

# Maybe it's time for reconciliation

"No!"



"The hand!"

I literally had no idea what was going on as I went up for Communion at a Monday morning Mass (after the Daylight Savings Time hour loss, no less) at a prominent church in the northeast. Ever since coronavirus fears hit the United States in a more intense way, changes slowly began at churches. No Precious Blood. No handshakes. No holy water in the fonts. Fine. The hope is that if we all make some adjustments, this won't get as bad as it could.

But we read headlines about no Ash Wednesday Masses in Milan. Italy canceled Masses for Lent. Giving up Mass for Lent? I've heard priests are celebrating private Masses and giving out Communion after. I'm not entirely sure why they would have to be private. But I wonder if it's just a matter of time when we do the same. A young colleague asked me how long I thought confession might be available. I told her not to waste any time.

And that's what is driving me a little batty about this time with coronavirus. Why aren't we talking about preparing to die? Because we are all going to die someday. And we – and I'll absolutely include myself here – are acting like we think we can choose the day or circumstances of our deaths. How else would you explain the seeming terror people seem to be feeling

about this disease? We all need and want to be prudent. But what if I get hit by a car this afternoon? I'll be honest. I had a really bad medical challenge last year that I was so scared about, I didn't think I was going to survive.

Like coronavirus, these things should change us, especially as they expose our unbelief. These things should remind us that we are not guaranteed tomorrow. These things should commit us to more intense examinations of conscience and living in a state of grace. It's Lent! Shouldn't we be talking about *memento mori*? Shouldn't we remember that we are made for eternity? And we should not freak out but instead love and pray. If you can't visit the sick, give a phone call, pray.

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This scare is keeping many of us out of the office. It's cutting down travel. The folks at Our Sunday Visitor know that. Because of the concern for the safety of attendees and speakers, the conference on reform in the Church that I was going to join them at was canceled.

So we have a little more time to reflect, a little more time to spend with God and with those closest to us. God works with everything. Maybe this can be a little bit of a respite for those of us who do not get seriously ill – to recall what it is our lives are for and about. What's most important? It's not what Donald Trump is tweeting or what material goods we can acquire. It's not going nonstop. I even thought that Amtrak canceled its nonstop Acela service in the northeast was a wee bit of a sign. Slow down. You move too fast. And then we don't move fast enough on the things we ought to, sometimes, that have to do with virtue and often require courage. Don't panic. Seek peace.

I don't know what's going to happen with confession in the coming weeks, but maybe this is a time for reconciliation. For getting right with God and fellow men. If you haven't been

talking with someone, pick up the phone. If you haven't been talking with God, now is the time. If you are in quarantine mode, remember your baptism, remember all the times you have received Jesus in the Eucharist. He is near to you. Cling to him, wherever you find yourself during these trying times. And, honestly, while we all need to do what we are called to do, can this be a little bit of a retreat time for some of us? And a reminder that the only real power we have is in prayer and the grace of God.

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