather, don’t thank God, for atheism is, both subtly and unsubtly, the means to their damnation. The godless man knows in his heart (do I echo Biblical proverbs?) that he can do whatever he can get away with. His restraint is only the prospect of humiliation, should he get caught; and if, as typically, he thinks himself smarter than his fellows, this is no restraint.

He needn’t commit “the perfect crime,” just one that is unlikely to be discovered. Again and again, we see scandals in public life, modeled on common scandals in private. “Progressive” people, who would legislate for others, hardly live by their own rules when they think backs are turned. Consult any newscast.

We call this behavior a “failure of conscience,” when we ourselves should realize that conscience hasn’t come into it. For these are the sort of crimes, often small and miserable acts of hypocrisy—that are inevitable once conscience has been suppressed.

To my mind, our present conception of freedom—blazoned in our godless media—reveals everything. It is the signal for more horrors that are coming, not by accident, but through acts of our own “liberated” will.¹

Over and over the same tune is played to no perceivable end; the crisis has given license to those with power to greater power and power is never willingly relinquished once it has been acquired. According to Ben Morreell of the Acton Institute:

When a person gains power over other persons—political power to force other persons to do his bidding when they do not believe it right to do so—it seems

inevitable that a moral weakness develops in the person who exercises that power. It may take time for this weakness to become visible. In fact, its full extent is frequently left to the historians to record, but we eventually learn of it. It was Lord Acton, the British historian, who said: "All power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely."

Please do not misunderstand me. These persons who are corrupted by the process of ruling over their fellow men are not innately evil. They begin as honest men. Their motives for wanting to direct the actions of others may be purely patriotic and altruistic. Indeed, they may wish only "to do good for the people." But, apparently, the only way they can think of to do this "good" is to impose more restrictive laws.

Now, obviously, there is no point in passing a law which requires people to do something they would do anyhow; or which prevents them from doing what they are not going to do anyhow. Therefore, the possessor of the political power could very well decide to leave every person free to do as he pleases so long as he does not infringe upon the same right of every other person to do as he pleases. However, that concept appears to be utterly without reason to a person who wants to exercise political power over his fellow man, for he asks himself: "How can I 'do good' for the people if I just leave them alone?" Besides, he does not want to pass into history as a "do nothing" leader who ends up as a footnote somewhere. So he begins to pass laws that will force all other persons to conform to *his* ideas of what is good for *them*.

That is the danger point! The more restrictions and compulsions he imposes on other persons, the greater the strain on his own morality. As his appetite for using force against people increases, he tends increasingly to surround himself with advisers who also seem to derive a peculiar pleasure from forcing others to obey their decrees.²

Here then is where the proverbial rubber meets the ruts in the road: keeping the above in mind, let us pause to consider Dr. Anthony Fauci, a 35 year otherwise unremarked public health bureaucrat, suddenly the most powerful man in the country. By his word alone the population was corralled, the pandemic grew horns and, as we have experienced, the entire country has been well and truly gored. Wearing a mask (who is that masked man?) and blinders, using flawed ever-shifting models and narrowly focusing on the deadly effects of the virus, Fauci has managed to lead us literally to the gates of hell. Rather than relying on the common

good sense of the American people, rather than providing straightforward guidelines for limiting the potential spread of COVID-19 and trusting in the American people to do the right thing, Fauci has insisted on a monstrous scheme to lockdown 378 Million people, shutdown virtually all businesses, including medical facilities with the exception of those focused on the virus, and arrogantly instigating the second Great Depression putting 36 Million people out of work. Granted, Dr. Fauci could not have accomplished this alone, he had a multitude of local, state, and federal officials eager to do his bidding and they did it in spades.

Throughout this sordid tale, Dr. Fauci has consistently but unabashedly been wrong on much, if not most, of his pronouncements, just as the models he has touted and relied for the too often faulty assumptions he has claimed as fact. Perhaps most grievous has been his pronouncement (as fact) that COVID-19 was extremely lethal, initially claiming that over two million would die from the virus within the U.S. To date that number has, thank God, been less than 100 thousand and perhaps most importantly, over fifty percent of the Coronavirus-coded deaths nationally have been from nursing homes. Significantly, Dr. Deborah Birx, a member of the White House Coronavirus taskforce and cohort of Dr. Fauci, believes Coronavirus-coded deaths are inflated by some 25%. According to a Washington Post report:

During a task force meeting Wednesday, a heated discussion broke out between Deborah Birx, the physician who oversees the administration's coronavirus response, and Robert Redfield, the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Birx and others were frustrated with the CDC's antiquated system for tracking virus data, which they worried was inflating some statistics—such as mortality rate and case count—by as much as 25 percent, according to four people present for the discussion or later briefed on it. Two senior administration officials said the discussion was not heated. "There is nothing from the CDC that I can trust," Birx said, according to two sources.

In April, Birx made it clear that the U.S. is liberally coding COVID deaths; in other words, she explained, if a person tests positive for the virus, "we are counting that."

"I think in this country, we are taking a very liberal approach to mortality," she said at an April press

briefing. “And I think the reporting here has been pretty straightforward over the last five to six weeks. ... If someone dies with COVID-19, we are counting that.”

“There are other countries, that if you have a pre-existing condition, and let’s say the virus called you to go to the ICU (intensive care unit) and then have a heart or kidney problem,” Birx explained. “Some countries are recording that as a kidney issue, or a heart issue, and not a COVID-19 death.” In the U.S., she suggested, “we’re still recording it” as a COVID-19 death.

Yet despite the growing evidence and facts to support Dr. Birx’s and others’ beliefs that the infection and mortality rates are overstated, Dr. Fauci, still claims that COVID-19 deaths are understated, and that the lockdown should continue indefinitely, no matter the cost.

According to San Diego county Supervisor Jim Desmond, after digging into the data he now believes only six of the county’s 194 coronavirus identified deaths are “pure” coronavirus deaths, meaning they died from the virus, not merely with the virus, ruling out deaths from individuals with preexisting conditions. “We’ve unfortunately had six pure, solely coronavirus deaths—six out of 3.3. million people. I mean, what number are we trying to get to with those odds. I mean, it’s incredible. We want to be safe, and we can do it, but unfortunately, it’s more about control than getting the economy going again and keeping people safe.”

Clearly, the sharks have smelled blood and being sharks have done what they always do when there is blood in the water: they have gone on a feeding frenzy, feeding on the wounded chum. The pandemic has presented a perfect storm for those who thirst for unrestrained power. Dennis Prager, in his May 5, 2020 column, posits that the global lockdown may well be the greatest mistake in history. I would add it may possibly be the greatest power grab in the history of power grabs.

The idea that the worldwide lockdown of virtually every country other than Sweden may have been an enormous mistake strikes many—including world leaders; most scientists, especially health officials, doctors and epidemiologists; those who work in major news media; opinion writers in those media; and the hundreds of millions, if not billions of people who put their faith in these people—as so preposterous as to be immoral.

That’s the way it is today on planet Earth, where deceit, cowardice and immaturity now dominate almost all societies because the elites are deceitful, cowardly and immature.

But for those open to reading thoughts they may differ with, here is the case for why the worldwide lockdown is not only a mistake but also, possibly, the worst mistake the world has ever made. And for those intellectually challenged by the English language and/or logic, “mistake” and “evil” are not synonyms. The lockdown is a mistake; the Holocaust, slavery, communism, fascism, etc., were evils. Massive mistakes are made by arrogant fools; massive evils are committed by evil people.

The forcible prevention of Americans from doing anything except what politicians deem “essential” has led to the worst economy in America history since the Great Depression of the 1930s. *It is panic and hysteria, not the coronavirus*, that created this catastrophe. And the consequences in much of the world will be more horrible than in America.

The United Nations World Food Programme, or the WFP, states that by the end of the year, more than 260 million people will face starvation — double last year’s figures. According to WFP director David Beasley on April 21: “We could be looking at famine in about three dozen countries. ... There is also a real danger that *more people could potentially die from the economic impact of COVID-19 than from the virus itself*” (italics added).

That would be enough to characterize the worldwide lockdown as a deadly error. But there is much more. If global GDP declines by 5%, another 147 million people could be plunged into extreme poverty, according to the International Food Policy Research Institute.

In one particularly incomprehensible act, the government of India, a poor country of 1.3 billion people, locked down its people. As Quartz India reported on April 22, “Coronavirus has killed only around 700 Indians ... a small number still compared to the 450,000 TB and 10,000-odd malaria deaths recorded every year.”

The lockdown is “*possibly even more catastrophic (than the virus) in its outcome: the collapse of global food-supply systems and widespread human starvation*” (italics added). That was published in the left-wing *The Nation*, which, nevertheless, enthusiastically supports lockdowns. But the American left cares as much about the millions of non-Americans reduced to hunger and starvation because of the lockdown as it does about the people of upstate New York who have no incomes, despite the minuscule number of coronavirus deaths there. Or about the citizens of Oregon, whose governor has just announced the state will remain locked down

until July 6. As of this writing, a total of 109 people have died of the coronavirus in Oregon.

Michael Levitt, professor of structural biology at Stanford Medical School and winner of the 2013 Nobel Prize in chemistry, recently stated, "There is no doubt in my mind that when we come to look back on this, the damage done by lockdown will exceed any saving of lives by a huge factor."

To the left, anyone who questions the lockdown is driven by preference for money over lives. Typical of the left's moral shallowness is this headline on Salon this week: "It's Time To Reject the Gods of Commerce: America Is a Society, Not an 'Economy,'" with the sub-head reading, "America Is About People, Not Profit Margins."³

Earlier, Prager in his April 28th column wrote, "the ease with which police state tactics have been employed and the equal ease with which most Americans have accepted them have been breathtaking." Think about that for a millisecond while trying desperately to breathe through your now mandatory mask. He goes on to note how people will argue that a temporary police state is justified because of the uniqueness of the coronavirus threat. Like Prager, I do not believe the data will ultimately bear this out. "Regardless, let us at least agree that we are closer to a police state than ever in American history." He goes on to explain what he sees as a "Police state."

"Police state" does not mean totalitarian state. America is not a totalitarian state; we still have many freedoms. In a totalitarian state, this article could not be legally published, and if it were illegally published, I would be imprisoned and/or executed. But we are presently living with all four of the key hallmarks of a police state:

No. 1: Draconian laws depriving citizens of elementary civil rights.

The federal, state, county and city governments are now restricting almost every freedom except those of travel and speech. Americans have been banned from going to work (and thereby earning a living), meeting in groups (both indoors and outdoors), meeting in their cars in church parking lots to pray and entering state-owned properties such as beaches and parks — among many other prohibitions.

No. 2: A mass media supportive of the state's messaging and deprivation of rights.

The New York Times, CNN and every other main-

stream mass medium — except Fox News, The Wall Street Journal (editorial and opinion pages only) and talk radio — have served the cause of state control over individual Americans' lives just as Pravda served the Soviet government. In fact, there is almost no more dissent in The New York Times than there was in Pravda. And the Big Tech platforms are removing posts about the virus and potential treatments they deem "misinformation."

No. 3: Use of police.

Police departments throughout America have agreed to enforce these laws and edicts with what can only be described as frightening alacrity. After hearing me describe police giving summonses to, or even arresting, people for playing baseball with their children on a beach, jogging alone without a mask, or worshipping on Easter while sitting isolated in their cars in a church parking lot, a police officer called my show. He explained that the police have no choice. They must respond to every dispatch they receive.

"And why are they dispatched to a person jogging on a beach or sitting alone in a park?" I asked.

Because the department was informed about these lawbreakers.

"And who told the police about these lawbreakers?" I asked.

His answer brings us to the fourth characteristic of a police state:

No. 4: Snitches.

How do the police dispatchers learn of lawbreakers such as families playing softball in a public park, lone joggers without face masks, etc.? From their fellow citizens snitching on them. The mayor of New York City, Bill de Blasio, set up a "snitch line," whereby New Yorkers were told to send authorities photos of fellow New Yorkers violating any of the quarantine laws. Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti similarly encouraged snitching, unabashedly using the term.

It is said that about 1 in every 100 East German citizens were informers for the Stasi, the East German secret police, as superbly portrayed in the film "The Lives of Others." It would be interesting, and, I think, important, to know what percentage of New Yorkers informed on their fellow citizens. Now, again, you may think such a comparison is not morally valid, that de Blasio's call to New Yorkers to serve a Stasi-like role was morally justified given the coronavirus pandemic. But you cannot deny it *is* Stasi-like or that, other than identifying spies during World War II, this is unprecedented in American history at anywhere near this level.

This past Friday night, I gathered with six others for a Shabbat dinner with friends in Santa Monica, California. On my Friday radio show, I announced I would be doing that, and if I was arrested, it would be worth it. In my most pessimistic dreams, I never imagined that in America, having dinner at a friend's house would be an act of civil disobedience, perhaps even a criminal act. But that is precisely what happens in a police state.

The reason I believe this is a dress rehearsal is that too many Americans appear untroubled by it; the dominant force in America, the left, supports it, and one of the two major political parties has been taken over by the left. Democrats and their supporters have, in effect, announced they will use state power to enforce any law they can to combat the even greater "existential" crisis of global warming.

On the CNN website this weekend, in one of the most frightening and fanatical articles in an era of fanaticism, Bill Weir, CNN chief climate correspondent, wrote an open letter to his newborn son. In it, he wrote of his idealized future for America: "completely new forms of power, food, construction, transportation, economics and politics."

You cannot get there without a police state.⁴

Anders Koskinen, Editorial Associate for *Intellectual Takeout* makes note of the importance of attitude post-COVID-19 in his May 7, 2020 essay "*Indifference Is Complicity in the Revolution*". In it he writes, "The form that American society takes after the COVID-19 stay-at-home orders, business closures, and social distancing will entirely depend on the attitudes of America's citizens."

Those who reject the Patrick Henry approach, valuing life and indifferent to the gift of liberty, will be content to trust the government for safety via its newly acquired pandemic powers. Yet anyone who describes himself as indifferent about the form American political power takes going forward needs to rethink what being indifferent actually means.

Replace "I'm indifferent" with "I don't care" and you'll realize that it's an extremely damaging reaction. "I don't care about Steve" is far more revealing language than "I'm indifferent towards Steve." In the same way, "I don't care about America and its values" is far more disturbing than "I'm indifferent towards American values."

At this time, it is not enough to seek to conserve the status quo. After all, the current status quo is one in which our government is allowed to monitor and pre-

vent people assembling, infringe upon our First Amendment rights, and dictate what we are allowed to buy.

Such a political climate is not one worth conserving, as political philosopher Frank Meyer noted in his essay, "*Freedom, Tradition, Conservatism*": "Today's conservatism cannot simply affirm. It must select and adjudge. It is conservative because in its selection and in its judgment it bases itself upon the accumulated wisdom of mankind over millennia, because it accepts the limits upon the irresponsible play of untrammelled reason which the unchanging values exhibited by that wisdom dictate. But it is, it has to be, not acceptance of what lies before it in the contemporary world, but challenge."

The problem with this is that many Americans simply do not want to step up to the challenge, they are indifferent to the moral, social, and political decay of the country they inhabit. The problem of American decay is due to this apathy, to this indifference. Americans just don't care about America.

Meyer continues: "In an era like ours the existing regime in philosophical thought, as in political and social actuality, is fundamentally wrong. To accept is to be not conservative but acquiescent to revolution. Situations of this nature have arisen again and again in the history of civilization; and each time the great renewers have been those who were able to recover true principle out of the wreck of their heritage."

Is America in for a great renewal of its principles as the COVID-19 restrictions begin to loosen? Will we see a restoration of timeless truths of Western Civilization, those which formed our country and its culture and system of government to begin with? Perhaps. But such a renewal out of the depths of the wreckage of America's heritage will require us to put in far more effort than most of us have been giving.

Speaking on spiritual matters, Archbishop Fulton Sheen once gave a talk in which he said, "So you see how important it is to have in the mind an idea to do all that you can, to work to the limit of your ability. Our world is really suffering from indifference. Indifference is apathy, not caring. I wonder maybe, if our Lord does not suffer more from our indifference than he did from the Crucifixion." While one can debate the sufferings of Christ crucified compared to his sufferings caused by an indifferent, uncaring, secular world, Sheen's statement nonetheless is apropos for America's current political climate.

Who wounds the soul of America more grievously? The socialist who seeks to mold America in their own preferred image? Or the average apolitical citizen who is indifferent towards America? The first seeks to reshape

his country, the second does not care about his country. As the coronavirus retreats and the economy reopens, will Americans fight for the founders' view of America? Or will we remain indifferent to the excesses that government has wrought this year, and in years prior?

One critical point which bears mention. **Contact tracing.** Like so much of the progressive narrative, contact tracing is sold as an elixir enabling rapid grounding of the source of any outbreak. Sounds good as it is sold; sounds *too good* to be all that and nothing more; which it is. Contact tracing means tracking everyone's movements, knowing who has been in contact with who, why and where they have been. In a word—okay, two words—surveillance monitoring. Not only is this immoral, it is illegal and unconstitutional. Do not let anyone tell you otherwise. Do not let them tell you it is for your own good, your own safety, because it is not. And remember Lord Acton. There are no laws that are “temporary” only laws that grow ever more onerous and are etched deeper in stone. Remember Rahm Emanuel, President Obama's chief of staff who so fatuously observed, “Never let a good crisis go to waste”? Sadly, he has repeated this catchphrase recently while discussing the pandemic. Speaking on ABC's *This Week* back on Sunday, March 22, 2020, Emanuel said, “Never allow a crisis to go to waste. Start planning for the future.” From the *Spokesman-Review* of Spokane, Bill Manuel offers this counterpoint:

The initial justification for the virus lockdown was to “flatten the curve,” meaning to slow the spread of the virus so hospitals were not overwhelmed with very sick patients. The same number of people would get the virus, but fewer would die because better care could be provided.

The curve has been flattened and our hospitals are not overwhelmed. Yet the lockdown and devastating economic results continue — with some political leaders urging the ugly tactic of citizens spying on their neighbors and turning them in for violations of often petty and arbitrary rules, e.g., Michigan residents were forbidden to travel to weekend cabins in Michigan but out-of-state residents could travel to their weekend cabins in Michigan.

The slogan “Stay home, stay safe” could very well be expanded to “Stay home, stay safe, stay unemployed, stay broke, stay hopeless, stay dependent.” To some in the political class, your misery is their opportunity they

don't want to waste.

This crisis has turned hard held political dogma upside down, most notably on the left, though it is difficult in the midst of this muddle to readily discern the contradictions now appearing in progressive premises long considered sacrosanct. The left has consistently portrayed itself as the defender and promoter of—pardon my French—*Liberté, égalité, fraternité*. But that bucket no longer holds water. Why? Because the pandemic has upended their holy grail turning their sacred cows on their heads. As John Horvat II, vice president of the *American Society for the Defense of Tradition, Family and Property* notes:

The left is driven by a subversive ideology. Having failed to persuade the general public by strength of argument, they now see the crisis as a means to impose radical changes implemented by globalists, “experts” and technocrats who claim to act in the name of public safety. Thus, it uses any means, even when contradictory, to effect this change. Sometimes, the left clamors for unrestrained freedom so that the destructive power of disordered human passions can be used to tear down traditional order and morality. At other times, like the present, the left extols totalitarian brutality and advocates its implementation to impose equality, reducing everyone to serfdom, the victims of a single and leveling rule.

The left's Jacobin and brutal side is now easy to see. They no longer hide behind their old masks and structures, pretending to uphold democracy. America's coronavirus-face-masked Jacobin left is fully unmasked.

Horvat provided a list of liberal contradictions which are quite illustrative of the leftist world gone bloodlust mad.

1. Many who loudly gloat about bridges and hatred of walls and everything associated with them are now screaming that everyone must be walled-in-place, stay at home, until further notice;
2. Many who demand free love with no personal restraints are now fanatically in favor of social distancing to the point of denouncing neighbors and others;
3. Many who insist all lockdown procedures are needed and worth the economic destruction “if only to save *one* life,” nevertheless demand all abortion facilities be left open, calling them essential and life-sustaining businesses;

4. Many who called for complete transparency now insist that everyone out and about cover their faces with a mask;
5. Many who once favored absolute freedom in daily life now insist on an almost militarized lifestyle;
6. Many who insist that science is a god to be worshipped in this crisis are strangely silent when “expert” models like the London Imperial College’s COVID-19 study, are proven to have grossly overestimated the scourge’s lethality;
7. Many who unashamedly defended euthanasia claiming that quality of life should determine when the government should put an end to the right to life of the elderly, now hold that every elderly life is precious regardless of its quality (while still excoriating anti-euthanasia conservatives, who have always stated this truth!);
8. Many who protested against the police’s use of force to stop crime and illegality now applaud brutal police action against law-abiding citizens protesting outside abortion mills who were falsely accused of violating stay-at-home orders or maintaining social distancing;
9. Many who imposed evolution and natural selection in schools, treating them as dogma that can never be questioned, now believe they must be suspended in regards to coronavirus victims;
10. Many who proclaim that the virus could never be a punishment from God affirm it is the revenge of “Mother Earth” for so-called sins against the environment;
11. Many who once denounced all censorship as a violation of absolute freedom now praise social media sites that censor content that is critical of Chinese communist handling of the crisis;
12. Many who claim that the Trump administration chose money over lives, now loudly complain that their stimulus checks are late;
13. Many who protested to support the cause of workers are now fierce critics of workers who are protesting in the streets and at state capitols because they want to return to work;
14. Many who urged the release of prisoners to avoid contagion by the virus, now demand severe punishment, including fines and im-

prisonment, for law-abiding Americans opposed to the lockdown;

15. Many who used to insist that change be ushered in by democratic means by “we the people,” now see the crisis as a golden opportunity for dictatorial governors running amok to impose on society the radical change engineered by “experts” whom, they claim, know better than the American people what is good for them;
16. Many who protested the globalism of multinational companies now urge global solutions and governing mechanisms and the imposition of a new world order;
17. Many who claimed to favor religious freedom now demand the closure of churches in the name of safety and public health;
18. Many who have protested against the Establishment now favor denying lockdown protesters that same right;
19. Many who decried attempts made against privacy are now willing to surrender all kinds of personal information to fight the virus—and demand that everyone else should be compelled to do the same.⁵

G.K. Chesterton once expressed the idea that “When people stop believing in God, they don’t believe in nothing; they believe in anything.” It seems a perfect metaphor for describing these times. People have stopped believing in God. They now worship what is perhaps the most natural of false gods, nature.

Every religion prior to the Bible had nature-gods—the sun, the moon, the sea, gods of fertility, gods of rain and so on.

That is why the farther Western society gets from biblical, i.e., Judeo-Christian religions, the more nature is worshipped.

Everyone on the left and the right cares about the environment. But caring about the environment is not the same as environmentalism. Environmentalism, for most of its adherents, is a secular religion. These people, many of whom refer to, and truly regard, the Earth as a goddess (Gaia, the name of the ancient Greek Earth goddess) worship the environment.

New York Times columnist Ross Douthat described the 2009 James Cameron blockbuster film, “Avatar,” as “Cameron’s long apologia for pantheism, a faith that equates God with Nature, and calls humanity into

religious communion with the natural world.” That equation of God with nature was a major reason for the film’s popularity.

Douthat, one of the only religious (as in believing in and practicing a religion) columnists at The New York Times, added, “The threat of global warming, meanwhile, has lent the cult of Nature qualities that every successful religion needs: a crusading spirit, a rigorous set of ‘thou shalt nots,’ and a piping-hot apocalypse.”

When you ask atheists, as I have for decades, what they believe in, the most common answer is “science.” ... There is nothing higher than science for an atheist because the natural world is all there is. So, worship of the Earth, the environment or nature is almost inevitable in a secular world.

The Bible takes an entirely different view. ... the first verse of the Bible — “In the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth” — contains the most radical idea in history. It stated, for the first time in history, that God created nature and is not part of nature. It is one of the reasons I believe the first five books, the Torah, are God-given. No human beings 3,000 years ago in the late Bronze Age would have come up with an idea so opposed to the way the human mind naturally works — to regard gods as part of nature.

From the point of view of the secular, Gaia-worshipping world, Genesis gets even worse when, 27 verses later, God tells human beings to, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.”

Both instructions infuriate Earth-worshippers. Regarding being fruitful, they oppose people having more than one child, and many advocate having no children so as to have minimal human impact on Mother Earth. But the second part — ruling over nature — is what really angers them.

Maybe the coronavirus will awaken young people, who have been taught by nature-worshipping teachers and raised by nature-worshipping parents, to the idiocy of worshipping nature rather than subduing it. Nature, it turns out, is not our friend, let alone a god. If it were up to nature, we’d all be dead: Animals would eat us; weather would freeze us to death; disease would wipe out the rest of us. If we don’t subdue nature, nature will subdue us. It’s that simple.

Nature is beautiful and awe-inspiring. It’s also brutal and merciless. “Nature, red in tooth and claw,” as Alfred Tennyson aptly describes it. Nature follows no moral rules and shows no compassion. The basic law of all biological life is “survival of the fittest,” while the basic law of Judaism and Christianity is the opposite: the survival of the weakest with the help of the fittest. Nature wants the weakest eaten by the strongest. Hos-

pitals are as anti-natural an entity as exists.

Only human beings make hospitals. We do so not by worshipping nature but by subduing it.

If the COVID-19 virus destroys the foolish veneration of nature and leads more people, especially the young, to a new respect for the Judeo-Christian worldview, it might be the one silver lining in this catastrophe.⁶

Considering all the aforementioned actions taken by local, state, federal and global leaders in the unholy name of combatting this pandemic, the most egregious and unholy has been the mandated closing of all churches, synagogues, temples, mosques and other houses of worship. Why are people allowed unfettered access to grocery stores to stock up on food for the body but denied access to houses of worship to feed the soul? This smells of *Eau du Sulfur*, the devil’s preferred fragrance and his delight. It takes little mental exercise to see Satan’s hand pulling marionettes’ strings. As Father Ripperger (see below) notes in his homily, the devil had the chutzpah to tempt Christ if only he would agree to worship him, so why should anyone believe Satan has no further interest in his dominion or in gaining disciples? Satan is not called the father of lies for the pure sport of it. Think about this: nothing frustrates the devil more than a church filled with God-fearing worshippers who acknowledge by their words and deeds that they are sinners and need God’s help, mercy and forgiveness. Our first parents, Adam and Eve, were seduced by the devil and fell from God’s grace (Gn 3). Because of their fall, we have been “infected” with the concupiscence virus; thus, through their weakness we are a broken, sinful people.

St. John distinguishes three kinds of covetousness or concupiscence: lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and pride of life. In the Catholic catechetical tradition, the ninth commandment forbids carnal concupiscence; the tenth forbids coveting another’s goods (CCC §2514).

Etymologically, “concupiscence” can refer to any intense form of human desire. Christian theology has given it a particular meaning: the movement of the sensitive appetite contrary to the operation of the human reason. The apostle St. Paul identifies it with the rebellion of the “flesh” against the “spirit.” Concupiscence stems from the disobedience of the first sin. It unsettles man’s moral faculties and, without being in itself an offense, inclines man to commit sins (CCC §2515).

The devil, Satan, is all too aware of this weakness, this brokenness and takes every opportunity to prey upon those weaknesses. Closing churches and other houses of worship is a welcome gift to Satan, he savors the thought of it. We need God's grace to overcome the devil's temptations. We need the Sacraments to safeguard our souls from the designs of the devil.

The seven sacraments are the sign and instruments by which the Holy Spirit spreads the grace of Christ the head throughout the Church which is his Body. The Church, then, both contains and communicates the invisible grace she signifies. It is in this analogical sense, that the Church is called a "sacrament" (CCC §774).

Cardinal Gerhard L. Müller, former prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith noted, according to *La Nuova Bussola Quotidiana* on May 6, 2020, that "The Church is not dependent on the state, it must defend its freedom and independence." "Suspending Masses is an abdication of the task it has, which includes reading the sufferings of this period in the light of the faith, the mystery of the Death and Resurrection of Jesus". "Jesus became flesh, we believe in the resurrection of the flesh: therefore bodily presence is indispensable". "The Eucharist is the only true form of adoration of God, it is the reason for the existence of any other liturgical form. It is scandalous that there are bishops who say the Eucharist is overrated." The Cardinal was adamant when he stated: "**No bishop has the right to ban public Masses.**" "This virus represented a tragedy for many people. This is the precise reason the Church has the duty to propose a vision of human suffering and existence, in the perspective of eternal life, in the light of faith. **The suspension of public Masses is an abdication of this task, it is the reduction of the Church to dependency on the state.** It is unacceptable." In a phone interview, the Cardinal was absolutely resolute in his judgment of what has happened in many countries around the globe.

Your Eminence, for many faithful the suffering of the disease has meant the additional suffering of the prohibition to attend Mass and the prevention of holding funerals; worse still, they find it is justified by the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

This is very serious, it's the secularist thought which has made its way into the Church. It is one thing to take precautionary measures to minimize the risks of conta-

tion, it's another to ban the liturgy. *The Church is not a client of the state, and no bishop has the right to ban the Eucharist in this way. Moreover, we have witnessed priests being punished by their bishops for celebrating Mass for only a few persons, this means they conceive themselves as state officials. (emphasis added)* But our supreme pastor is Jesus Christ, not Giuseppe Conte or any other head of state. The state has its task, but the church has its own.

It seems many find it difficult to reconcile their duty to the state with the need for public worship to God.

We must also pray publicly because we know that everything depends on God. God is the universal cause, then there is the secondary cause that goes through our freedom. We, finite creatures, do not know how much of what happens depends on the causality of God and how much depends on ourselves: this is the point of prayer. We must pray to God to overcome the challenges of our personal and social life, but without forgetting the transcendental dimension, that vision of eternal life and intimate union with God and with Jesus Christ even in our suffering. We are called to load our cross on our shoulders every day, but we must also explain their suffering to the faithful according to Gospel criteria. *Banning participation in the liturgy goes in the opposite direction. Taking certain external measures is the task of the state, our task is to defend the freedom and independence of the Church; and the Church's superiority in the spiritual dimension. We are not an agency subordinated to the state. (emphasis added)*

There are many, including priests and bishops, that are realizing there is a strong risk of misunderstanding the meaning of the liturgy because of the proliferation of masses on TV and streaming.

These forms cannot be considered a replacement of the Mass. (emphasis added) Of course, if you are in prison or in a concentration camp or other exceptional circumstances, you can participate spiritually in the Eucharist, but it is not a normal situation. God created us body and soul. God accompanied His people throughout history, He freed them from the slavery in Egypt, He did not perform a virtual liberation. Jesus, Son of God, became flesh, we believe in the resurrection of the flesh. This is why physical presence is absolutely necessary for us. For us, not for God. God does not need the sacraments, we need them. God instituted the sacraments for us. Marriage does not work only spiritually, there is a need for the union of body and soul. We are not Platonic idealists, we cannot follow mass from home, except in particular circumstances. No, we must go to church, meet with others, communicate the Word of God. The whole vocabulary of the Church also indicates this need: Holy Communion; Communion is to convene; the

Church is the people of God summoned together. The psalm says: "How good and beautiful it is that brothers live together".

There are theologians and bishops according to whom the Eucharist is overrated, that Sunday Mass is not necessary.

There is also a bishop such as Victor Fernandez, who prides himself on being Pope Francis' ghost writer, who claims that the duty to go to Mass on Sunday is a commandment that was introduced by the Church. It is another example of disastrous theological formation. The third commandment has its foundation in divine law: it obliges the Jews to sanctify the day of the Lord. For us Christians, it is the day of the Resurrection. It is also a commandment Jesus gave us: "Do this in memory of me". And Saint Paul says: "Every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord" (1 Cor 11:26). This is the real and sacramental representation of the saving death of Jesus and of His resurrection. In the mass we participate in the paschal mystery. The Second Vatican Council made this clear in the *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and *Lumen Gentium* (Nr. 11). Yet there are bishops who say that some faithful are too attached to the Eucharist. It's absurd. *The Eucharist is the only true adoration of God through Jesus Christ. It is not one of the many forms of the liturgy, instead all the forms of the liturgy have the reason for their existence in the Eucharist. Everything receives strength and consistency from the Eucharist. (emphasis added)*

Can you also see the manifestation of a clear attack on the Eucharist, the heart of the Church?

Yes. Just think of those who before and during the Synod on the Amazon said forcefully that indigenous peoples absolutely needed the Eucharist and for this it was necessary to ordain married men as priests. Now the same people shamelessly argue the exact opposite, that we don't need the Eucharist. They reason like Protestants, ignoring that the central point of controversy since the beginning of the Protestant Reformation, is the Eucharist. *And now there are bishops who call themselves Catholics who do not understand the central value of the Eucharist. It is a real scandal: these are the ones who are rigid, the true clericals, not those who take the word of Jesus and the doctrine of the Church seriously. It is a perverted way of thinking. And this "modern" Catholicism is a self-destructive ideology. (emphasis added)* There is a need, especially in Italy, for bishops of the stature of San Carlo Borromeo, and whoever is in the Curia should take Cardinal Roberto Bellarmine as an example.

In recent months we have heard episcopate leaders often say that the first duty is to safeguard health.

This is a bourgeois, secularized Church, not a Church that lives on the Word of Jesus Christ. Jesus said "seek the Kingdom of God first." *What is life, all the goods of the world including health worth, if you lose your soul? (emphasis added)* This crisis has shown that many of our pastors think like the world, they conceive themselves more as officials of a social religious system than as pastors of a Church that is an intimate communion with God and with everyone. We must always combine faith and reason. Obviously, we are not fideists, we are not like those Christian sects that say that we do not need medicine, that we entrust ourselves only to God. Instead, entrusting oneself to God does not contradict the valorization of all that modern medicine offers. But modern medicine does not replace prayer: they are two dimensions that should not be separated but not superimposed.

It has been said by some, as a way of justifying the suspension of public Masses, that if we infect others then we are responsible for their eventual death.

Doctors also run this risk, *there is a risk in every human activity. It is certain that we must be careful not to endanger the lives and health of others, but this is not the supreme value. (emphasis added)* Unfortunately, this situation has shown us that many priests and bishops of good quality lack the theological basis for reflecting on this situation and offering a judgment consistent with the Gospel and the doctrine of the Church.

Perhaps it is also for this reason that many bishops snubbed the request of the Italian faithful for an act of Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Which in the Italian case, then became an act of Dedication, and in the end was conducted in a negligent and fraudulent way.

There is an underestimation of the supernatural aspect. We are immersed in the naturalist conception that comes from the Enlightenment. The Church, Grace, the sacraments cannot be explained according to the natural dimension. The heart of our Christian religion is the transcendent God who becomes immanence in our life, He is Christ, true man and true God through the Incarnation.

It's almost as if we are resigned to chasing a world that reasons only in natural terms, and we call this realism.

It is the ideology of pragmatism. (emphasis added) Today, for example, the idea prevails in the Church that there is a need for bishops who are only pastors, that is, pragmatic. But the bishop is minister of the Word, he must reflect on the Word. Saint Paul and Saint Peter were not fools, the fathers of the Church were not only pragmatic, they reflected on the Christian faith and its

implications. A good teacher of faith must be able to explain a situation like the present one starting from faith, in its supernatural sense, not with naturalism. *Once again, the two dimensions must be held together: we cannot reduce human existence to mere nature, and at the same time not even think—as Marxists claim—that Christianity is only concerned with the afterlife. In Jesus Christ we have the unity between the afterlife and the immanence of life. (emphasis added)* A good Christian should know how to be an excellent doctor and scientist but this does not contradict trust in God. There is integration between faith and reason, between trust in God and competence in the natural sciences.⁷

On May 8, 2020, Cardinals Gerhard Ludwig Müller, Joseph Zen, and Janis Pujats, along with 8 bishops, 3 priests, 21 journalists, 11 medical doctors, 13 lawyers, 18 teachers and professionals, and 12 various groups and associations issued a global appeal decrying the crackdown on basic freedoms over the Coronavirus.

APPEAL FOR THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD

To Catholics and all people of good will

Veritas liberabit vos. Jn 8:32

In this time of great crisis, we Pastors of the Catholic Church, by virtue of our mandate, consider it our sacred duty to make an Appeal to our Brothers in the Episcopate, to the Clergy, to Religious, to the holy People of God and to all men and women of good will. This Appeal has also been undersigned by intellectuals, doctors, lawyers, journalists and professionals who agree with its content, and may be undersigned by those who wish to make it their own.

The facts have shown that, under the pretext of the Covid-19 epidemic, the inalienable rights of citizens have in many cases been violated and their fundamental freedoms, including the exercise of freedom of worship, expression and movement, have been disproportionately and unjustifiably restricted. Public health must not, and cannot, become an alibi for infringing on the rights of millions of people around the world, let alone for depriving the civil authority of its duty to act wisely for the common good. This is particularly true as growing doubts emerge from several quarters about the actual contagiousness, danger and resistance of the virus. Many authoritative voices in the world of science and medicine confirm that the media's alarmism about Covid-19 appears to be absolutely unjustified.

We have reason to believe, on the basis of official data on the incidence of the epidemic as related to the num-

ber of deaths, that there are powers interested in creating panic among the world's population with the sole aim of permanently imposing unacceptable forms of restriction on freedoms, of controlling people and of tracking their movements. The imposition of these illiberal measures is a disturbing prelude to the realization of a **world government beyond all control**.

We also believe that in some situations the containment measures that were adopted, including the closure of shops and businesses, have precipitated a crisis that has brought down entire sectors of the economy. This encourages **interference by foreign powers** and has serious social and political repercussions. Those with governmental responsibility must stop these forms of social engineering, by taking measures to protect their citizens whom they represent, and in whose interests they have a serious obligation to act. Likewise, let them help the family, the cell of society, by not unreasonably penalizing the weak and elderly, forcing them into a painful separation from their loved ones. The criminalization of personal and social relationships must likewise be judged as an unacceptable part of the plan of those who advocate isolating individuals in order to better manipulate and control them.

We ask the scientific community to be vigilant, so that cures for Covid-19 are offered in honesty for the common good. Every effort must be made to ensure that **shady business interests** do not influence the choices made by government leaders and international bodies. It is unreasonable to penalize those remedies that have proved to be effective, and are often inexpensive, just because one wishes to give priority to treatments or vaccines that are not as good, but which guarantee pharmaceutical companies far greater profits, and exacerbate public health expenditures. Let us also remember, as Pastors, that for Catholics it is **morally unacceptable** to develop or use vaccines derived from material from aborted fetuses.

We also ask government leaders to ensure that forms of **control over people**, whether through tracking systems or any other form of location-finding, are rigorously avoided. The fight against Covid-19, however serious, must not be the pretext for supporting the hidden intentions of supranational bodies that have very strong commercial and political interests in this plan. In particular, citizens must be given the opportunity to refuse these restrictions on personal freedom, without any penalty whatsoever being imposed on those who do not wish to use vaccines, contact tracking or any other similar tool. Let us also consider the blatant contradiction of those who pursue policies of drastic population control and at the same time present themselves as the savior of humanity, without any political or social legitimacy. Finally, the political responsibility of those who

represent the people can in no way be left to “experts” who can indeed claim a kind of **immunity from prosecution**, which is disturbing to say the least.

We strongly urge **those in the media** to commit themselves to providing accurate information and not penalizing dissent by resorting to forms of censorship, as is happening widely on social media, in the press and on television. Providing accurate information requires that room be given to voices that are not aligned with a single way of thinking. This allows citizens to consciously assess the facts, without being heavily influenced by partisan interventions. A democratic and honest debate is the best antidote to the risk of imposing **subtle forms of dictatorship**, presumably worse than those our society has seen rise and fall in the recent past.

Finally, as Pastors responsible for the flock of Christ, let us remember that the Church firmly asserts her **autonomy to govern, worship, and teach**. This autonomy and freedom are an innate right that Our Lord Jesus Christ has given her for the pursuit of her proper ends. For this reason, as Pastors we firmly assert the right to decide autonomously on the celebration of Mass and the Sacraments, just as we claim absolute autonomy in matters falling within our immediate jurisdiction, such as liturgical norms and ways of administering Communion and the Sacraments. The State has no right to interfere, for any reason whatsoever, in the sovereignty of the Church. Ecclesiastical authorities have never refused to collaborate with the State, but such collaboration does not authorize civil authorities to impose any sort of ban or restriction on public worship or the exercise of priestly ministry. **The rights of God and of the faithful are the supreme law of the Church**, which she neither intends to, nor can, abdicate. We ask that restrictions on the celebration of public ceremonies be removed.

We should like to invite all people of good will not to shirk their duty to cooperate for the common good, each according to his or her own state and possibilities and in a spirit of fraternal charity. The Church desires such cooperation, but this cannot disregard either a respect for natural law or a guarantee of individual freedoms. The civil duties to which citizens are bound imply the State’s recognition of their rights.

We are all called to assess the current situation in a way consistent with the teaching of the Gospel. This means taking a stand: **either with Christ or against Christ**. Let us not be intimidated or frightened by those who would have us believe that we are a minority: Good is much more widespread and powerful than the world would have us believe. We are fighting against an invisible enemy that seeks to divide citizens, to separate children from their parents, grandchildren from their

grandparents, the faithful from their pastors, students from teachers, and customers from vendors. Let us not allow centuries of Christian civilization to be erased under the pretext of a virus, and an **odious technological tyranny** to be established, in which nameless and faceless people can decide the fate of the world by confining us to a virtual reality. If this is the plan to which the powers of this earth intend to make us yield, know that Jesus Christ, King and Lord of History, has promised that “the gates of Hell shall not prevail” (Mt 16:18).

Let us entrust government leaders and all those who rule over the fate of nations to Almighty God, that He may enlighten and guide them in this time of great crisis. May they remember that, just as the Lord will judge us Pastors for the flock which he has entrusted to us, so will He also judge government leaders for the peoples whom they have the duty to defend and govern.

With faith, let us beseech the Lord to protect the Church and the world. May the Blessed Virgin, Help of Christians, crush the head of the ancient Serpent and defeat the plans of the children of darkness.

8 May 2020

Our Lady of the Rosary of Pompeii

To add further emphasis to what Cardinal Müller and others have said, let me say what is on many of our minds and in our hearts. We find livestream Masses completely and utterly dissatisfying and emphatically non-sacramental. Many of us, if not most, have had it with virtual reality Masses. While screens can be and are an acceptable (occasional) substitute for in-person encounters, most of the time such encounters have left us nauseated. While there may be at least some things which video calls can adequately satisfy, virtual reality Mass and artificial Sacraments are neither acceptable nor spiritually fulfilling.

Earlier this week, I received a link to a homily given by Father Ripperger of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church in Littleton, Colorado. Upon listening to it, I found it to be so compelling that I spent several hours assiduously transcribing his words.⁸ His homily begins on the following page.

Better to Die with the Sacraments Than to Live Without Them

Fr. Ripperger, Homily for May 19, 2020

“It is expedient to you that I go, for if I go not the Paraclete will not come to you” (Jn 26:7). Taken from our holy Gospel today. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. These words of our Lord can seem quite perplexing. Could not have Christ sent the Holy Spirit while he was still living in the flesh on earth at least. He was filled with the Holy Ghost without measure from the very moment of his conception. Why then did he choose to go first?

Saint Thomas gives us several reasons for this: first, the apostles were not prepared yet to receive the Holy Ghost. He says “the apostles were affected with a certain carnal love for the human nature of Christ without yet being elevated into a spiritual love of his divinity. And carnal love is contrary to the Holy Spirit since the spirit is spiritual love. The apostles and all Christ’s disciples came to know him first in his human nature. It was only over the course of much time that his divine nature was revealed to them and this only gradually. Our Lord took on himself the form of a slave, let himself be known and treated as such, most evident in his passion.

Why then, may we ask, does he prepare them for his departure so soon after his resurrection? Again, the disciples’ love for Christ was still too grounded in the things of this world and this life, so to purify their love for him, Christ had to remove himself from their sight. They could not receive the Holy Ghost to the full if they had their hearts set on the consolation of our Lord’s physical presence.

And we might think how we found ourselves in a similar position these last few weeks, few months maybe. The faithful in most places have not been able to attend Mass physically, to receive Holy Communion, and have often not had as frequent access to confession. Some, shocking to say, have even had their baptism deferred. This has been a great challenge. Many have learned how to make Spiritual Communions and some have realized that when they had been able to go to Mass and receive Holy Communion easily, they had not been participating as spiritually in the Mass as they ought to have been. Ignoring, for now, the cause of this situation, the effects an invitation for the faithful to push themselves beyond the external dimension of their religion and exert themselves more and more in the spirit, embracing a more spiritual practice in their homes, making more sincere spiritual communion they might have

done in church. There are even some who have kept out of sin because of the lessened availability of confession. In this case, the absence of Christ has made them realize the subtle presumption they were carrying about with them. It is a lot harder to tell yourself it is ok to sin tonight I can just go to confession tomorrow when you know that you can’t go to confession tomorrow.

Now, you might say, “Wait a minute! What are you saying? Are we to say these lockdowns are good, wise and prudent? Are we to suggest, as some have, that the church is too materialistic, too focused on the sacraments, on buildings confining, on the priesthood and so on? Was the Church in need of a purification to return to ‘home’ churches, abandoning ritual and the sacraments, to simply praise God in spirit and in truth, not in any church but with each shut up in his own room praying in secret? It seems that a number of people think just this. Protestants, modernists, and the worldlings all think that the public exercise of religion is some nicety that one should be free to do as he wishes but only if it doesn’t impose any risk or threat to anyone else. And rather, they believe that true spirituality is only internal and needs no church, no sacraments, no priest, no rituals, no physical presence. The Protestants and Modernists feel little pain at not being at church. Rather, they may see this, as some have expressed it, as a great opportunity to continue even further down their erroneous road. The Protestants sought after all to decentralize matters of faith so that each little church determined its own beliefs. And the Modernists within the Church have sought, in effect, to decentralize or deritualize the liturgy, so that each community can find its own new and particular way of worshiping God. The end of the Protestants is that each one eventually becomes his own pope, determining for himself all by himself, his own personal creed. And the end of the Modernist is the purely personal worship of God.

And our secular government, atheistic by design, often ruled by those not even worthy to be called the foxes, for they cannot sing together to orders, they do not contradict one another. They would say the same, “Worship your God in spirit! We won’t make any rules that govern your spirit just your bodies and your buildings.” They’ve no problem, no problem with strangers engaging in carnal acts together if they are willing to accept the risk but think we should restrain ourselves from having more than a small handful of people in a huge church building who similarly accepts the risks involved, much lesser risks at that. What justifications could they give if they were in the reasoning business or not? They might say, “Well, one act is properly carnal, and it can’t be accomplished online. And the other act is properly spiritual, so it can be accomplished online just as well. Therefore, the first one is ok and the

second one is forbidden.”

How are we to respond to this, especially when our Gospel today shows us Christ attempting to wean his disciples from his visible, physical presence so that they might more fully receive the invisible spirit? Are these prohibitions actually fulfilling his will? Let us consider more of what Saint Thomas says on this matter. He says that Christ did not give them the Holy Spirit right then because it the characteristic of divine help to be especially present in times of need, a stronghold in times of trouble. As long as Christ was with them, he was all the help they needed. Remember, it was not until the Israelites carnal food ran out that they were given food from heaven. But that food was real food. The departure of Christ does not weaken the apostles. It was necessary for them best to receive the Spirit which strengthened them more than before. Before, Christ was simply with them in the form of man, along beside them, in only one place at a time. But the Holy Spirit makes Christ present within them and all of their actions all over the world in real and visible ways. We see them immediately baptizing and preaching, refusing to be silenced and hidden, at the cost of their lives, not just their health. This does not make Christ less present, but more present. His departure does not empower the devil, rather, the prince of this world becomes subject to the power of Christ everywhere that the Church and her Sacraments are found.

What then? The Protestants and Modernists would have it that Christ indeed left us orphans, that he dwelt here in the flesh, the perfect unity of the divine and human, and then left us each on our own, each to find his own path to God, no Sacraments necessary. No, the Sacraments are not superfluous. They are not some cute personalized expression of our invisible faith, easily done away without any harm. They are the greatest thing on earth because they were left by Christ to bind earth to heaven. The Sacraments are the only thing keeping the devil from reasserting his old dominion over the world. The Sacraments, the only thing that really restore the dead to life. Like Christ, the Sacraments are both human and divine and they are the only visible path to an invisible God.

So, as much as we may have benefited indirectly from this lockdown, as much as we may have had to grow spiritually by holding on to our faith more tightly when its visible practice has been restricted or forbidden, make no mistake, it is not good in itself. It is a disaster of backwards priority, a cataclysm of confusion where many of the descendants of the apostles rather than convicting the world of judgment have more often than not have been the first to bend the knee before worldly princes seeking to exercise their desire, to see the Church hidden and powerless, closing their churches

before they were even asked to do so, keeping them closed when they could legally open and to all appearances never, never attempting to fight.

I wish to share with you the letter from a devout layman from a far-off diocese to its bishop. He writes: “As the director of a homeless shelter here in the city, I have been out here since the beginning. One of my tasks is providing and serving lunches to the homeless. The need did not disappear when the Coronavirus came to town. The homeless are still hungry, so, we continued to serve food. The task was made more difficult when grocery stores put limits on purchases, resulting in me having to go to four or five stores each time to get all the supplies. And we had to buy more since our usual volunteers stopped donating. But the thought never occurred to me to just shutdown and let the poor go hungry. We knew the risks and took the precautions. We did not abandon those who depend on us. Abortionists were actually prohibited from operating by our state but several decided to ignore the order, advertising this publicly, “We are open!” I will admit, I am jealous. The abortionists are evil, but at least they fight for what they believe in. But you did not fight. You are derelict in your duties to tend to the spiritual needs of your flock under the pretense of tending to their physical health. Many of us understand there are worse things than death and we would prefer to die with the Sacraments rather than live without them. A pious layman.”

What of us then? What shall our response be? Be certain of this, you will lose whatever you do not love, if not physically, then spiritually. If you do not love your family, you will lose your family. If you do not love your God, you will lose your God. If you do not love the Sacraments, such that you would rather die with them than live without them, you will lose the Sacraments and the only access to heaven will be closed to you.

I don't care if the whole world goes mad, if every prelate abandons the faith, throws the most holy things to the side of the road and barely looks back, don't you do it! Don't you dare! So what can you do? Love the Sacraments more than life itself. For what is the life of the body compared to the life of the soul? Let us never be complacent again at Mass. Let us never be casual about confessions. The priest is often admonished to say each Mass as if it were his first Mass, his last Mass, his only Mass. So, are you the faithful to pray at every Mass as if it were your first, your last, your only; to make your confession as if you should have to stand before the judgment seat of Christ shortly thereafter; to receive our Good Lord in Holy Communion as if it were the only time in your entire life that you would ever be able to do so.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

On May 14th I received this brief letter from our bishop to all Catholics within the Diocese of Reno.

Preparing for Resuming Public Masses

For several weeks now, I have been working with diocesan staff and parish priests in planning for the day when we can resume parish liturgies. We eagerly look forward to that day but also are exercising due diligence in making the necessary preparations. This is essential for safety. We want to make sure the worship environment is as safe as possible following federal, state and health guidelines and recommendations. There is much to consider for there are various aspects that include social distancing in seating, sufficient supplies for necessary cleaning of surface areas, to name a few. All pastors along with parish leaders have been asked to proceed in this planning so we will be ready when the day comes that we can resume gathering together.

The health and safety of all participants in our liturgies are paramount. This is nothing less than a moral obligation for us to follow. It is a matter not only of charity toward neighbor but also justice. Health and life are precious gifts from God which we are bound to safeguard. Parishes will be doing their part in following safety protocols; we will be asking parishioners to do their part in respecting these protocols. Please keep this in your mind and, more importantly, in your heart for this will be a circumstance for us to heed Jesus' command that we love one another.

More information will be forthcoming from the diocese and your parishes.

Bishop Calvo
May 14, 2020

Whether you agree or disagree with some or all of what you have read here (assuming you have read this much) it is vitally important that every Catholic stand up, reach out, and speak up. Let our bishop and our priests know your thoughts and concerns.

And he said to all, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake, he will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself" (Lk 9:23-25)?

1. David Warren, "Our Godless Freedom", The Catholic Thing, www.thecatholicthing.org, May 8, 2020.
2. Ben Moreell, "Power Corrupts", (Acton Institute) Religion & Liberty: Volume 2, Number 6, July 20, 2010.
3. Dennis Prager, "The Worldwide Lockdown May Be the Greatest Mistake in History", dennisprager.com/column/the-worldwide-lockdown-may-be-the-greatest-mistake-in-history/, May 5, 2020.
4. Dennis Prager, "Our Dress Rehearsal for a Police State", dennisprager.com/column/our-dress-rehearsal-for-a-police-state/, April 28, 2020
5. John Horvat II, scholar, researcher, educator, international speaker, and author of the book *Return to Order*, as well as the author of hundreds of published articles. He is the vice president of the *American Society for the Defense of Tradition, Family and Property*, "19 ways corona crisis has unmasked the left's subversive agenda" for LifeSite News, May 6, 2020.
6. Dennis Prager, "Maybe Nature Shouldn't Be Worshipped After All", dennisprager.com/column/maybe-nature-shouldn't-be-worshipped-after-all/, April 7, 2020.
7. Riccardo Cascioli, "Cdl. Müller: No bishop has the right to ban public Masses", *La Nuova Bussola Quotidiana*, reprinted by LifeSite News, May 7, 2020.
8. Transcribed May 13, 2020 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OY5HHjIO2zY&feature=youtu.be>.

Deacon's Diner

Food for a restless mind

For those restless minds that hunger and thirst for more. Each week this space will offer a menu of interesting and provocative titles, written by Catholic authors, in addition to those referenced in the articles, for you to feed your restless mind.

BOOKS

Salvation: What Every Catholic Should Know

Michael Patrick Barber

Ignatius Press

2019, 189 pages.

Faith and Politics

Joseph Ratzinger (Benedict XVI)

Ignatius Press

2018, 269 pages.

The Day Is Now Far Spent

Robert Cardinal Sarah

Ignatius Press

2019, 350 pages.

Socrates' Children, Volume I: Ancient Philosophers

Peter Kreeft

St. Augustine's Press

2019, 169 pages.

G.K. Chesterton Collected Works: Volume XXXVI

The Illustrated London News 1932-1934

Ignatius Press

2011, 613 pages.

Return of the Strong Gods: Nationalism, Populism and the future of the West

R. R. Reno

Regnery Gateway

2019, 182 pages.

The Irony of Modern Catholic History:

How the Church rediscovered itself & challenged the modern world to reform

George Weigel

Basic Books

2019, 322 pages.

PERIODICALS

First Things

www.firstthings.com

Touchstone

www.touchstonemag.com

Catholic Answers Magazine

www.catholic.com

Catholic Herald

www.catholicherald.co.uk

Chronicles

www.chroniclesmagazine.org

Gilbert!

www.chesterton.org

The National Catholic Register

www.ncregister.com

Our Sunday Visitor

www.osvnews.com

ONLINE

Crisis Magazine

www.crisismagazine.com

The Imaginative Conservative

www.theimaginativeconservative.org

Catholic Exchange

www.catholicexchange.com

Intellectual Takeout

www.intellectuالتakeout.org

Life News

www.lifenews.com

Life Site News

www.lifesitenews.com

OnePeterFive

www.onepeterfive.com

Catholic Vote

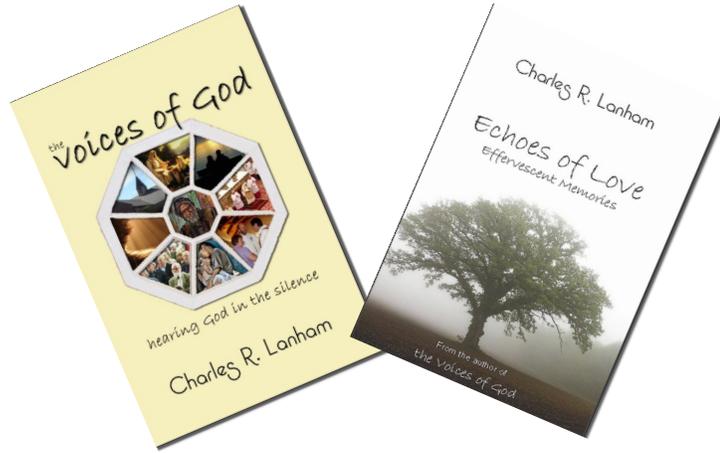
www.catholicvote.org

The Catholic Thing

www.thecatholicthing.org

PragerU

www.prageru.com



Books are available on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) or from the author's web site at:

deaconscorner.org

Deacon Chuck Lanham is a Catholic author, columnist, speaker, theologian and philosopher, a jack-of-all-trades like his father (though far from a master of anything) and a servant of God. He is the author of **The Voices of God: Hearing God in the Silence**, **Echoes of Love: Effervescent Memories** and has written over 400 essays on religion, faith, morality, theology, and philosophy.

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“UNTIL IT IS SAFE”

MEANS

NEVER

Colloquī, the present infinitive of *colloquor* (Latin: *to talk, to discuss or to converse*) is a Deacon's Corner weekly journal. Its mission and purpose to encourage serious discussion, to promote reasoned debate, and to provide serious content for those who hope to find their own pathway to God. Each week **Colloquī** will contain articles on theology, philosophy, faith, religion, Catholicism, and much more. Be forewarned! Essays may and often will contain fuel for controversy, but always with the expressed intent to seek the Truth, the whole Truth and nothing but the Truth, so help us God.

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