



Pandemic and sin

Introduction

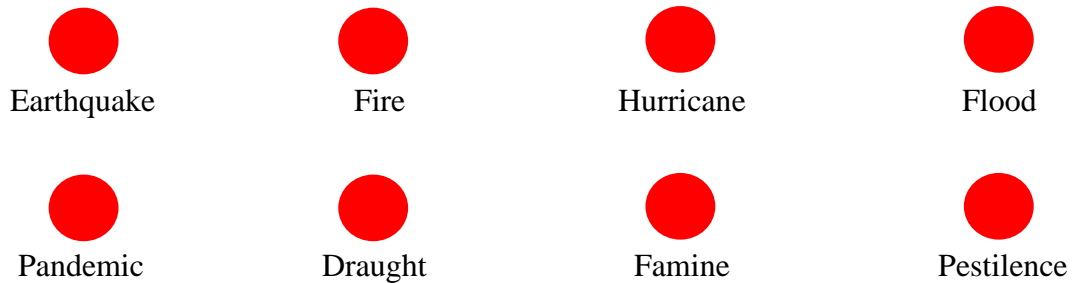
On Sunday, people of my faith, I suppose by the millions, conducted a day of fasting and prayer. They fasted and prayed that a merciful Father in Heaven stretch forth His mighty hand and allay if not outright halt the devastating worldwide spread of the coronavirus.

I have asked myself, "Do I believe God can do so?" Yes, I believe He does possess the capacity.

"But," I wonder, "should He?" "Does He have the right?" Or, put differently, "Would doing so be the right thing to do?" Perhaps we could ask, "Does He possess the will?" These last questions are more difficult, and ones that are above my paygrade. In the end, I can do no more than plead, submissively, "Thy will be done." I am tempted, I admit, to rebel against this final solution. I am tempted to play God.

I have asked myself these questions in light of another question that I asked and answered long ago. "Do I believe God 'causes' disasters?" "Does he bring disasters as a call to repentance?" Bringing the questions up to date, I could ask, "Did God 'cause' the current pandemic as a call to repentance?" These questions elicit a resounding, "No!"

Notwithstanding scriptural rhetoric, I do not believe that God causes disasters in order to call his children to repentance. I do not believe that God has a huge "punishment console" in front of him with buttons he can push when a call to repentance is needed.



Does He have a console to stop them? I don't know.

Cause and effect—outlining a process

Now, to be clear, I do not believe that anyone “caused” the pandemic. The Chinese did not cause it. Caligula did not cause it. The electorate’s disastrous decision to elect such a sick and perverted man did not cause it. It was coming no matter who governed where. It was coming to America no matter who was sitting in the white house. Health officials have been vainly warning of this for years—years before Caligula was even a twinkle in the electorate’s eye. The virus is simply part of the natural world. There is no need to blame anyone, no man, woman, child, group, nation, or God for the virus or the pandemic whose charge it leads.

Having said all that, I do believe that the severity of the current pandemic is “caused.” The severity of the pandemic is, in large measure, a result of human choices. The choices, decades in the making, in preparation for and response to the pandemic have been pathetic. These choices—preparatory and responsive—have been infused with sinfulness. There can be no doubt. Sin has made the pandemic more severe than it might have otherwise been. I’ll not argue about this assertion. I’ll not hear any arguments against it. Any argument against it is less than a puff of air.

My stubbornness might lead the reader to stop reading right here and now. So be it. But, if the reader is curious, I will try to explain. I will do so as simply as I can, for that is the only

way I can understand it myself. I am going to outline, in reverse,¹ a process of “cause and effect” that leads to our current predicament. I am going to use my own country, the U.S, as it is the one with which I am most familiar. It may look different in different countries.

- A pandemic sickens millions of Americans, killing tens of thousands more than would be the case under a moral and competent leadership² •
- The president and his administration, more concerned with the settling of scores, propping up the president’s pathetically fragile ego and the ungodly profit margins of the wealthy for purposes of his reelection continues to dawdle •
- The president and his administration, more concerned with propping up the president’s pathetically fragile ego, and propping up the ungodly profit margins of the wealthy for purposes of his reelection refuses to act early when warned by health and intelligence agencies of a looming crisis³ •
- The nation elects an unquestionably and demonstrably immoral and unprincipled man as its president as he gives voice to their self-induced frustrations •
- The nation grows dissatisfied and frustrated with its government •
- Consistent with the new political and religious ideologies, individual greed, and rejection of community (including racism), public officials systematically starve government of needed financial resources, thus reducing government’s capacity to function appropriately. Agencies so starved include those related to human health and pandemic response •
- The nation elects public officials who, discerning the nation’s mood, run on platforms that are hostile to government and contrary to good governance⁴ •
- Greedy for more materialistic vanities, chaffing at the restraints community places on individual appetites, less inclined to help others through government tax-based programs, and heeding idolatrous ideologies and false religions, the nation’s citizenry calls for less government •
- Making virtue of vice, calling good evil, and evil good, secular economic ideologies are developed and “Christianity” corrupted in order to justify the nation’s appetite for and addictions to materialistic consumption⁵ •

¹ If it makes more sense to the reader, he or she is welcome to read the process in its temporal order, bottom to top.

² At this point, it seems this is the best case scenario. Health officials today warn that the deaths could add up to 100 to 200 thousand. Of course, for too many Americans, “experts” of all stripes are not to be believed. After all, it is from the gut that all true thinking and truth comes.

³ This is beyond rational dispute

⁴ “Government is not the solution to our problem, government is the problem.”

⁵ Economic Neoliberalism and Prosperity Gospel among them.

- The nation, addicted to consumption, demands more and more and more. •
- The nation grows rich •

Your outline might look different than mine. That's fine. Things are usually more complex than we think. But the process I describe below is plenty complex, extending over decades and generations, and impacting individuals by the millions and systems by the thousands.

However, I do have a demand of those who wish to create their own outline of cause and effect, It must be rational. Causes and effects must be logical and commensurate with each other. One can't write, "He put his hand on the fire," and then, "his fingers froze." Or, more apt, one can't say, as some undoubtedly have, "The nation passed laws to legalize gay marriage," and then, "a plague came." There is no logical or natural mechanism by which gay marriage leads to pandemic or the pathetic response to it that we are currently witnessing from the administration.

Sin... everywhere one looks, sin

The discerning reader can see for him or herself that sin is present at every stage of this process. At one time or another, we have discussed nearly every sin that has reared its ugly head over the past several decades and has only increased during the present administration. The whole sordid picture can only be called madness. Maybe we should add Derangement. Deviancy. Well, we should probably just leave it at that.

It is beyond the scope of this homily (or beyond the author's ability and patience) to enumerate all the sins found in my procession of cause and effect found above: societal-wide pride, envy, selfishness, self-gratification, deceit, vengeance, etc. I have addressed all of these and many others on this site.

Having said that, the regular visitor to this site will not be surprised at my starting point. It all begins with Paul's "the root of all evil," which I have, in one fashion or another, so often

addressed.⁶ This root is not only the starting point, it is present at nearly every stage. Of all the sins that could be catalogued, and have been catalogued by holy men of God, none get the press that this one, idolatry by another name, gets. The obsession with economic gain infiltrated and corrupted mankind's genetic makeup right out of the garden called Eden and has grown stronger, mutating over, and over again over the millennia. This is humanity's real and truly deadly infection.

We can, I suppose, pray that God will ameliorate the pandemic infection that goes by the name of coronavirus. Hopefully, it is not too late. But, if people really want to pray for God's intervention in human affairs—to cure the world of a deadly virus—then they must begin to pray, as they should have been doing for the past forty years of wilderness wondering, that He remove this most powerful of infections: idolatry. Otherwise this and many other infections of various sorts will roll over our nation and planet in wave after wave while we are incapable of erecting any life-saving defense against them.

If we, on the other hand, repent, putting our love of money aside for the love of God and our fellowman the hosts of sins that follow in its train will dissipate. We will appreciate and act upon the reality that we are all connected; that a government for the people is the only enduring government. We will not begrudge dedicating our material resources to this life-saving venture. He will not elect representatives that tell us what we want to hear and prey on our greediness. We will not end up with a president whose depravity is as contagious and deadly as any virus. We will be prepared when the next pandemic arrives—at it will. We will be prepared to act in concert, firm in the belief that life trumps money, every time.

What to do now, now that we are where we are

But what should I pray for now, in this present moment? If I, finally, settle, as I have said that I have, on praying, "They will be done in earth, as in heaven," I must ask, even if it is above my paygrade, "what is His will in the present circumstances?" I must ask, as I did earlier, "What is the right thing for Him to do in this moment?"

⁶ See, for example, my devotional of the same name, or any number of my other homilies.

Sins bear within themselves their own logical and natural consequences. God, knowing of the natural and logical consequences of sin, has of old and does today provide warnings and directions for avoiding them. These warnings and counsels have gone unheeded. Though God did not send this pandemic, it might be useful to us. It might serve to wake us up and bring us to repentance. It might serve to reveal the folly of the past four decades during which we have decimated the federal government in the selfish name of “no new taxes.” It might serve to reveal the bargain we entered into with the devil when we elected Caligula.

If God now rushes in to save us, will we have learned anything? I fear not. I would put all that I own down against it. Even now, there are many who, with “a whore’s forehead... refusedst to be ashamed.”⁷ They struggle against correction—a correction that, though God may or may not use, is of their own invention:

“Thine own wickedness shall correct thee,
and thy backslidings shall reprove thee:
know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter,
that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God,
and that my fear is not in thee,
saith the Lord GOD of hosts.”⁸

Too few—would the few be enough?—“come unto Jesus with broken hearts and contrite spirits, but they [do] curse God, and wish to die. Nevertheless they... struggle... for their lives.”⁹

I will make a prediction. I predict that even after FOX’s hard core audience discovers that that rump of a network fed them a pack of lies and false securities as evidenced by the fact that the pandemic will have proven far more dangerous and deadly than it led them to believe, they will return straight away to the poisoned trough; confirming the old parable that

⁷ Jeremiah 3.³

⁸ Jeremiah 2.¹⁹

⁹ Mormon 2.¹⁴

“The dog is turned to his own vomit again;
and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.”¹⁰

Yes, I am doubtful. I want God to act. But I worry about the consequences. I worry that we will be right back where we were before.

Conclusion

So, I joined people of my faith in prayer and fasting. Time will tell what impact, if any, it will have. But, for me, this homily is what came out of it. It will come as no surprise that I feel justified in my diagnosis of the real virus that is infecting our American society and my prescription for dealing with this and future pandemics—spiritual and temporal.

I hope, however, that I am wrong about the continued state of my fellow citizens’ rebellion and madness. I hope we have all learned from the tragedies unfolding around us. I hope we repent of our sins against one another. I hope we allow Jesus to soften our hardened hearts. I hope we resolve to be better citizens and better keepers of our brother.

Yes, I hope I am wrong, for this suffering brings me no pleasure. I do not feel that I deserve, or that God owes me any special treatment or protection. So, I do not “desire the woeful day.”¹¹ It is as likely to reach out and snatch me or one dear to me as it might any other. I am as wretched a man as any other.

Even so, our wretchedness must not blind or mute us to society’s ills and evils. The watchman must stay true, remain on the watchtower, and warn of looming danger.

At the end of the day of fasting and prayer, I find that I am right back where I started.

¹⁰ 2 Peter 2:²²

¹¹ Jeremiah 17.¹⁶

“Our Father which art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done in earth,
as it is in heaven.”¹²

“Even so,” I cry out,

“Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”¹³

¹² Matthew 6.⁹⁻¹⁰

¹³ Revelation 22.²⁰