

CORONAVIRUS COVID-19 PANDEMIC 2020

Knowledge is Power

By Fr. Frank Kurzaj

Starting in China and then spreading all over the world, the virus created such a health situation in the human population that in March 2020 The World Health Authority pronounced it as a PANDEMIC that in the epidemiological vocabulary is the highest rating on the scale of health concern among humans. Learning about this pandemic I found out:

1. **Symptoms of the infection with the virus:** Coughing, high temperature, difficulty breathing, lack of appetite, weakness.
2. **Development of the illness:** at the beginning the person with the illness experiences only the symptoms. After four or five days, the symptoms are disappearing and the infected person feels “normal” but walking around behaving as usual he/she is spreading the virus not knowing that he/she is the carrier of the virus. He/she is like a walking bomb. After five or six days, the symptoms are coming back in a more powerful way. Hospitalization is needed, sometimes respiratory equipment is needed for the breathing. For some people this infection is deadly. For 80% of the infected the illness is overcome but for 20% it is very dangerous. The health experts inform us that the illness is especially dangerous for the people over 68 years old. There are currently no cases for seriously sick children but because of the uncertainty of the illness, nobody knows if the children are not carriers of the virus. The experts also tell us that presently, March 13, 2020, for every 100,000 infected only 5 persons are diagnosed and recognized as being a carrier of the virus. They told us also that 80% of the human population will be infected. By March 15, 2020 there are 5,000 people who have died because of the virus. In France, 127 have passed away. In diocese of Bergamo in Italy, where the pandemic is most deadly, 20 priests are carriers of the Coronavirus and 6 have already died.
3. **How does it spread:** the virus spreads through droplets that are released by the infected person through sneezing, coughing, or by touching people or places when passing by. The unknown and the lack of data (lack of testing) causes some of the experts to believe that the virus may stay only on the surface for four to six days. Others are talking about different timelines for incubation and believe that a person can be infected not knowing about this for two to eight weeks since the contact with the infected person. This is why the self-quarantine is recommended for those who in any way may come in contact with the people infected. Recently, the members of the whole Romanian Government is in self-quarantine. This is also why the people who travel to the places with most cases are under self-quarantine. The proof for the existence of the longer time of incubation can be found in the case of Tom Hanks and his wife. They were diagnosed in Australia but they felt sick a week to ten days earlier while in California. This is why Social Distancing is the new normal.

4. The reaction to deal with the pandemic:

It is understood that life is a risky business that people are misbehaving and are getting sick and that death is imminent and is part of everyday life. Every year in the US there are 45,000-50,000 people who die because of influenza, as of today, March 17th, 2020, there are only 70 deaths in the US from the Coronavirus.

Life is also precious and as humans we have the responsibility to take care of our own lives and the lives of others.

In the time of a pandemic, which we are now in, there are two options for the politicians and the people with authority that have a special responsibility in a society to react for the good of the people; 1) every life is precious and everything has to be done to protect and save lives. 2) Some people will die and nobody can stop this. For the sake of the majority, no drastic actions to protect others are needed.

Those who talk about the risks are using the image of a scale. On one side of the scale, they see a brick with all the dangers - the virus is a real enemy for whom the whole society has to be protected. They will say that we are in the business of fighting against time – every day without serious action on behalf of the whole society like closing schools, institutions, and cancelling major events, although costly, are necessary for the good of the society. Every tool in the tool box to get in front of the virus has to be used. This action was taken in China, Italy, Poland the Czech Republic and in many other places in the world.

Those for whom a feather is on the right side of the scale, no particular and drastic actions are necessary. In the United Kingdom for example, even though there are cases for the coronavirus, no particular actions are being taken. The leaders believe that the virus will stop infecting the people during the summer and right now some of the people will die but this is a part of life that everyone has to get used to. The experts are saying that, with this approach, there will many casualties and 7.9 million people will be hospitalized.

Sometimes to protect the bigger society from losing too much even a lie is accepted. During the Spanish epidemic in 1918 President Woodrow Wilson, for example, ordered not to tell the truth about the epidemic. This decision in practice gave permission to the members of the government and others responsible for the safety of the society to lie about the epidemic. At that time 660,000 died because of this epidemic.

The present pandemic started probably in China. Already on December 30 Dr. Li Wenliang from Wuhan, China wrote on a WeChat about the dangers of the virus. A couple of hours later he was arrested for “spreading false opinions on the internet and causing panic”. After being made to sign a statement renouncing the claims, he went back to work where he was infected and died within 10 days. On March 19th, he was posthumously exonerated.

Presently, in the United States, Governor Gina Raimondo and, since then, other Governors, announced a State of Emergency in their respective states. She and the others take the brick image position. Everything possible has to be done to stop the virus.

5. **The responsibility of a leader of a community:** A leader has to understand: We have never faced anything like this before. We feel as if everything has stopped and we are lost. We are almost like blind firefighters trying to put out a fire. An aggressive approach is needed, drastic, quick actions. Coordinated efforts are needed. Social distancing is the new normal and testing is a must. But quality testing that gives the truth and not only a possibility. The virus spreads through community transmission. A leader should always lead by example. A leader should never be afraid to learn from others. A leader should never disregard the real danger. A leader should always encourage and guide others to proceed with caution and act and decide in such a way to prevent the members of society from panic. A leader should always remember that the difference between caution and panic changes with time and knowledge. A leader should also remember that scaring people for the sake of scaring is not only irresponsible or immature, but immoral. Scaring people is evil. A lie is always evil. The truth, without love, is a crime. Humility is a sign of wisdom.
6. **A Christian responsibility:** Infection of human solidarity must be greater than the virus. The people can be in isolation but should never be alone. Christianity is a religion of hope. “Do not be afraid” has to always be remembered. Jesus the Lord and Savior is with humanity in good and in bad. He is the source of hope for everyone. Hanging on the cross He is taking care of all our sins and illnesses. Hanging on the Cross, He is infected too but He does not spread the deadly infection but only hope and love. A Christian, a follower of Jesus, participates in the life of the Church following the recommendations of the Church leaders and their own, good, informed, conscience.
7. **Worth to Remember:**

“The power of God’s love is stronger than all the difficulties faced by the people.” Pope Francis

Better to be safe now than sorry later.

Even if all the precautions are unnecessary, be prudent.

Be Responsible – Follow the decisions and recommendations of those in authority.

The Social Distance is now the new normal.

The truth is always painful – Jesus – The Truth - is on the Cross suffering. It cost him His life to give us life.

It is going to get worse before it gets better.

Do not be afraid! I am with you. – Our Lord and Savior