

Column050320

Companions on the Journey

May 3, 2020

Dear Friends,

We find ourselves at the beginning of the month of May. Traditionally May is the month of Mothers' Day and May Processions, Weddings and Baccalaureate Masses and Graduations. But not this year. Or at least not right now. I have been speaking on the phone with brides and grooms who have been grappling with decisions about their planned weddings. Is it better to go through with the wedding but on a greatly reduced scale (ten people max) or is it better to postpone until a time when everyone you want to attend can actually attend? Tough calls. I find that the engaged couples I have been speaking with have different approaches and come to different decisions given their particular circumstances.

Some will have their wedding now and just a few people at Church. No real reception. Even food for ten people is problematic. Others have decided to do the vows now and do a renewal of vows at a later date when everyone can be present. Dressing up in bridal attire and still hosting a wedding reception. There are even issues with some of the venues who had been hired to host the reception. Will all of them still be there?

We are running into similar issues with funerals. Some are opting for a funeral with ten people and then the traditional interment at the cemetery. Others are opting for a Funeral Home Service, also limited to ten people (all observing proper social distance protocols) and then interment. Others are opting for a graveside service with a Memorial Mass to be celebrated later on followed by a breaking of bread with family and friends. All of this really cuts against the grain of human celebration. We are a social people. We comfort and we celebrate in a very hands on way. We share food and we break bread and we drink wine and we sing songs and we dance. We also comfort with hugs and kisses when there is loss. We take the hands of the other person in our own hands. We stroke the arm of a mourning loved one. We seek ways to convey our own sharing the loss of the loved one and the consolation of the mourners. But we do these things physically so often besides their relational, spiritual, emotional dimensions.

But now we cannot. Now the best we can do is to muddle through somehow. I am predicting that there will be some new ways to participate and celebrate both life and death that come out of the ingenuity of dealing with this particular coronavirus. They may not have clearly emerged yet but they are slowly beginning to emerge. I believe that we should actually be praying for the Spirit of the Living God to be leading us specifically at this time. What is it that we need to do, to hear, and to discern? Pray to the Holy Spirit for the guidance and the enlightenment and for the grace to be able to recognize and realize where the Lord is in all of this and when He draws close. My friends, we must not waste these moments. The Lord is in all of these moments and we can turn to ask for the assistance we need. The Lord is waiting for us and will help us. But we have to respond to his invitation. People still get married. People still die. We must be ready to find just the right way to handle these most human of all realities. But to do it in a spirit of hope and faith and trust in our God. We must turn to the Lord and ask Him to show us the Way. He surely will.

Peace,
Msgr. McHenry