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Theological Observer

COVID-19: Tricky Waters for the Good Ship

The COVID crisis has created some tricky waters for the good ship of the church. In Romans 13, Paul rightly urges us to obey those who govern, even as our Lord tells us to give Caesar what is his. Add to this the desire to do everything we can to protect the physical health of our neighbor. We pray for the wisdom of Solomon, that we might find the right balance, knowing that we may come to different conclusions as to how to go forward. One church goes entirely online, another requires masks, while another asks us simply to spread ourselves apart. When it comes to such things, one size does not fit all, and charity is a must.

But even so, Christians need to retain a certain vigor. We comply, but not as those who are unthinking, or without courage. Throughout our land, governors have issued edicts prohibiting the gathering of Christians, in churches and in homes. In some situations, the church has been unjustly targeted. Christians are allowed to enter big box stores but have been told they cannot go to church. This is especially troublesome when we remember that we are the body of Christ, commanded by our Lord to receive the body of Christ often.

While we owe basic obedience to governing authorities, so also must we take into account the spiritual toll that COVID-19 has taken on our people. Isolation from the physical church has left some in despair and depression, leading to both spiritual and physical harm. As a matter of wisdom, Christians are sure to have differing opinions as to where to draw the line. Christian brothers have already shown great courage in resisting government overreach, and this has met with some success. We live in a republic, where we have ample room, and even a duty, to push back. Due to the resistance of Christian leaders, edicts have been withdrawn and churches have been reopened. Great issues are at play. The longer government officials label church as “non-essential,” the more likely our own people will come to believe it. Continued absence from church soon becomes a habit. Nor is it good that we become comfortable with livestreaming when we need the real presence.

While we debate where to draw the line, lines must be drawn. Health emergencies matter, but one thing is needful. May the Lord give us charity, wisdom, and courage that we might care for others while remaining faithful, all the while knowing that the church is not much loved today, and that we must be vigilant in defense of her prerogatives.

Peter J. Scaer