

### THE SHEPHERDS WALKING STICK

Did God give us covid-19? A medical authority was quoted in one of our local papers as saying, “The God that made us get COVID was perhaps the same God that has placed its solution in the hands of doctors. It is just possible that your prayers have been answered. Take the vaccine, use your mask and keep social distance.” I am sure that the good doctor does not mean to say that God is the direct cause of people getting sick with something evil as covid-19. Evil does not from God who is all-Love, all-Goodness..... There are two kinds of evil: (a) physical or natural evil, and (b) moral evil. Physical or natural evil are natural calamities that cause suffering on people – earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, drought, etc. These are not the result of man’s willing it, but simply occur in nature. Our faith teaches us that these calamities will continue to occur until the entire creation is brought to perfection. St. Paul reveals, “We know that the whole creation has been groaning with labor pains together until now” (Rom 8:22). In other words, until the birth of “the new heaven and the new earth” which will be perfect, we will continue to experience physical or natural evil. Why did not God create a perfect world right away? Of course, he certainly has the power to do that. However, “with infinite wisdom and goodness [He] freely willed to create a world in a state of journeying towards its ultimate perfection” (CCC, 310). Because of this, we can say that God is an indirect cause of natural or physical evil..... Covid-19 is said to be a case of zoonotic spillover wherein a virus from an animal jumps to humans. In this case, it is a natural evil. On the other hand, there is also a theory that covid-19 comes from a virus that was developed in the lab for sinister purposes. In this case, the pandemic is mostly a moral evil. Moral evil is the result of man’s perverted will. Moral evil occurs when man acts contrary to the good. According to the Catechism, “God is in no way, directly or indirectly, the cause of moral evil. He permits it, however, because he respects the freedom of his creatures and, mysteriously, knows how to derive good from it: For almighty God...because he is supremely good, would never allow any evil whatsoever to exist in his works if he were not so all-powerful and good as to cause good to emerge from evil itself” (CCC, 311)..... At this point, as your pastor, I would like to invite you to pray and discern always: What are the goods that God wants to emerge from this

pandemic so that I may participate in them? Certainly the isolation effected by the restrictions should make us realize the value of family life. For us Catholics, the prohibition to gather for public worship should enlarge our desire for the grace of the sacraments especially receiving the Lord in the Eucharist which we oftentimes take for granted in the past..... Another good that we can participate in is the sense of community which can be fostered by respecting each other's decision with regards to the vaccine. It is observed that the vaccine has created antagonism and incivility in society at large. It should not be so especially in our Catholic community. Such disunity can be avoided if we refrain from two extreme attitudes. One extreme position is saying that getting the vaccine is intrinsically immoral because it is tested/produced using illicitly obtained fetal cell lines, and that it cannot be justified in any circumstances. This is not the official teaching of the Church. We should not put such undue imposition on the consciences of people who are truly feel the need for the vaccine due to their circumstances. On the other hand, the other extreme is to think that since the Church has okay-ed the vaccines, then everybody has to get it, and anyone who conscientiously objects to the vaccine is selfish, scrupulous, not doing her part, has no regard for public health or common good, pseudo-scientific, etc. This is not the stance of the Church either. This is ignoring the other things Church is saying in permitting the use of the vaccines – e.g., the conditions for its use in certain circumstances and the moral obligation of those vaccinated to demand for an ethically sourced vaccine. The permission of the Church to use the vaccines does not mean that people should be pressured or coerced to get it. Common good does not trump individual conscience. That being said, I appeal to everyone in the parish to respect each other's decision on this matter. We are still a family even if we see things differently..... Now, is the vaccine a God-given solution for our predicament? Mmm...That would be stretching it too far. Using the vaccine on certain conditions is one thing; how it was created is another thing. But then this is a subject is for another day.