

REFLECTION

Covid has exposed our lack of faith

ECCLESIA

21_07_2020

*Carmelo
Ferlito**



The period of Covid-19 will be remembered as one of the most challenging for individual freedoms, and for religious freedom in particular. In an unprecedented way, faithful people from all over the world had to face the impossibility to have access to worship places; all this happened without the attempt to find a compromise between the necessary precautions to limit the spread of the new influenza and the defence of the

fundamental right to practice religion. Everywhere in the world churches and other worship places were among the last places to reopen their doors to the public.

Still today in Malaysia, while life went almost back to normal in every aspect of life, worshipping is facing limitations; among others, the ban of foreigners from worship places, as if foreigners automatically were virus-bearer. For catholic churches, the number of admitted people is still subject to limitations and the number of masses drastically reduced.

While it is not surprising that governments around the world used every kind of occasion to curb individual freedoms, it is quite striking how no religious authority stood up against the imposition of very restrictive measures; if a way to have regular access to supermarkets (physical needs) was found, why could not have been done the same for worship places (spiritual needs)?

The point I want to make here, however, is of a more general nature and regards the co-responsibility of all the Catholic community in accepting the circumstances as if they were unavoidable or it was unworthy to fight for changing them. Regarding the access to foreigners to worship places in Malaysia, in example, it is often repeated the mantra that it is because of the government SOPs (standard operating procedures).

I think here there is a confusion between accepting the Cross “ad imitatio Christi” and the obligation to follow state orders. We should remember that great saints like Maximilian Kolbe and Edith Stein died in Nazi concentration camps where their persecutors were “just” following government orders...

My point is related with the SOPs mantra. I wonder, how would we react if we were told that we could not see our children for an indefinite amount of time because of some reason decided by the government? Would not we fight back? Would not we feel unjustly deprived of our right to live with our family? Would not we be devastated with pain?

Good. The natural answer we all hold in our hearths reveals how we are in need of mercy; our faith is so poor that we could not recognize that the Eucharist truly is what we hold most dear. Is not the Eucharist, in fact, the very foundation of our faith? Is not the sacrifice of the Living God – re-happening in every Eucharist – the only source of meaning for our affections and actions? Is not the possibility of getting mystically fed with the Body of Christ the only and true source of life for us?

We gave up with no fight to what we hold most dear. We allowed the biggest

disruption in the supply chain of our spiritual and essential life to happen without raising a voice.

If something good this lockdown ever did, it was, I hope, to make us conscious of how miserable and decrepit we are, to make us realize how small and uncertain our faith is, so weak that we allowed the world to rape us without even realizing we were being raped. Recognizing our miserable condition, however, is the necessary big grace to embrace conversion and become more in love with the Living God and hungrier of His mystical body. May a new consciousness increase our faith.

*** Director, Petersime Southeast Asia Sdn Bhd, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia.**