

## Pastoral Musing

June 16, 2020 (Of the Octave of Corpus Christi)

There is a scene in the movie *The Last Samurai* (2003, starring Tom Cruise) in which Katsumoto, the leader of the Samurai is lamenting the fact the Japanese emperor has rejected the spiritual and cultural traditions of the Samurai for modern, Westernized ways. He says to his American protégée Nathan Algren (played by Cruise) “The way of the Samurai is not necessary anymore.” To which Algren replies “Necessary? What could be more necessary!?”

For the past several months, government leaders and health officials (“the world”) have been saying that churches and attending church are not necessary (non-essential). Sadly a number of churches agreed. Even once it became clear the Wuhan, Chinese Virus is not as deadly and would not overwhelm hospitals as first reported, churches remained closed. Some are still closed.

A number of the churches that have opened have accepted restrictions to practices and activities which are not being imposed on businesses deemed “essential.” The contradiction is obvious. Who is the government to tell the Church she is not essential? Why would the Church accept that designation?

If all businesses had been shut...all of them... then maybe the churches should have been shut too. But once *one* business (never mind a liquor store or a convenience store) is allowed to be open, churches should be open too. Only secularists who do not believe in God or care about the eternal state of the soul believe churches are non-essential.

I was disappointed to see the response many churches had to this epidemic (I don’t agree that it’s a pandemic), including our own. Many just rolled over. The government demanded and threatened and churches said “Okay.”

I’m a newbie in the APA and new to my parish, so I’ve kept my head down and mouth shut (publicly at least), and accepted whatever restrictions have been imposed. I will continue to be cautious with the former and abide by the latter. I’m one priest in a mission parish in NE Georgia and decisions which affect the whole of our church are above my pay grade (Psalm 131). But still, enough with “...virtual Communion is just as...” (Yeah, and the Emperor’s new clothes are...)

If this epidemic flairs up again, the Church needs to remember two things:

First, nothing is more essential to man and society than the celebration and reception of the Holy Eucharist! It is God’s appointed means to plead the sacrifice of Christ for sin and it powerfully declares the message of the Gospel. I hope the bishops, and the clergy and laity of influence, start from this truth and make all their decisions based upon it.

If driving to Walmart to walk around a store with large numbers of people who are touching and putting back food items on the shelves is considered essential, then certainly driving to mass to be with a smaller number of people to receive the Body and Blood of Jesus at the hand of *persona Christi* is essential too, and likely safer.

Second, remember who is giving the orders. “Trust, but verify.” If the leaders of the WHO and CDC had to report to stock holders, they’d all be fired by now. They’ve been far more wrong than they’ve been right. Along with this, China uses its people as human fodder for the ruling class (all Communist and many Socialist nations do). They should never be an example for how to handle any health crisis.

Enough said...

This is my musing for today. Thanks for reading it.